

Report for Parish Councils, July 2026

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1. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR):

At an extraordinary Cabinet meeting, Suffolk County Council agreed to continue its legal challenge against the Government's proposal to split the county into three unitary councils. The council argues the decision did not follow due process and notes that official advice had favoured a single authority. The action seeks to ensure a lawful and transparent decision, with concerns raised about potential disruption to services, including countywide services such as SEND, and an estimated £40 million cost to implement the changes.

2. Suffolk County Council supports communities in fight against use of RAF Barnham to house asylum seekers

Suffolk County Council has publicly committed to supporting Barnham and surrounding communities in opposing the Home Office proposal to use the former RAF Barnham site to house around 1,250 asylum seekers. Council leader Michael Hadwen strongly objected, citing concerns about the scale of the proposal, its impact on a small rural village and primary school, and the lack of prior consultation with local authorities and residents. He confirmed the council will work with the Parish Council, school, and local councillors to challenge the plans and continue lobbying the Home Office to abandon the proposal, emphasising that protecting Suffolk's communities is the council's priority.

3. Blast off for an out-of-this-world adventure to the moon

Suffolk Archives is hosting a free, family-friendly summer exhibition, "*The Moon: Meet Our Nearest Neighbour*", at The Hold on the Ipswich waterfront from 26 June to 19 September 2026. The exhibition features interactive displays alongside a programme of activities including planetarium shows, talks, workshops, and community events, combining space science with local history and Suffolk's contribution to astronomy and exploration.

4. Suffolk County Council takes precautionary action following school fire

Following a fire at Sidegate Primary School in Ipswich on 24 June, Suffolk County Council has taken precautionary action by temporarily switching off solar panel systems installed in around 80 schools between 2011 and 2016. While there is no conclusive evidence linking solar panels to this or two previous school fires, they have been identified as a possible factor, prompting a county-wide risk mitigation approach. Engineers will attend affected schools over the coming weeks to isolate systems, with no expected disruption to daily operations, while investigations continue in partnership with Suffolk Fire and Rescue and technical specialists. As your local county councillor, I fully support this precautionary approach to ensure the safety of pupils and staff while the cause of these incidents is properly understood.

5. Local Infrastructure & Energy Projects (NSIPs)

Local authorities quiz government over NSIP reforms at Suffolk conference

Suffolk County Council recently hosted a national conference in Ipswich bringing together councils, government and industry experts to discuss proposed changes to how major infrastructure projects (NSIPs) are planned and delivered. Attendees raised concerns that reforms could reduce the role of local authorities, with a strong emphasis on protecting local accountability and ensuring communities continue to have a voice in decisions affecting their area.

EcoPower Suffolk Solar Project: Suffolk County Council is encouraging residents, businesses and parish councils to take part in EcoPower Suffolk's public consultation for its proposed solar farm and battery energy storage project. This statutory consultation launches Monday 22 June 2026 and closes on

Sunday 16 August 2026. The council's formal response to the consultation will then be considered and agreed at the cabinet meeting on 14 July 2026. Further details about EcoPower Suffolk's proposals, consultation events and how to submit comments before the 16 August 2026 deadline can be found on its website www.ecopowersuffolk.com. Residents should also be aware that they are not legally obligated to sign any licence agreements proposed by EcoPower.

Norwich to Tilbury – Proposed Enabling Works

National Grid has advised that it is progressing its proposed Norwich to Tilbury electricity transmission project, which is currently under examination by the Planning Inspectorate following submission of a Development Consent Order (DCO) application.

As part of this, they intend to submit separate local planning applications to Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils for a number of early “enabling works”, ahead of any main construction should consent be granted. These works have already been included within the overall project proposals and do not introduce any new elements. Within Mid Suffolk, works are proposed at Old Bury Road, including:

- A temporary construction compound south of Old Bury Road
- Improvements to the existing junction

A public comment period is currently open from 16 June to 14 July 2026, ahead of the planning applications being submitted (expected late July). Residents closest to the proposed works have been contacted directly, and the District Councils will carry out a further formal consultation once applications are submitted.

6. Suffolk unites to fight fraud

A new countywide partnership, Suffolk Against Fraud, has been formally launched, bringing together Suffolk Constabulary, Trading Standards, local businesses, charities and community groups to strengthen the collective response to fraud. With fraud now accounting for over 40% of recorded crime in the county, the initiative will focus on enhanced prevention, improved intelligence sharing and more coordinated support for victims. Residents are encouraged to remain vigilant, report suspected incidents promptly, and contact their bank immediately where financial loss has occurred.

7. Suffolk invests £3.6 million in new fire engines to support community safety

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has announced a £3.6 million investment in 11 new frontline fire engines, as part of its ongoing programme to keep emergency response equipment modern and reliable. The new vehicles, designed to respond to a wide range of incidents, are currently being built and will begin arriving at stations across the county between November and December this year. While appliance allocation is determined operationally, this countywide investment will help ensure that communities across Hartismere and wider Mid Suffolk continue to benefit from a safe, efficient, and dependable emergency response when it is needed most.

8. Adult Social Care Update

Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care service has once again been rated “**Good**” by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Inspectors praised the dedication of staff, strong partnership working and effective safeguarding arrangements, while also identifying areas for further improvement, including reducing waiting times and ensuring reviews are consistently person-centred. The council is already taking action to address these recommendations. This is a positive endorsement of the support provided to some of Suffolk's most vulnerable residents and reflects the hard work and commitment of staff and partners across the county.

9. Division Contact and Support

If you have specific issues regarding local county services, school transport allocations, or unresolved highways defects, please contact me with your relevant case reference numbers.

Please get in touch with me if you have questions or comments: Paul.Bains@suffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07889066305