



MINUTES of the PARISH COUNCIL MEETING held on Wednesday 07 January 2026 commencing at 7pm held in Brantham Village Hall.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED INCLUDED AT APPENDIX B

PRESENT: Cllrs Mal Bridgeman (Chair), R Chamberlain, M Chatfield, L Cherry, M Clark, C Donaldson, A Edevane, J Heywood, A McCraw and E Osben.

Also in attendance: S Keys (Clerk) and 2 members of the public.

PC 01.26.01 - OPENING INCLUDING STATEMENT

The Chair declared the meeting open at 7pm and thanked all for attending.

A statement was then read out by the Chair indicating that, in accordance with legislation, the public and councillors were permitted to film, record, photograph or use social media in order to report on the proceedings of the meeting. A full transcript is on the Council's [website](#).

The Chair reminded the public that a Council meeting is not a public meeting, it is a meeting conducted in public. Members of the public, the press, and District, Borough or County Councilors are invited to attend our meetings and contribute during the public forum. Comments from the public during the remainder of the meeting should be by invitation from the Chair only.

PC 01.26.02 - APOLOGIES

- Council to receive apologies for absence – Council noted apologies received from County Councillor Simon Harley - **These apologies were aif.**

PC 01.26.03- DECLARATION OF INTEREST AND LOCAL NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS

- To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other registerable interests and non-registerable interests as detailed in Appendix B of the LGA Model Code of Conduct – None.
- To receive notifications of gifts of hospitality exceeding £50 – None
- To note the determination of requests for dispensations – None.

PC 01.26.04 - MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- To consider and approve the minutes of the previous Parish Council meeting held on 03 December 2025 –**Cllr Osben proposed that Council approve the minutes as a true and accurate record of the proceedings that took place, this was seconded by Cllr Heywood and approved by the Council, aif (Cllr Edevane abstained from the vote).** The Chair signed the minutes as approved.
- To consider and approve the minutes of the previous Parish Council meeting held on 10 December 2025 –**Cllr Osben proposed that Council approve the minutes as a true and accurate record of the proceedings that took place, this was seconded by Cllr Heywood and approved by the Council, aif (Cllr Edevane abstained from the vote).** The Chair signed the minutes as approved.

PC 12.25.06 - REPORTS FOR INFORMATION - to receive written reports for information only:

- County Councillor Simon Harley – the written report (APPENDIX C) was taken as read.
- District Councillor Alastair McCraw – the written report (APPENDIX D) was taken as read.

PC 12.25.07- PUBLIC FORUM

- To receive any questions or comments from members of the public – the following questions or comments were raised:
 - Why has the lease between Brantham Parish Council and Brantham Management CIC been made public?
The Chair confirmed that BMCIC shared the lease with its users at a public meeting.
 - How did users of the Leisure Centre become aware of the breaches of the lease?



The Chair confirmed that BMCIC had shared letters between BMCIC and BPC at a public meeting.

- Why does Brantham Parish Council make BMCIC repay the costs of Buildings insurance for the Leisure Centre.

The Chair confirmed that this is a requirement of the lease between BMCIC and BPC. This reclaim had not been requested prior to 2022 but this was agreed as part of the rent review between BPC and BMCIC. At this time the annual rent of £1650 paid by BMCIC was not increased but the requirement to repay the insurance (in line with the lease) was reinstated and the payment to BMCIC for maintenance of the Lower Playing Field was reduced to £40 per month.

- Why has the diary system that was in place previously not been used to schedule meetings between BPC and BMCIC. Members of the Council noted that they were not aware of a "diary system". Invitations to future meetings had now been extended by BMCIC.
- Cllr McCraw queried whether the member of the public was attending the Parish Council in an official capacity on behalf of BMCIC. The member of the public confirmed that they were present as an interested member of the public and not in an official capacity.
- A member of the public confirmed that the Brantham Open Spaces equipment was now due for servicing. The Clerk confirmed that this should be scheduled.

PC 01.26.07 - CLERK'S REPORT (Paper 1) -

- a) To review actions from the previous meeting
 - Ask SCC to proceed to design/safety audit of proposed crossing points on A137 – completed
 - Purchase portable staging from VH Reserves - completed
- b) To receive the reports of items actioned under delegated powers and correspondence of note – The Clerk updated on work undertaken during the month including:
 - Attended Brantham Leisure Centre public meeting on behalf of the Parish Council with Council Chair and responded to queries and comments received
 - Scheduled meeting with County Council representative to review locations for proposed bus shelters and funding options – more information to follow
 - Work to update Brantham Community Emergency Plan – contacted local volunteers and Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit. Rest centre training currently under review – more information to follow.
 - Attendance at Christmas Tree Festival in December on behalf of Parish Council and Village Hall.
 - Collected Thermal Imaging equipment from East Bergholt Parish Council. Promoted on Facebook and coordinated visits where necessary.

Correspondence to note:

- Email received and responded to ref. concerns about the future of Brantham Leisure Centre following incorrect comments circulated on Facebook.
- Email chain with local resident – for discussion in agenda item PC 01.26.16

PC 01.26.08 - STATUTORY INFORMATION

- a) To receive nominations for the vacant posts of Councillor (1) – none received.
- b) To note April Parish Council meeting date changed to 14 April 2026, 7pm – noted
- c) To note that a public consultation has now been launched on proposals for Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution – noted.

PC 01.26.09 - FINANCE REPORT

- a) To review the minutes of the Finance Committee and note any decisions made - no meeting in December.
- b) To consider/review any proposal received from the Finance Committee (noted in the minutes) - no meeting in December.
- c) To review the take-up of the thermal imaging surveys and consider/approve the purchase of a Thermal imaging camera – Cllr Cherry had used the equipment and completed surveys when necessary. She confirmed that take up for the surveys had been low but this was likely due to the fact that the equipment had been loaned over the Christmas period.



Cllr Clark noted that the purchase of this equipment was relatively inexpensive and would mean that the Council always had equipment to loan for this purpose. The Chair noted that since take up had been low it was difficult to gauge whether this would be a sound investment. Following discussion **Cllr Osben proposed that the Council should attempt to loan the thermal imaging equipment again to see if take up is higher at another time of year, this was seconded by Cllr Chamberlain, aif.** (ACTION – Clerk)

- d) To approve the accounts awaiting payment including those coming forth, the accounts paid since the last meeting and the receipts allocated since the last meeting - **Cllr Osben proposed that the accounts coming forth, the accounts paid and the receipts allocated should be approved by the Council, this was seconded by Cllr Chamberlain, aif.**
- e) To note and approve the balance of accounts and Bank Reconciliation as at 31 December 2025 - all noted the confirmed bank balances of 209,304.98 across all accounts held in the name of the Parish Council at the end of December 2025. **The Council approved these figures, aif**
- f) To note the budget to actual statement for the period ending 31 December 2025 along with the budget monitoring paper – The Council noted the reports circulated by the Clerk. **Cllr Bridgeman proposed that this report was formally approved, this was seconded by Cllr Osben, aif.**
- g) To note the CIL report to 31 December 2025 including nominal sums for potential CIL expenditure for the coming year – Council noted the paper submitted showed no receipts for the year with expenditure in the sum of £820.83 incurred to date in 2025-26. Committed expenditure was noted as £61,796.00. Council noted the remaining balance after committed expenditure of £41,643.79.
- h) To note the donations approved to date in 2025-26 – Council noted the donations approved in 2025-26 and the outstanding donations balance of £144.98.
- i) To note the proposed Budget for the year 2026-27 alongside the narrative budget report as circulated by the Clerk – the Council noted the budget and narrative report circulated and the RFO confirmed that the Tax Base Figures circulated by Babergh District Council had now been finalised. **Cllr Cherry proposed that the Council approve a budget in the sum of £171,979 for 2026-27, this was seconded by Cllr Donaldson, aif.**
- j) To formally approve the Brantham Parish Council 2026-27 precept request for submission to Babergh District Council – following confirmation that there had been no change to the indicative tax base issued in December, **Cllr McCraw proposed that the parish council should levy a precept of £92,054 which would give Brantham a Council Tax Band D amount of £82.52 which was an increase of 20.24% or £13.89 over that set for 2025-2026, this was seconded by Cllr Osben, aif.**
- k) To note the signing of the Precept request form – the Council noted the signing of the precept request form by the Chair. This form would be submitted to Babergh District Council by the Clerk before the deadline of 31 January 2026. (ACTION – Clerk)

PC 01.26.10 - PLANNING MATTERS

- a) To consider and approve response to the following planning matters to Brantham – none received
- b) To note the following planning decisions relating to Brantham

DC/25/04397

8 Ash Ground Close, Brantham, CO11 1TY

Erection of single storey front side and rear extension to dwelling and relocation of close boarded boundary fence.

PLANNING PERMISSION GRANTED

DC/25/04982

1 Broughton Villa, Cattawade Street, Brantham, Manningtree Suffolk CO11 1SA

Erection of a Single storey ground floor rear extension. Front extension to the existing outhouse. A new roof to the existing rear extension. Upgrades to the front porch including new insulation and windows.

PLANNING PERMISSION GRANTED

PC 01.26.11 – BRANTHAM 2034

- a) OUTDOOR SPACES - To receive any updates from Skate Park Working Group and consider/agree any next steps as necessary – Cllr Edevane noted that funding of £20k from the National Lottery had been approved and received. She confirmed that the video for the Crowdfunder campaign should be completed in the near future. The Council discussed the best time to launch the crowdfunder. Cllr Edevane informed the Council that she



thought the campaign would be more successful if the CIL funding from Babergh District Council had been confirmed. The Chair noted concerns that he would like to press forward with the project. Following discussion the Clerk agreed to find out when the CIL bid was likely to be reviewed at Babergh District Council. (ACTION – Clerk)

Cllr Edevane noted that Stutton Parish Council had donated £50 towards the cost of the Brantham Skate Park and formally recorded her thanks for this donation.

- b) GREEN ISSUES - To receive an update on proposals for allotments – Cllr Clark noted that there was nothing to report which the plan from Flagship for affordable housing and possible allotments was awaited.
- c) GREEN ISSUES – To note successful application for hedging and trees from Woodland Trust to be planted at Lower Playing Field – noted.
- d) GREEN ISSUES – To receive an update on EV Charging points for installation at Brantham VH from Cllr Clark, review quote received and to consider/agree next steps as necessary – Cllr Clark highlighted the outline quote received from Zolbv and noted that a site visit would be the next step.
Cllr McCraw informed the Council that he was aware of a Suffolk County Council project to install EV charging points at Palfrey Heights in Brantham and agreed to share the details with the Clerk along with any details for possible funding for a Parish Council project.
Council agreed that proposals for this project should be reviewed at either the Finance Committee meeting or a future Council meeting.
- e) SAFETY – To note the correspondence received from East Bergholt Parish Council ref. proposals for a shared PCSO – The Chair noted that an increased police presence was one of the key feedback points from the consultation undertaken with village residents.
- f) SAFETY – To consider/approve the appointment of a shared PCSO for Brantham and East Bergholt - Cllr Bridgeman proposed that the Council explore the joint funding of a PCSO with East Bergholt Parish Council (funded in the first year from Parish Council CIL funds), aif. (ACTION – Cllr Bridgeman to liaise with EBPC and Suffolk Police)
- g) AFFORDABLE HOUSING - To receive an update on Affordable Housing Project and agree any next steps as appropriate – Cllr Osben noted that Flagship had been asked to submit a Pre-Application for the proposed site. Feedback is currently awaited.
- h) ROADS – To receive an update on proposals or a crossing point on A137 and agree next steps as appropriate – the Clerk confirmed that Josh White at Suffolk County Council had asked the Council to informally consult with local residents about proposals to install a crossing point. Cllr Cherry confirmed that she had Cllr Heywood had consulted with a number of households in this location and received largely positive feedback. Any remaining households would be contacted in the coming weeks.
- i) To receive any other updates from Cllrs relating to their areas in the Brantham 2034 plan – Cllr Cherry noted that she had been contacted by a local resident about the possibility of installing raised beds on verges in Sycamore Way. Following discussion it was agreed that the Clerk would find out who was responsible for these verges and feedback.

PC 01.26.12 – NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

- a) To receive an update on Neighbourhood Plan for Brantham – Cllr Chamberlain informed the Council that the second meeting of the Steering Group had now been held and the Group had reviewed a possible first draft of a consultation questionnaire and adopted the approved Terms of Reference. Cllr Chamberlain noted that more volunteers for the group were needed and that this would be promoted on social media and in the Bugle.
- b) To consider/agree next steps as appropriate – see above.

PC 01.26.13 – DEFIBRILATOR

- a) To receive email received from Manningtree First Responders ref. defibrillator at Brantham Bull – the Council noted the email received from the group asking whether the Parish Council will continue to fund the cost of upkeep and maintenance of the defibrillator at the Brantham Bull.
- b) To approve funding for defibrillator by Parish Council going forward – following discussion **Cllr Bridgeman proposed that the Parish Council should permanently fund the costs associated with the defibrillator at the Brantham Bull, this was seconded by Cllr Cherry, aif.**



PC 01.26.14 – RECORDING OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

- a) To consider formal recording and broadcasting of Parish Council meetings – the Chair noted that the recording and broadcasting of Parish Council meetings would widen the means of attending the meetings and the Council would be prepared if there were changes to the law to allow remote attendance at meetings by Cllrs.
- b) To review equipment for this purpose and to agree next steps as appropriate – following discussion **the Chair proposed that the principle of recording and broadcasting Parish Council meetings should be approved and that a formal quote for the equipment should be requested and submitted to the next Parish Council meeting for review, this was seconded by Cllr Clark, aif.**

PC 01.26.15- REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

- a) To receive a report from the Parish Chairman and agree any actions as necessary – none received.
- b) To receive any other points to note from committees, sub-committees & working groups –
Services Sub-Committee – Cllr Osben noted that the dog litter bin on Rectory Lane was in a poor state of repair and needed replacement. Cllr Cherry noted that it did not seem necessary to have two bins next to each other on Church Lane Footpath. Following discussion, it was agreed that the Clerk would ask the Grounds Maintenance Contractor to move one of these bins to Rectory Lane (*ACTION – Clerk*)
- c) To receive an update from the Chair in relation to Dilapidations survey of Brantham Leisure Centre – The Chair provided the following update:
 - Following completion of the Parish Council dilapidations survey BMCIC had instructed their own surveyor to undertake a dilapidations survey. This was now complete and the surveyors are negotiating on the works necessary.
 - The Chair noted that the surveyor appointed by BMCIC did not seem to understand that the lease in place is a FRI and this was being reiterated by BPC's surveyor.
 - An on-site meeting will be held by the surveyors to review the outstanding points and come to some agreement.
 - The Chair noted that Birketts had confirmed that the costs of this work were recoverable from BMCIC as per the lease.
 - Cllr Donaldson noted that the main consideration of the Council should be the safety of the users of the centre and that any outstanding points in relation to safety (and in particular Fire Safety) should be followed up as quickly as possible.
 - Cllr Donaldson queried whether the Council's insurance of the Leisure Centre building was invalidated in the event of a fire or accident now that the Council is aware of the state of the building and the lack of proper safety measures? The Clerk to confirm with Birketts. (*ACTION – Clerk*)
- d) To consider/agree Parish Council-BMCIC representative – **The Chair proposed that he takes on the BMCIC Rep role, this was seconded by Cllr Clark, aif.**
- e) To consider/approve any proposals or next steps as appropriate – none.

PC 01.26.16 - DATES OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

- a) Finance Committee meeting, Wednesday 28 January 2025, 7pm
- b) Parish Council meeting – Wednesday 04 February 2025, 7pm

PC 01.26.17 IN CAMERA ITEM

- a) To resolve under the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed – **Cllr Osben proposed that the public be excluded from the meeting, this was seconded by Cllr McCraw, aif.**

At 8.11pm the meeting closed to the public.

- b) To note correspondence received from local resident and consider whether this meets the criteria of the BPC Persistent and Vexatious Correspondence Policy and agree next steps as necessary – the Council reviewed the correspondence received between 16 November 2025 and 11 December 2025. All present agreed that this



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correspondence was persistent and met the criteria of the Policy. Following discussion **Cllr Bridgeman proposed that in line with the Council's policy the Clerk should write to the resident concerned noting that the Council and Clerk will not respond to enquiries and communications to the Council from the resident for a period of 6 months if no substantive new issue is raised, this was seconded by Cllr McCraw, aif. (ACTION – Clerk)**

MEETING CLOSED AT 8.32pm

SIGNED.....DATED.....



ACTIONS

| MINUTE NO. | ACTION | WHO |
|-------------|--|-------|
| PC 01.26.09 | Arrange second loan of Thermal Imaging Equipment | Clerk |
| PC 01.26.09 | Submit the precept request form to Babergh District Council | Clerk |
| PC 01.26.11 | Find out when CIL bid will be reviewed by Babergh District Council | Clerk |
| PC 01.26.11 | Liaise with EBPC and Suffolk Constabulary ref. shared PCSO | MB |
| PC 01.26.15 | Ask Grounds Maintenance Contractor to move bin from Church Lane Footpath to Rectory Lane | Clerk |
| PC 01.26.15 | Find out whether Council's insurance of BLC is invalidated by lack of proper Safety measures and assessments | Clerk |



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APPENDIX A

Accounts submitted for payment – 07 January 2025

| Payee | Detail | Method | NETT | VAT | TOTAL |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|--------|-------|-----|-------|
| Brantham Village Hall | Hall Hire costs (inv. 2010) | BACS | 42.00 | | 42.00 |

Accounts paid since 03 December 2025

| Payee | Detail | Method | NETT | VAT | TOTAL |
|----------------------------|--|--------------|---------|--------|---------|
| Parish Council staff costs | Salaries, Office Allowance, Pension payments | BACS | 3910.25 | | 3910.25 |
| BMCIC | Grounds Maintenance Payment | BACS | 40.00 | | 40.00 |
| Microsoft | Monthly Subscription Charges | DD | 20.16 | 4.03 | 24.19 |
| Virtual Landline | Phone number for Parish Council | Direct Debit | 7.29 | 1.46 | 8.75 |
| Smarty.co.uk | CCTV SIM Cards | Direct Debit | 27.00 | | 27.00 |
| Sainsburys | Food & Drink for Christmas meeting | Debit Card | 98.25 | | 98.25 |
| Brantham Village Hall | Refund for Sumup payment received in error | BACS | 123.88 | | 123.88 |
| T Mirtabhmeasebi | Seasonal display at Village Sign | BACS | 186.23 | | 186.23 |
| Essential Supplies Ltd | Staging for Brantham Village Hall (paid from reserves) | BACS | 4400.81 | 880.16 | 5280.97 |
| Lloyds Bank | Service Charges | BACS | 8.50 | | 8.50 |
| Genesis Orwell Mencap | Bench for Brantham Open Space | BACS | 820.83 | 164.17 | 985.00 |
| Suffolk County Council | Licence application for memorial bench on A137 | BACS | 170.00 | | 170.00 |

Items paid following authorisation at meeting of 03 December 2025

| Payee | Detail | Method | NETT | VAT | TOTAL |
|-----------------------|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Dave Childs | Grounds Maintenance (inv. 2398) | BACS | 90.00 | | 90.00 |
| Brantham Village Hall | Hall Hire costs (inv. 2005) | BACS | 48.00 | | 48.00 |
| SALC | Councillor training (inv. 30704) | BACS | 132.00 | 26.40 | 158.40 |
| MJS Systems Ltd | Annual management and Maintenance of CCTV cameras (inv. 8906) | BACS | 560.00 | 112.00 | 672.00 |
| Headway Suffolk | Donation as per FC 11.25.04 | BACS | 100.00 | | 100.00 |

Receipts allocated since 03 December 2025

| Who | Detail | Method | Amount |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| National Lottery Community Fund | Skate Park donation | BACS | 20,000.00 |
| Stutton Parish Council | Skate Park donation | BACS | 50.00 |
| Sumup | Skate park donation | BACS | 6.84 |
| Bank Interest | Bank Interest | BACS | 108.76 |
| Village Hall Brantham | Contribution stage equipment | BACS | 1250.00 |



APPENDIX B – List of common abbreviations used.

| | |
|-------|--|
| Aif | All in favour |
| AGAR | Annual Governance and Accountability Return |
| APM | Annual Parish Meeting |
| APCM | Annual Parish Council Meeting |
| ASB | Anti-social Behaviour |
| BACS | Bankers Automated Clearing Services |
| BDC | Babergh District Council |
| BLC | Brantham Leisure Centre |
| BMIC | Brantham Management Community Interest Company |
| BOS | Brantham Open Spaces Group |
| BMSDC | Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Council |
| BPC | Brantham Parish Council |
| CEP | Community Emergency Plan |
| CAS | Community Action Suffolk |
| Chq | Cheque |
| Cllr | Councillor |
| Cttee | Committee |
| DCLG | Department of Communities and Local Government |
| FC | Finance Committee |
| FOI | Freedom of Information |
| FR | Financial Regulations |
| GPoC | General Power of Competence |
| HMRC | His Majesty's Revenue and Customs |
| LPA | Local Planning Authority |
| LPF | Lower Playing Field |
| LSC | Legal Sub Committee |
| NHS | National Health Service |
| NDP | Neighbourhood Development Plan |
| NP | Neighbourhood Plan |
| PC | Parish Council |
| PCSO | Police Community Support Officer |
| RFO | Responsible Finance Officer |
| RFSC | Recreation, Footpaths and Services Committee |
| SALC | Suffolk Association of Local Councils |
| SCC | Suffolk County Council |
| SID | Speed Indicator Device |
| SLA | Service Level Agreement |
| SNT | Safer Neighbourhood Team |
| SO | Standing Order |
| TPO | Tree Preservation Order |
| VAS | Vehicle Activated Sign |
| VCSE | Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations |
| HMC | Village Hall Management Committee |

County Councillor's Parish Report

Cllr Simon Harley, Peninsula Division

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Firstly, I wish you all a very happy and productive New Year!

Elections in 2026?

As most of you know the Government has postponed the Norfolk/Suffolk mayoral elections until 2028; they were supposed to be held in May 2026 but it has been considered that it would be best to delay these, though the reasons are not clear to all!

County Councils will be taken over by Unitary Authorities in 2028 as will District and Borough Councils in a unified council structure which will see between one and three Unitary Authorities to cover Suffolk, under the Mayoral Authority of Norfolk and Suffolk. The decision on the number of Unitary Authorities will be made by the government in March 2026 after the consultation period finishes. As you are aware the County Council has been promoting the single council option whereas the other Councils feel a three council option would provide better services as well as cost savings.

So, what about the County Council elections (which were already postponed in May 2025 for a year)? The government recently announced that they would allow County Councils to decide whether a further delay would be implemented so that there would be no need to re-elect Councillors before the Mayoral and Unitary authorities come into formal existence. Whilst this might be convenient (Govt. are arguing that elections may distract from local government reform work) and save some money, this leads to accusations that the main reasons are for political expediency and is certainly deeply undemocratic as Councillors who were originally elected for 4 years could serve for 7 years instead.

The Council has to let the government know what is our preferred option by 15th January and there is an Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 12th January to decide the Council's response, so I will be able to let you know the result by the next Parish Report.

Protecting Suffolk's Rivers

At Council on Thursday 11 December, my group proposed a motion to strengthen protection for rivers in the county via the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Rivers which include the right to flow naturally, be free from pollution or contamination and the right to recover from environmental harm. Councillors in the group and those from other groups at the council spoke passionately about rivers and the harm being done to them by sewage and agricultural and highways run off. Unfortunately, the Conservative group opted to vote against the motion and it was not carried. Other motions tabled at the meeting including writing to the government to protest the recent budget announcements, a motion criticising the council's record on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and the importance of local Post Offices.

Suffolk Minerals and Waste Plan

At Cabinet on Tuesday 2 December, preparation arrangements were agreed for the county's Minerals and Waste plan, which is now five years old and due for renewal. The plan looks at the county's needs and decides what planning measures need to be taken to meet them – for example, aggregates such as sand and gravel which are necessary for housebuilding. As the government has announced high targets for housing in Suffolk, the amount of these materials needed will be higher than before. As the Local Government Reorganisation process means that Suffolk County Council will likely not exist by the time

the plan is due to be adopted, the decision made by Cabinet was to undertake all the prep work and gather evidence for it so that the new authority/ies who have to publish the plan will be well-placed to do so once established.

Review of SEND progress

On Thursday 4 December, the council's Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee convened to scrutinise progress on the action plan for improvement to Suffolk's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services. The action plan was developed following a poor inspection report from Ofsted and CQC in November 2023. Council officers and Cabinet members for children's services joined the meeting and acknowledged that although progress had been made to clear the backlog of EHCPs and improve the waiting times to produce them and review them annually, many families had not yet felt the benefit of improvements the council and health partners were trying to embed. The Cabinet member for Education and SEND apologised at the meeting for this. It was noted that some issues, like the shortage of speech and language therapists, were a national issue rather than specific to Suffolk. The council is also working closely with the Department for Education and in partnership with Bedford Borough Council on best practice and support with strategy. The government's Schools white paper, which is expected to include an overhaul of the SEND system nationally, is expected soon in 2026. Members of the committee included education professionals and parents of children with special educational needs who expressed their concern that the council was still not providing a good enough service to Suffolk families.

New Funding for Buses and Sustainable Travel

Suffolk has been awarded £27m of funding for bus services from the government's Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG), this can be used for routes, ticketing or improving infrastructure like bus stops and shelters. Previously known as the Bus Services Improvement Grant, communities in Suffolk will be able to suggest improvements in their area and 'bid' for funding via the Suffolk on Board website: <https://www.suffolkonboard.com/>

The council has also been awarded just over £12m from Active Travel England to promote sustainable travel in the county. This can be used to invest in footpaths, cycle lanes and other infrastructure. Examples of how this funding has been used recently include pedestrian crossings in Bridge Street and College Road by Ipswich waterfront and improved cycle routes including from Ipswich Hospital to the waterfront area, Nacton Road in Ipswich, Main Road in Martlesham, and within Woodbridge as part of the town's current active travel project. Cllr Chris Chambers, the Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy at the council, said it was important for the council to develop a network of measures to encourage people out of the car wherever possible in order to reduce congestion and pollution.

Warm Homes in Suffolk

At the end of November 2025, Suffolk County Council secured £1.38 million from the government's Warm Homes Local Grant Fund, which means Suffolk residents living in properties which are not energy efficient could be eligible for funding to make their homes warmer and reduce their energy bills. Residents and landlords are urged to apply quickly, as the funding must be allocated by the end of March 2026.

The fund aims to provide free energy saving improvements to energy inefficient homes if residents are on a low income, receive certain benefits or live in a certain postcode area. This could be wall and loft insulation, solar panels or air source heat pumps. To be eligible, Suffolk homes must be privately owned (either by you or your landlord) and have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of D, E, F or G (you can find this out when you apply). Household income must usually be £36,000 a year or less - but if you earn more than that, you might still be eligible if either:

- you live in a certain postcode area (certain areas of Beccles, Felixstowe, Ipswich, Lowestoft and Stowmarket)
- someone in your household is getting certain benefits
- you have a severe or long-term health condition, which is adversely affected by living in a cold home

Once these conditions have been approved, an assessment of your home will identify which measures

are best suited to your property. These will then be installed by trusted contactors, for free. You can find out more and apply using this link: <https://www.warmhomessuffolk.org/>

In addition, Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk council have teamed up to provide Winter Warmth Packs to help vulnerable residents stay warm and healthy at home even if they are struggling with rising living costs. Referrals are via community groups, food banks, GP surgeries or hospitals and each pack includes items such as thermal hats, gloves, blankets and gilets, tailored as necessary – for example, children's winter coats can be included. Although the Warm Homes Healthy People programme is delivered by East Suffolk Council, it is a county-wide programme.

Helping Older Drivers Stay Safe

Suffolk's Fire and Rescue Service are holding workshops at fire stations around the county to advise older people on how they can stay safe while driving. Nationally, one in four car drivers killed on the roads last year were aged 70 or over, and as a rural county, many residents are reliant on cars to stay independent. The sessions are planned at the following venues for 11am-1pm:

- Tuesday 13 January – Woodbridge Fire and Police Station
- Wednesday 14 January – Stradbroke Fire Station
- Tuesday 27 January – Wrentham Fire and Police Station
- Wednesday 28 January – Ixworth Fire Station
- Tuesday 10 February – Holbrook Fire Station

To book a free place, please visit <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/suffolk-fire-rescue-service-road-safety-86298781223?msocid=1b58e35a30906c973b40f56031016d19>

Social Media and Helpful Links

Follow us on:

Twitter - [@SuffolkGLI](https://twitter.com/SuffolkGLI) / Twitter

Instagram – https://www.instagram.com/suffolkgli_group/

Facebook - [Suffolk GLI - Green, Liberal Democrat & Independent Group | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/SuffolkGLI)

Website - [Suffolk Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group – The GLI Group at Suffolk County Council \(suffolkgli.wordpress.com\)](https://suffolkgli.wordpress.com)

Cost of Living help and

advice: <https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and

support: <https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>

Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safety-advice-in-the-community/what-to-do-in-a-flood>

<https://suffolkprepared.co.uk/get-prepared/risk-advice/flooding/>

Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>



[Council leaders back 'Suffolk to the Power of Three' option as part of local government reorganisation consultation](#)

Suffolk residents, businesses and local organisations are being urged to take part in a once in a generation opportunity to shape how council services are delivered for their local communities.

The Government's statutory consultation on LGR is now open, but people only have until **11 January** to respond, so we would be grateful for your help in ensuring that your communities are aware.

The consultation seeks views on the two proposals submitted for Suffolk: the Three Councils for Suffolk case submitted jointly by the district and borough councils, and One Suffolk, submitted by Suffolk County Council.

You can find out more on [the Three Councils for Suffolk website](#), including the benefits of our case for businesses, residents, town and parish councils and for the voluntary and community sector.

In addition to our case in full, there are also [Q&As](#) which may help you respond to queries from residents. The site also includes a link to the [One Suffolk website](#) to ensure awareness of both cases.

[Suffolk residents urged to apply quickly for free home energy upgrades](#)

Suffolk residents living in properties which are not energy efficient, could be eligible for funding to make their homes warmer and reduce their energy bills, thanks to Warm Homes Suffolk.

| <u>Upcoming</u> | <u>grant</u> | <u>deadline</u> |
|---|--------------|-----------------|
| The application window for the Community Development Fund will close on 18 January 2026. Up to £10,000 can be applied for to help deliver capital, revenue or pre-project activities. All the information you need can be found on our community funding page . | | |

[Starting 2026 with fully funded training to strengthen local organisations](#)

Community Action Suffolk is offering four fully funded training courses designed to

strengthen the capacity of local organisations and build strength for the future. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have supported this training by making use of the Shared Prosperity Fund. Find all the training sessions on the [Community Action Suffolk website](#).

Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan progress overview

Sustainable Suffolk has shared the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan progress overview, giving an insight into the work done since the plan was published in 2021.

Included within the document is a breakdown of lots of work carried out by partner organisations, which includes our council.

[Visit the Sustainable Suffolk website](#) to find out more, or [read the progress overview document](#).