

## **A Summary for the Boxford Annual Parish Meeting 28 April 2026 8 of the Key Activities for the year 2025 – 2026**

### ➤ **Suffolk County Council brought all 45 libraries back under its care and control.**

The decision, made at the Cabinet meeting, will ensure continued access to high-quality, community-focused library services across the county. As part of this move, the council:

- Kept all 45 libraries open
- Maintained opening hours
- Created job security for all frontline staff
- Secure a sustainable future for Suffolk's library services

In addition to continuing its core library services, the council is investing £200,000 in mobile libraries, with a further £157,000 for new books and to replace public computers in libraries across Suffolk.

### ➤ **£8m funding for Bus Service improvements in March 25**

The funding from the Department of Transport's Local Authority Bus Grant can be used to create new bus services or enhance existing routes.

Following on from previous grants from the Department for Transport to improve bus services, totalling £3.7m of revenue funding between 2023 and 2025, the new grant announced in March comprises of:

- £2,805,076 revenue for delivering new or enhanced services.
- £5,229,805 capital for new and improved bus stops, bus stations, bus priority measures or vehicle upgrades.

### ➤ **In addition Suffolk secured nearly £27 million bus funding over three years in October :**

Millions of pounds of investment is to take place in Suffolk's bus network over three years following allocation of Government funding. Services, ticketing, and infrastructure will all benefit under the package worth nearly £27 million between 2026 and 2029.

Suffolk County Council will receive a total of £26,813,760 under the Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG). This funding will enable the continuation and expansion of new and improved services introduced over the past two years through LABG support and its predecessor, the Bus Services Improvement Grant (BSIP), many of which were shaped by community feedback.

Suffolk will receive:

- 2026/27 - £8,849,119;      • 2027/28 - £8,937,920;      • 2028/29 - £9,026,721

### ➤ **On 2<sup>nd</sup> October, Councillors approved a historic devolution deal, paving the way for major investment for Suffolk**

Suffolk County Council's cabinet has voted in favour of creating a new mayoral authority for Norfolk and Suffolk - which will bring £1 billion to the counties in the next 30 years - following overwhelming support from councillors earlier today (Thursday 2 October).

The investment fund would enable the new mayor to support a wide range of long-term, locally-driven projects that will boost economic growth, improve infrastructure and enhance the quality of life for residents. This could include transport infrastructure, housing and education and skills.

The new mayoral combined county authority (MCCA) would have access to a starting annual investment fund of £37.4 million - funded by the government. This is in addition to devolved funding from Whitehall to deliver public services. Later in the year this was postponed to start from April 2028.

➤ **The Department for Education acknowledges progress - and sets clear expectations for Suffolk's continue SEND improvement.**

In a stocktake visit in January 2026, officers from the DfE reported progress in governance, quality assurance and timeliness, leadership and multi-agency working. They praised a shared commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Development (SEND ) and laid out a number of recommendations for further improvement.

SEND services in Suffolk are delivered in partnership by Suffolk County Council, the NHS Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB, the Suffolk Parent Carer Forum and education settings.

The findings of the stocktake visit were published in a letter to Suffolk County Council, and the North East Essex Integrated Care Board. You can read the letter here:

<https://www.suffolklocaloffer.org.uk/news-and-developments/improving-send-in-suffolk/inspections-and-evaluations>

The DfE also acknowledged work to clear the backlog of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) by January and the fact that plans will be delivered above the national average for timeliness.

➤ **Council remains opposed to pylon projects, as applications have been submitted**

Primarily, the county council maintains that offshore and undergrounding solutions should be priorities for the scheme, not 114 miles of pylons cutting through countryside, sensitive landscapes and communities in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex.

Previously, SCC has formally and strongly requested that National Grid pauses the Norwich to Tilbury proposals, to allow for effective consideration of offshore alternatives.

➤ **The Government has announced the outcome of Local Government Reorganisation in Suffolk**

The government has announced its decision on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Suffolk in 2028, opting for three unitary authorities – despite clear evidence that this is not the best outcome for Suffolk. This is a major milestone in the future of local government in the county and reshapes how councils are structured and how services are delivered across the county.

Each of the three new unitary councils will cover their own new geographical area: West Suffolk, East Suffolk, and South Suffolk and Ipswich.

The creation of three unitary authorities for Suffolk will mean the abolition of all Suffolk's councils:

- Suffolk County Council
- East Suffolk Council
- West Suffolk Council
- Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils
- Ipswich Borough Council

While detailed boundaries are still being finalised, the creation of three unitary councils, **West Suffolk, East Suffolk, and South Suffolk and Ipswich**, means that from May 2028 the new councils will replace the existing councils listed above. Elections for the new shadow authorities will take place in May 2027, with the new councils formally taking over responsibilities from May 2028. This transition period will enable detailed work for reorganisation to take place, and services will be delivered as usual throughout the process.

Additionally, each new authority would be responsible for the delivery of the services previously undertaken by the County Council in their specific area. The new councils would have responsibility for delivering services including waste collection, planning, adult social care, children's services, highways and more.

➤ **Suffolk 2026–2027 budget protects frontline services amid rising costs and demand**

Demand pressures, particularly in adult and children’s social care, are expected to add £32.2 million to the council’s costs next year. As a result, around 77 pence of every £1 the council spends will go directly towards services for people, including public health.

The remaining 23 pence in every £1 will fund all other services, such as fire and rescue, highways and waste management, alongside the staff, infrastructure and technology that support service delivery across the council.

To deliver a balanced budget, councillors approved £46.5 million of savings. These will be achieved through service improvements, more efficient ways of working, and a reduction in employer pension contributions, made possible by the strong performance of the council’s pension fund. This reduction in employer contributions will not reduce employees’ pension benefits.

Councillors also agreed a 4.99% increase in the county council’s share of Council Tax, comprising a 2.99% general increase for county-wide services and a further 2% Adult Social Care Precept to help meet rising care costs.

***For households, this means weekly Council Tax bills will increase by £1.23 to £25.90 for a Band B property – the most common in Suffolk – and by £1.58 to £33.30 for a Band D property.***

Combined with a forecast 1% increase in the taxbase, the Council Tax changes will generate an additional £27.4 million for the council in 2026/27.

Alongside day-to-day spending, councillors approved a revised three-year capital programme, reduced from four years to reflect local government reorganisation planned for 2028. The programme will continue to fund essential projects such as school expansions and infrastructure improvements, while also investing in improvements to bus services, public rights of way, and cycling and walking infrastructure.

**James Finch - 28 April 2026**