

May - June 2025 Parish Report
East Suffolk Council GLI Group – Councillor Update
Cllr Julia Ewart – Kelsale & Yoxford Ward

Rather a long report!

Local Information

Lots to read and going into the summer months particularly in each of the individual villages. Enjoy! Enjoy! If you wish to let me have your event's details, I will share them around. Don't forget it is the Heveningham Fair imminently.

Might I put a date in you diary please? Sunday 2 November, 10 am -12 noon – a ward litter-pick (yes all 13 villages in the Kelsale & Yoxford Ward) called 'Wrap It & Pack It' for all villages to put the year to bed .. but that's not for now!

East Suffolk Council - HERE For You!

Following a successful series of events last year, East Suffolk officers and councillors will be visiting towns around the district again this summer, chatting to local people about council services and asking how they feel about what we do.

The first event took place in Saxmundham on 14 May, and will be followed by Lowestoft and Kesgrave in June, Beccles in July, Felixstowe and Southwold in August before finishing in Framlingham in September.

Councillors and senior officers will be present to listen to local people and chat about our plans, our services and how we are looking to improve lives and outcomes not only in the towns we visit but throughout East Suffolk.

East Suffolk Council - HERE For You! Come and find us. All events are from 10am until 1pm

11 June - Lowestoft

25 June - Kesgrave

16 July - Beccles

6 August - Felixstowe

27 August - Southwold

24 September - Framlingham

District and Borough Councils' clear message to communities: "Let's shape the future of Suffolk together!"

Suffolk's five district and borough councils are launching a county-wide survey asking people for their views on the future of vital local government services.

The move comes as part of the government's Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) initiative which would see county, district and borough councils replaced and all their services delivered by one or more new unitary councils covering a specific area in the county.

District and borough councils believe that Suffolk would be best served by more than one unitary council. They have submitted their interim report, which sets out the benefits of a multi-unitary model. In a letter sent earlier this month to all Suffolk councils, the government offered clear encouragement for the districts and boroughs to continue developing their proposals.

With this in mind, they are now seeking to further develop the best possible case for a multiple unitary solution in Suffolk, creating councils that are big enough to deliver, but local enough to care; councils that will be efficient and financially sustainable, delivering genuine value for money.

This is the most dramatic change to local government in 50 years, and the Leaders of the borough and district councils are committed to ensuring that every community is involved in shaping the new councils and their services.

As part of the wider engagement work the district and borough councils are carrying out, residents, businesses, community groups and other organisations can now have their say on what is important to them, in the areas in which they live and work.

Encouraging as many Suffolk people as possible to take part, the Leaders of the five district and borough councils, Cllr John Ward, leader of Babergh District Council, Cllr Caroline Topping, leader of East Suffolk Council, Cllr Neil MacDonald, leader of Ipswich Borough Council, Cllr Andy Mellen, leader of Mid Suffolk District Council, and Cllr Cliff Waterman, Leader of West Suffolk Council, said:

“We want to transform public services, so they work for all our citizens and communities, and we want you to help us shape them.

“Suffolk County Council has only one plan – to create a single mega-council, which we believe would be out of touch with communities and residents. It would cover a vast geographical area seeking to save as much money as possible, no matter how perilous the impact on local democracy, the quality of services provided or proper accountability where you live - whether it’s Hadleigh, Sudbury, Bury St Edmunds, Stowmarket, Felixstowe, Lowestoft or Ipswich.

“We can’t let that happen and we want to hear what you think, to understand the challenges and opportunities, and to ensure that all of Suffolk is listened to and properly represented in the generational changes which are taking place.

“We are absolutely certain that a multiple unitary model, with each new council delivering all services to different, recognisable parts of Suffolk, is vital to meet the differing needs of our diverse communities.

“With this in mind, we are greatly encouraged by the government’s recent feedback which makes it absolutely clear that we can make a case for local unitaries focused on meeting the needs of all our communities, embodying a true sense of place and local identity. It also supports our argument to have greater representation in the Mayoral Strategic Authority to ensure local voices are heard from across Suffolk.

“Creating more than one unitary council in Suffolk will ensure strong local leadership and democratic representation, better community engagement, neighbourhood empowerment and more responsive councils. We want more locally targeted, modern and flexible services, to drive better outcomes and value, rather than a basic and unimaginative ‘one size fits all’ option which simply bolts district and borough services on to an old and tired county council system.

“This is a fantastic opportunity to work with communities, service users and organisations to rewire how services are delivered and drive better outcomes to meet local needs. For example, the needs and challenges for people living in Ipswich are different to those in rural Suffolk. For the first time your council will be able to deliver services tailored to meet local needs when previously it was a one size fits all approach that only worked for the few.

“It’s particularly important that we can make a strong financial case for change – not only highlighting how we can deliver savings in the short and medium term, but how we can absolutely guarantee the future sustainability of the services people depend on.”

The survey, which closes on 25 July 2025, can be found at: www.babergh.gov.uk/devolution-and-lgr

Four East Suffolk beaches amongst the best in country

Four of East Suffolk’s beautiful beaches have once again received national awards, ranking them amongst the best in the country.

Environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy has today announced the winners of the prestigious Blue Flag and Seaside Awards for 2025, and once again, four of East Suffolk’s beaches have been selected.

Both Felixstowe (Felixstowe South and Pier) and Southwold (Southwold Pier) have again received combined Seaside Awards and Blue Flags whilst the beaches at Lowestoft South of Claremont Pier (bathing / resort) and Kessingland (non-bathing) have received Seaside Awards, consistent with recent years.

GLI Cllr Sarah Whitelock, East Suffolk’s cabinet member for Communities, Leisure and Tourism said: “We are pleased to once again receive these prestigious awards which highlight all the hard work which goes into maintaining the cleanliness of our beaches and their facilities for the benefit of residents and visitors and helps bring them up to such a high standard. East Suffolk has miles of beautiful coastline, and these awards continue to position our beaches as some of the best in the country.”

Keep Britain Tidy’s Chief Executive, Allison Ogden-Newton OBE said: “In England we are lucky enough to have some of the best beaches in the world. It’s wonderful to see the flags flying proudly over East Suffolk’s beaches, demonstrating their quality to residents and visitors alike.

“Visitors to a beach flying a Blue Flag can be assured the beach will be clean, safe and meet the highest environmental standards.”

The Blue Flag and Seaside Awards are aimed at improving the quality of England’s coastline and promoting the country’s best beaches.

Accessible beach chalets are available to hire at Felixstowe's Seashore Village, as well as traditional beach huts. Each chalet has a kitchenette including sink with hot/cold water and facilities to make your own hot drinks, chairs and tables, electric heating and access to an accessible, Changing Places toilet.

In Lowestoft, beach huts are available to hire throughout the year, from the new Eastern Edge huts or chalet style huts further along the seafront. There is also a range of accessible huts, with a beach boardwalk, beach buggy and Changing Places facilities nearby.

Hire is available at: hirebeachhuts.co.uk

Supporting young people with mental wellbeing

Primary school children across East Suffolk will shortly receive a new resource to help support their mental wellbeing.

Developed by local parent and author Jen Rose, and funded by East Suffolk Council's Community Partnership Board, Me (and My Mind) aims to be a relevant, accessible, and supportive resource for children during a key transitional stage in their lives.

Over the coming weeks, every Year 6 pupil across East Suffolk will receive a copy of Me (and My Mind) – an engaging, interactive colouring journal designed to support young people in beginning to understand and manage their mental health. This unique resource (each with its own pack of colouring pencils) is fully funded by the Community Partnership Board.

The journal offers a fun and creative way to help children explore who they are, understand their emotions, and learn strategies to recognise and manage when they might not be feeling ok. They are designed to complement PHSE lessons in schools and can be used in class, in smaller groups, or individually. They are also suitable to take home and be shared with parents, carers, and family members.

GLI Cllr Sarah Whitelock, East Suffolk's cabinet member for Communities, Culture, Leisure and Tourism said: "The Community Partnership Board together with other public, voluntary and business sector partners work together to find solutions to local issues. With mental health challenges among young people on the rise, this project is a vital step in equipping them with the knowledge and skills to care for their mental wellbeing."

This initiative reflects East Suffolk Council's ongoing commitment to supporting young people's mental health and fostering resilient communities.

Ease the Squeeze on Cost of Living

Are you, or someone you know, worried about the increasing cost of living? We understand the pressures faced by many people today and we are working closely with key partners to ensure support is available to help ease the squeeze for households in East Suffolk.

To make it as easy as possible for you to access the services and support available, locally and nationally, we have gathered information about them in one place:

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/squeeze/

For the most up to date information regarding East Suffolk Council, please visit:

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk

View the Well Minds East Suffolk booklet: tinyurl.com/9xhka624

Annual Report of Activities from ESC

East Suffolk Council has agreed a historic, new approach to recycling collection, and with it, a commitment to greatly improve environmental outcomes for the district.

This will see all households supplied with an additional wheelie bin or other container to separate paper and card from plastics, metal, cartons (including Tetra Pak) and glass bottles

or jars. A weekly food waste collection service was also agreed.

This extra collection service allows the Council to adopt a three-weekly residual waste collection service, rather than the current fortnightly arrangement, without a reduction in the overall combined capacity of household bins.

Working together in response to Government legislation, Suffolk's district and borough authorities - Babergh, East Suffolk, Ipswich, Mid Suffolk and West Suffolk Councils - are all reviewing their waste and recycling services to meet new nationwide 'Simpler Recycling' requirements by 31 March 2026.

In September, East Suffolk hosted the final stage of the Lloyds Bank Tour of Britain for Men. The final stage started in Lowestoft, and residents lined the streets to watch the race as it passed through Beccles, Framlingham, Aldeburgh and many more towns before moving on to Felixstowe for the finish.

Felixstowe also showed wonderful support in the lead up to the final stage with their Love Felixstowe festival, which proved to be a huge success with local residents.

Last summer, East Suffolk Council set up a series of roadshows, in a variety of locations across East Suffolk, aimed at connecting with the local community.

At each location, councillors and senior officers were on hand to listen to any concerns or questions from residents. Residents were also asked to fill out a survey about their local area. The roadshows proved to be a success, with good levels of attendance and plenty of people stopping to speak with us.

The information gathered from the roadshows and survey will help us create better outcomes for our residents and communities and shape the future of East Suffolk.

Last winter, a network of venues offering residents a warm, safe space to socialise over the winter reopened for the third year. East Suffolk Council's Warm Welcomes (formerly Warm Rooms) scheme saw more than 20 libraries, churches and community hubs providing a warm space and an opportunity to connect with other members of the local community. Warm Welcomes provide a safe and welcoming space where residents, including people who may be struggling with the cost of heating their homes, can come to meet with others and access information about additional support available.

Meanwhile, numerous organisations across the district provided fun and enriching activities and food as part of a programme of experiences for children and young people over the Christmas holidays. The HAF programme is overseen by Suffolk County Council and coordinated locally by East Suffolk Council. Holiday activities are varied and can introduce young people to new experiences and skills, from filmmaking to drama and teamwork to problem solving, as well providing opportunities for physical and social activity.

Our innovative new Youth Council entirely comprising young people from across East Suffolk met for the first time this year, ensuring the ideas and concerns of younger people are heard.

In November, 32 young people were elected to the new East Suffolk Youth Council.

Following an induction day on Monday 18 November at which the new Youth Councillors were 'sworn in', the first Youth Council meeting took place at Riverside in Lowestoft on Monday 9 December.

The Youth Council's first motion, saw them call upon East Suffolk Council to devote greater resources and attention to youth safety and well-being. The Youth Councillors emphasised the impacts of social media and the Covid-19 pandemic upon youth, and the need for improved youth activities, services and support.

East Suffolk Council has secured a provisional allocation of £5.9m to help improve the energy performance of social housing as part of the Government's Warm Homes Plan. The Council was named amongst the local authorities and housing associations offered a total of £1.29bn to retrofit properties, across 144 nationwide projects, under the latest wave of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund.

In a report submitted to government on Friday 21 March, Suffolk's five district and borough councils united to present an interim plan which would revitalise local government and put the needs of local communities first.

The Councils said: "Our joint proposal demonstrates that a one size fits all mega authority will not solve the existing issue of large countywide services that will continue to drain money, require improvement and potentially lead to further cost cutting. Crucially, more than one unitary authority is the best way to meet these issues and would ensure strong democratic representation as one would be too remote for residents to be heard. This ensures that services are designed and delivered in a tailored way built on local knowledge to meet the unique need of an area, its residents and businesses. It creates new councils able to deliver both value for money and better outcomes. It is about starting with a blank page and not simply bolting existing council services together. It makes sure the 'local' stays in Local Government for Suffolk."

An innovative new commercial development has opened its doors in the heart of Lowestoft's PowerPark energy hub. Delivered by East Suffolk Council, The Nexus is home to 16 modern business units for office and light industrial uses – positioned at the forefront of the region's renewable energy sector. With allocated on-site EV parking, the site includes units varying in size creating potential for a cluster of clean energy sector businesses and enhancing ongoing investment in the area, with easy access to the Port of Lowestoft, OrbisEnergy and East Coast College's Energy Skills Centre.

A new fund has been established to provide immediate, short-term financial support to East Suffolk communities affected by future emergency events.

Last year, as part of the 2024-25 Budget setting process, East Suffolk Council created a Resilience Reserve in response to the severe disruption caused by Storm Babet. Now, Cabinet members have agreed how this £500,000 pot will be managed, through a newly established Resilience and Emergency Response Fund (RERF).

The RERF is designed to ensure East Suffolk Council can be more flexible and responsive to cover reasonable additional costs incurred by town and parish councils during an emergency event.

In the aftermath of Storm Babet, East Suffolk Council established the East Suffolk Flood Recovery Group, that provided a physical presence in Framlingham and Wickham Market to assist and deal with affected residents enquiries and clean up in the aftermath.

Examples of support that could be provided by the fund include temporary accommodation costs for up to 48 hours, disposal costs for damaged furniture, carpets or flooring, and support for voluntary groups to assist and co-ordinate recovery activities.

East Suffolk Council is supporting the efforts of The Deben Climate Centre to deliver “a radical and ambitious plan to regenerate the Deben River for people and nature”.

The Centre is an expanding coalition of residents, academics, local community groups, charities and organisations which plans to regenerate the River Deben Catchment through widespread community action.

The Centre’s programs to date have focused on testing water quality on the Deben, and several lecture series highlighting the local effects of Climate Change, the global food security crisis, and the startling loss of species and habitats.

Deben Climate founders Professor Peter Hobson and Eamonn O’Nolan said: “Ours is a radical and ambitious plan to regenerate the Deben River for people and nature and it is built on the collective will of a partnership between local people, community environment groups and other key stakeholders such as farmers and land-owners.

“We are thrilled to work with East Suffolk Council, and we recognise that successful projects like this require the support and expertise of skilled Local Government officers and members.”

Plans for a major development which will reinvigorate Lowestoft’s town centre have been given the green light.

The Cultural Quarter project, which when complete will be known as Battery Green, is one of five transformational regeneration projects which received £24.9m from the Government’s Towns Fund in 2022 and will see the redevelopment of East Suffolk Council’s current Customer Services Centre and the former Battery Green multi-storey car park. Designed by Norwich-based architects Chaplin Farrant, the development will provide a new cultural and community hub with studio space for creative businesses together with a leisure complex and restaurant.

The Cultural Quarter project is just one of many regenerative projects underway in the town, with a new seafront complex being built at Jubilee Parade and improvements at Royal Plain, Royal Green and South Quay Wharf.

More than 80,000 people have logged onto free Wi-Fi while visiting East Suffolk towns during the first two years of a project to boost connectivity and business.

The Digital Towns programme was launched by East Suffolk Council in June 2022 to support market towns through the installation of free public Wi-Fi, digital footfall counters and marketing platforms.

As well as more than 80,000 free Wi-Fi users, Digital Towns has attracted 20,000 promotional email subscriptions and logged millions of movements on footfall sensors designed to provide more insight into shopping habits to help towns and businesses

improve the town centre experience.

Subsequently collected data has provided the impetus for new town websites, marketing resources and bids to extend free Wi-Fi zones.

East Suffolk Council has developed a Tree and Hedgerow Strategy, seeking input from residents, community groups, and experts to identify key priorities and requirements for tree and hedgerow planting and management of existing trees across the district.

Currently, forests cover just 12% of land in the UK, whereas Europe's total land area has forest cover comprising 47%. The Tree and Hedgerow Strategy would aim to enable 250,000 trees to be planted across East Suffolk, increasing canopy cover by 1%.

Landowners play the key role in protecting and planting trees and will be invited to suggest spaces suitable for tree planting. Ongoing work to map the tree canopy in East Suffolk will be completed, creating a map of council-owned land where there are opportunities for tree planting and feeding-in to Suffolk's developing 'Local Nature Recovery Strategy'.

East Suffolk Council has pledged to extend its support for town centres with the launch of a new programme designed to foster long-term prosperity and sustainability.

Cabinet members approved an additional revenue budget of £537,000 to support delivery of the new Town Development Programme over three years from this month.

The renewed pledge builds on the work of the East Suffolk Towns Revitalisation Programme in delivering evidence-based actions plans, resources, and grant support for 12 key towns and villages to develop locally identified priorities since 2019. East Suffolk Council secured £900,000 of external funding and invested £270,000 for the programme to support town centres through delivery of covid recovery and resilience assistance, town apps, websites and branding, skills and training, capital improvements, and events development.

Funding of over £400,000 has been agreed to extend a scheme which helps young people in East Suffolk to find employment.

At a meeting of East Suffolk Council's Cabinet on 1 October, additional funding of £420,000 was approved to extend the Youth Employment Service (YES) from April 2025 to March 2028. Additionally, £190,000 in external funding has also been secured from Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS) which will support the creation of an enhanced service to help young people with more challenging needs.

Delivered by Inspire Suffolk on behalf of East Suffolk Council, YES is an innovative project supporting local young people aged between 16 and 24 who are not currently employed or in education to receive job coaching, skills and employment training by providing bespoke online and face-to-face support. It also offers access to other support services and programmes.

East Suffolk Council is investing £1 million in car park infrastructure, including new contactless payment terminals, EV chargers, new cycle racks and signage, as well as introducing a suite of new parking tariffs in the district.

As part of an annual review of its fees and charges, the Council agreed to retain the 30 minutes free parking available in many council-owned car parks and to introduce several new tariffs to reduce congestion at peak times of the year.

To reflect the increased number of visitors coming to the district from further afield during the summer, new seasonal tariffs are being introduced in car parks in popular tourist destinations. Parking fees haven't risen in four years, and over that time the council has carried the cost of inflation. Parking in a council-owned car park still compares favourably with other similar locations, with council-owned car park fees being approximately 20% cheaper than alternative parking options, and our new charges still compare favourably to other tourism destinations and our neighbouring councils.

Other changes include the option to park for longer in short-stay car parks and reduced parking prices in car parks out of town centres to encourage people to park further afield and walk into town.

Contactless payment terminals will be introduced to give drivers more choice when paying for parking. This will be in addition to paying through a parking app or with cash.

East Suffolk Council has pledged more than £64million towards delivering quality key services for residents while continuing to invest in projects for the benefit of local communities.

In February, East Suffolk Council agreed a balanced Budget which allows for vital day-to-day services to be delivered alongside programmes developed to help improve the quality of people's lives.

The annual Budget is set against the framework of a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to ensure effective management of resources and support delivery of the Council's strategic action plan, Our Direction 2028.

More than £64m has been budgeted within the Council's General Fund to pay for services such as planning, leisure, housing and environmental services, waste collection and parking. The Council is committed to securing a balanced budget, not just through setting council tax, but by utilising opportunities to deliver service efficiencies and generate additional income, while maintaining an appropriate level of balances and reserves in case of significant variations or emergencies.

A balanced budget will be achieved for 2025/26 by using reserves, currently estimated at £5.3m. Meanwhile, a council tax premium on second homes, to be introduced from April, could generate around £9m in East Suffolk.

Always feel free to get in touch.

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