

Parish report for the Bungay and Wainford villages Division at the end of January 2026 from County Councillor Judy Cloke.

I have been working hard in the background on projects these last few weeks, despite probably not being very visible. That said I have nothing to report at the moment which is parish specific, so the report below is general information regarding Suffolk in a wider sense.

20MPH zones:

A new 20mph speed limit policy to enhance road safety and improve quality of life across Suffolk's communities has been agreed by county councillors.

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet has backed the proposal to make it easier to reduce the speed limit, where appropriate, in residential and high-pedestrian areas to 20mph.

Under the new scheme any applications for a 20mph limit in an area where recorded average traffic speeds are 28mph or under is likely to be approved.

The scheme was approved by the Cabinet at its meeting on Friday January 9.

It is anticipated that these community led schemes will be locally funded.

As part of the new system Suffolk County Council has developed assessment criteria to consider observed average traffic speeds, the role and character of the road, and the presence of vulnerable road users.

Where average speeds are already low, there will be a presumption in favour of a 20mph limit, often supported by clear signage. Where speeds are higher, additional measures such as traffic calming may be required to ensure good compliance.

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Transport

Strategy, said: "I am delighted this proposed policy has been accepted, it will make a real difference to the quality of life of our communities.

"This update to the 20mph policy reflects a greater demand for lower speed environments where people live.

"It is not a blanket speed-reduction policy, it is simply a more efficient way of introducing a 20mph limit on roads where it is appropriate to do so."

Under the new scheme communities, typically parish or town councils, will be invited to come forward with proposals for 20mph limits, supported by their local county councillor and backed by local engagement. This could include formal surveys or consultation through neighbourhood plans to demonstrate community support.

Assessment criteria will consider observed average traffic speeds, the role and character of the road, and the presence of vulnerable road users. Schemes will still need local funding, as is currently the case, except where they align with existing council programmes as part of the Local Transport Plan.

Under the scheme, areas with recorded speeds of:

- Below 28mph – likely to be accepted, with a speed limit sign only, although signs warning that a 20mph zone is ahead may be required
- Between 28 - 32mph - unlikely to be acceptable with signing alone. Gateway signing and traffic calming throughout the area may be required
- Above 32mph - Unlikely to be acceptable without extensive traffic calming measures such as road humps, plus night-time lighting. It would also be subject to a Road Safety Audit

The new policy will come into immediate effect for all new applications.

Budget:

The Budget is being considered by Full Council on Thursday 12 Feb

Key themes of the draft budget include:

- **Savings and efficiencies:** £46.5 million of savings through service transformation and efficiencies, including a temporary reduction in employer pension contributions, made possible by the strong position of the council's pension fund.
- **Rising financial pressures:** Increasing demand, in particular for adult and children's social care, will add £32.2 million in costs, alongside continued pressures from the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit.
- **Reserves:** A one-off use of reserves will bridge a £5.9 million funding gap, while keeping reserves above the minimum level needed to manage financial risks.
- **Capital investment:** The capital programme has been shortened from four years to three ahead of local government reorganisation in 2028. It continues to fund essential projects like school expansions and infrastructure upgrades, as well as new schemes, such as improvements to bus services, public rights of way, and cycling and walking infrastructure.

"Our priorities are clear: protect frontline services, invest where it will make the most impact, and make the decisions needed to keep Suffolk strong, resilient and ready for the future." said Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council's deputy leader and cabinet member for finance, economic development and skills.

To support these plans, the council has proposed a 4.99% rise in Council Tax, comprising a 2.99% general increase and an extra 2% for adult care. Alongside a forecast 1% rise in the taxbase, this would generate an additional £27.4 million.

For households, this would mean:

- **Band B property:** £25.90 per week, an increase of £1.23 a week (Band B properties are the most common in Suffolk)
- **Band D property:** £33.30 per week, an increase of £1.58 a week.

Improvements in SEND provision:

In a recent stocktake visit, 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 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 Northeast 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 have been published in a letter addressed to Sarah-Jane Smedmor, Executive Director of Children & Young People's Services at Suffolk County Council, and Dr Ed Garratt OBE, Chief Executive Suffolk and Northeast Essex Integrated Care Board. You can read the letter [here](#).

The DfE 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. Officers noted a need to ensure that plans reflect families' views and lead to timely, appropriate support.

However, whilst noting considerable improvement evidenced by data, the DfE emphasised the need to translate activity into measurable impact for families, acknowledging that too many families are yet to feel the benefit of this. It also reported that families still experience frustration, especially around statutory processes and communication, and that some planned activities have yet to start, including work to prepare children for adulthood, but steps for effective action are being developed to address this. Concerns also remain about waiting times and assessment for neurodevelopmental needs.

One Suffolk plans:

Suffolk County Council on 9 Jan 2026 confirmed its formal response to the Government's public consultation on LGR, strongly supporting the One Suffolk plan for a single unitary authority which would save millions and streamline services. The council's Cabinet also agreed on its response to the alternative proposal, highlighting its significant concerns around carving Suffolk into three made up areas. These two consultation responses were submitted to government ahead of its 11 January deadline.

The One Suffolk plan - for a single unitary authority in Suffolk delivering all services locally and county-wide - will save millions and strengthen local services.

Meanwhile the alternative proposal will see Suffolk divided into three new arbitrary areas, cost more than the status quo and put Suffolk's most vulnerable residents at risk.

Ultimately, the decision on the outcome of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) sits with the Government. However, the public consultation seeks to hear from Suffolk residents as well as named consultees from a wide range of sectors.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

"Today's discussion is a pivotal moment in the journey of LGR – and one which will have lasting implications for all of us who live and work in Suffolk. In our consultation responses, we set out clearly and unequivocally why One Suffolk represents the smartest, simplest and best option for local government in this county. It is abundantly clear that One Suffolk is the only financially viable option, delivering improved services for residents while ensuring no adverse impact on our most vulnerable. A single unitary authority gives us the rare opportunity to bring together and harmonise services that make a real difference to our residents and businesses."

"In contrast, our response to the alternative proposal for three unitary councils sets out serious and fundamental concerns. These concerns have been echoed by industry experts across a range of sectors.

“We cannot stand by and allow Suffolk to be carved into three – an outcome that would have serious consequences for the communities that we all represent.”

In recent months the One Suffolk proposal has gained support from community leaders across the county, from sectors including business, health, social care, agriculture and tourism. Additionally, leading think tank Centre for Cities produced its report *Priority Growth: How to reorganise local government in 2026*, which explains how One Suffolk is the best option for supporting economic growth.

The alternative proposal, from Suffolk’s districts and borough councils, will see the county split into three arbitrary council areas, which could put key services such as social care at serious risk and cost millions to set up. By creating three new areas across Suffolk, essential county-wide services like adult social care and children’s services must be disaggregated - resulting in higher costs and a postcode lottery for the county’s most vulnerable residents.

Sizewell C News:

Among the most remarkable discoveries is a high-status grave containing two individuals buried alongside a fully harnessed horse, weapons, and personal items. These finds, dating to the 7th century, suggest the individuals were elite members of Anglo-Saxon society and reflect their complex burial traditions.

The team from Oxford Cotswold Archaeology (OCA), working on behalf of Sizewell C, identified at least 11 burial mounds, known as barrows, along with cremation and inhumation burials. All had been carefully arranged across a prominent point in the landscape near Theberton in Suffolk.

Despite poor bone preservation caused by the local sandy soils, detailed excavation and recording have preserved valuable information about burial practices and social status in early Medieval Suffolk.

Details of the discovery featured in an episode of [Digging for Britain](#) on BBC 2 on Wednesday, 14 January.

Highways rating:

Suffolk County Council has called on the Department for Transport to correct a report it says wrongly labels the authority in the worst category of a new ratings system. The move comes after a meeting with department officials (DfT) on Monday by Councillor Paul West and senior highways officials.

The new system ranks highways authorities using a traffic-light system based on effectiveness in spending the government's highways maintenance funding.

The council says the DfT failed to include in its assessment £10 million of highways funding it brought forward from 2025/26 and invested early in 2024/25. Had this been included, Suffolk would have received an Amber rating for highways expenditure, consistent with its ratings in road condition and best practice, rather than an overall Red.

Judy Cloke 11 Feb 26