

**March '25 report to Bungay and Wainford villages from
County Councillor Judy Cloke**

At the beginning of last month I attended the Councillor 'drop in ' session at Bungay Library. Sadly, no one else did, but I had a very nice chat with a gentleman who had come in to read the newspapers.

I was disappointed with the traffic management during the recent closure of Chaucer Street in Bungay and frustrated with the placing of the 'diversion' signs which were obviously in the wrong place at Cemetery corner. I have complained and I hope the upcoming diversion when the B1062 is closed in Flixton for drainage works will be more effective. The plans at least show the signs in the right places.

At the Cabinet meeting of 18 March, the decision to bring Suffolk's Libraries back 'in house ' was ratified. I know feelings are still running high on this topic but it is disappointing to hear some of the fiction surrounding it. Only this week I was asked by a Bungay shopkeeper 'why is the Library about to close?'. It isn't. I have copied below more information for clarification.

Suffolk County Council has confirmed that it will be bringing all 45 libraries back under its care and control. The decision, made at the Cabinet meeting earlier in March, will ensure continued access to high-quality, community-focused library services across the county. As part of this move, the council plans to:

- **Keep all 45 libraries open**
- **Maintain opening hours**
- **Create 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.

Libraries have long been at the heart of Suffolk's communities. They are essential spaces for learning, connection, and support, and the council is committed to ensuring they remain hubs that bring people together. The focus is on building upon the excellent services already provided, strengthening libraries' role as trusted local resources that meet the evolving needs of residents.

Looking to the future, Suffolk County Council envisions libraries becoming even more integrated into the wider community, serving as convenient access points for a range of essential council services. This includes providing information and support around Adult Social Care, offering health and social care services, facilitating Family Hub activities, and promoting digital inclusion. The aim is to make it easier for residents to

access vital services and support, all within the welcoming, familiar setting of their local library.

Suffolk County Council would like to express its sincere gratitude to Suffolk Libraries, who have run the library contract for the past 12 years. Their passion and hard work have been integral to the success of library services in the county, and the council appreciates all they have done to support local communities. We look forward to welcoming library staff back into the county council and continuing to support them in delivering outstanding services to the public.

We would also like to thank the 1,250 volunteers whose commitment has been essential in delivering high-quality services to residents across Suffolk. As we transition the library service back under council control, we remain fully committed to working with our volunteers. Their invaluable contributions will continue to play a central role in the future of our libraries, and we are excited to explore new opportunities to expand volunteer involvement.

The library service will officially return to Suffolk County Council control on **1st June 2025**.

Local Government reorganisation:

Suffolk County Council's cabinet has approved an interim plan for local government reorganisation in Suffolk which will be submitted to ministers. A full business case will be submitted in September 2025, following extensive engagement with residents, town and parish councils, businesses and local organisations.

- [Local Government Reorganisation in Suffolk - Interim Plan](#)

The key benefits of one council are:

- **Simpler for residents** – one council would make it easier to understand and contact local government
- **Clearer accountability** – there would be less confusion over who is responsible for what
- **Better use of funding** – a more coherent, strategic, financially sustainable, county-wide approach to budgeting
- **Safer services** - less risk of breaking up critical services like social care and better alignment with other agencies like health and the police
- **Better alignment of services** – since everything is under one roof, services can be more easily coordinated, creating opportunities to improve services for residents
- **More efficient decision-making** – with just one council, decisions can be made more quickly
- **Connected to and empowering residents** - providing both the most straightforward and accountable democratic leadership with enhanced neighbourhood and community engagement

- **Stronger leadership** – a single, visible and accountable body providing a clear strategic voice for Suffolk.
- Analysis carried out nationally by the County Council Network has demonstrated that a single unitary council for Suffolk would have a recurring financial benefit of almost £26 million a year – with the net benefit after 5 years being over £103 million. Local analysis of data suggests that the national figures are reasonable.

Cllr Richard Rout, Cabinet member is coming to Bungay Town Council on 14 April to speak about this

SEND Education

The creation of 200 new specialist places across the county for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) was agreed by Cabinet on 1 April

An extra 100 places could open this year, and another 100 new places by September 2026, with future plans being drawn up. These places will be spread across Suffolk and tailored to meet need and demand.

The plan outlines how £18.6million could best be spent to support the growing population of SEND children and young people who need specialist education. Over the last five years, Suffolk pupils accessing special schools and units attached to mainstream schools has increased by over 40%.

The proposal includes £3million to be spent on small groups and units in mainstream schools from September 2025 and £12million to be spent on developing satellite units linked to existing special schools across Suffolk from September 2026. The remaining £3.6million is earmarked for further SEND provision.

In the past five years, 1,025 new specialist SEND places across Suffolk have been agreed.

On top of these new 200 places, future plans will continue to be drawn up. Using the recently published Joint SEND Needs Assessment report, work is underway to create a Joint SEND Sufficiency Plan, written in conjunction with health, social care, inclusion and transport. This will establish how future Department for Education SEND capital money should be spent.

Hundreds of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Suffolk are set to benefit from new government funding.

It has been announced that Suffolk will receive £9,441,348 from the Department for Education to invest in new SEND school places.

Plans will now be drawn up by the Local Area SEND Partnership.

This funding is in addition to the 200 new SEND places that Suffolk County Council's cabinet will discussed on Tuesday 1st of April.

The cabinet papers can be found here: [Read the Cabinet papers.](#)

Suffolk Archives are in line for an award:

The Arrivals: Celebrating Migration to Suffolk exhibition, curated by Suffolk Archives, had been nominated for Community Engagement Programme of the Year at the prestigious 23rd annual Museums + Heritage Awards.

The free exhibition was made possible by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, with Suffolk Archives working closely with community groups to bring it to life.

It explored historical and contemporary migration experiences to Suffolk since the end of World War II. This included oral history recordings, stories of migrant entrepreneurs, and archive materials from the Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality. Visitors learned about Jewish refugees, Polish soldier Marion Laskowski, the Windrush generation, and saw examples of traditional clothing from around the world.

The exhibition also featured a community art installation, The Journey, created in collaboration with local groups, artists, and schools. The installation consisted of 125 birds, made from sustainably sourced plywood, each decorated to represent a unique migration story. The flock is currently on display at The Hold.

Electronic Car Club :

Ten locations across Suffolk will be fitted with electric cars that can be booked out by drivers in the community by the minute, hour or day.

Two cars will be placed at each of the following locations and local residents will receive free membership to the Car Club as well as credit added to their account:

- Ann Street, Ipswich
- Norfolk Road, Ipswich
- Norwich Road, Lowestoft
- Cannon Street, Bury St Edmunds
- Crown Street, Stowmarket
- Castle Street, Woodbridge
- Granary Road, Newmarket
- Station Yard Car Park, Needham Market
- Maiden Way Car Park, Hadleigh
- Girling Street Car Park, Sudbury

With a further location under review for addition to the scheme in Leiston. Visit the [Plug in Suffolk Car Club](#) website to stay up to date with the latest news on the project.

An initial 18-month trial will determine the appetite for a wider scheme across the county so we could see electric community vehicles rolled out to more locations in Suffolk in the future. This innovative project is funded by Suffolk's public sector organisations and managed by Suffolk County Council with additional charge point funding provided by the Department for Transport's On Street Residential ChargePoint Scheme (ORCS).

On the ground, the Car Clubs themselves will be delivered by Co Wheels and the chargepoints provided by Connected Kerb and, for those in their area, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council.

Providing Suffolk residents with access to electric community vehicles is just one part of the wider plan to transform Suffolk into a net zero county. You can find out more about this on the [Green Suffolk website](#).

The EV points at Bungay Community Centre are being replaced also and should be in use soon.

Judy Cloke 4 April 25