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Suffolk County Councillor
Carlford Division

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Parish Newsletter

Update on Westerfield Quarry

Having worked closely with Parish Councils and residents affected by proposed Westerfield Quarry, ever since talk of it first reared its ugly head, I was especially pleased to learn the Suffolk County Council Highways team has recommended that the application is refused on grounds of highways concerns.

At the time of writing, it looks likely that the application will come before Suffolk County Council's Development and Regulation Committee on 1st September 2026 and I will be attending the Committee and speaking against the application, on behalf of the residents and communities who I represent.

Suffolk County Council have confirmed that it will continue to receive and review comments on the application right up until the Committee meeting and further details on the application can be found here: [Planning Register | Suffolk County Council](#)

To find out more, or to join the campaign team to stop the quarry, regular updates can be found at www.stopthequarry.info

Update on Easton and Letheringham Solar

Having worked closely with Parish Councils and residents affected by proposed industrial solar site at Easton and Letheringham, I have continued to work hard in opposing this hideous application. Twice I have gone into writing with East Suffolk Council demanding that they extend their consultation period, raising concerns of lack of transparency and accessibility for residents to have their say on this application.

East Suffolk Council will continue to receive and review comments on the application, so if you haven't yet had the opportunity to review the application and have your say, further details can be found here: [DC/25/2733/FUL | Full planning application for the construction and operation of a Solar Farm \(49.9MW\) and Battery Energy Storage Scheme \(50MW\) with all associated works, equipment, enclosures, access and biodiversity net gains | Parcels To Northwest Of Easton And South West Of Letheringham Suffolk](#)

To find out more, or to join the campaign team to Stop Deben Solar, regular updates can be found at: www.stopdebensolar.co.uk

Suffolk Conservative group questions Reform UK legal challenge to Local Government Reorganisation

The Suffolk Conservative Group has questioned the decision by the new Reform UK administration at Suffolk County Council to pursue a legal challenge against the Government's decision on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Suffolk.

The Leader of the Suffolk Conservative Group, Cllr Richard Rout, has commented:

"This judicial review seems spurious at best, and hiding behind legal privilege is weak. Pre-action protocol letters are not privileged in the way that claim implies. They're a formal, procedural step in contemplated litigation, not protected legal advice. The proof is next door in Essex, where the County Council published its pre-action letter in full, setting out six detailed legal grounds, the case law it relies on, and the specific failures it alleges.

"If Suffolk had a comparable case, there would be no reason not to do the same. Instead, residents are being asked to take it on trust that strong grounds exist, while the actual document, and any genuine scrutiny of whether the challenge has merit, is kept hidden behind a privilege claim that does not stand up. The natural inference is that there is little in the letter that would survive being read in daylight.

"We remain clear that the government made the wrong choice splitting Suffolk into three but throwing good money after bad, particularly when the public consultation seemed to favour three councils, is not the answer. Council staff warned us that there were likely no grounds for challenge prior to the election, and this bland statement seems to confirm that."

As your County Councillor for Carlford Division, I fundamentally disagreed with the Government's decision to proceed with three unitary authorities and I am concerned that many of the villages that I represent to the north of Ipswich will be swept up, without say, into a Greater Ipswich and Felixstowe model. Equally, many of the villages I represent in East Suffolk will also be batched together with Lowestoft, which makes no sense whatsoever. That said, I believe that pursuing legal action is an irresponsible use of taxpayers' money and risked diverting attention from the practical challenges of LGR in Suffolk.

Un-declaring climate emergency is "an empty gesture that achieves nothing for Suffolk"

The Suffolk Conservative Group and other opposition parties have come together to question Reform UK's decision to "un-declare" the climate emergency adopted by Suffolk County Council in 2019, branding it "an empty gesture that achieves nothing for Suffolk" and highlighting that the council's climate programme has cut energy bills by £4.8 million a year while placing Suffolk near the top of the national rankings for emissions reductions. While also pointing out the change to the council's energy tariff would have happened anyway, regardless of the local elections.

Councillor Richard Rout, Leader of the Suffolk Conservative Group, said:

"Reform UK's first instinct in Suffolk is to remove a few words from the minute book. Meanwhile, 11,730 coastal properties are at risk; our coastline is eroding faster than almost anywhere in Europe; and at Thorpeness, families have watched their homes demolished in recent months as the cliffs retreat beneath them. We are one of the driest counties in the country, where our farmers, the breadbasket of England, are already rationing irrigation water and watching their crops hang in the balance. We recorded one of the hottest days in Suffolk's history in the summer of 2022, with railway lines buckling and fields ablaze. You don't have to call it an 'emergency' to take it seriously, but you certainly shouldn't spend your first weeks in office pretending it's less serious than it is.

"I'll be candid: I seconded the 2019 declaration, and with hindsight, the fashion for declaring 'emergencies' was overdone. But if declaring it changed little, un-declaring it changes even less. This is reverse virtue-signalling, a symbolic act dressed up as decisive leadership, achieving precisely nothing.

"Where there is a serious argument about the cost of net zero and arbitrary targets, Suffolk answered it years ago. Our commitment was built on a 'spend to save' basis from the very start: every pound of investment had to pay for itself. The result is annual energy bills that are now £4.8 million lower than they would otherwise have been, emissions from the council's own operations cut by nearly half, and Suffolk ranked among the leading county councils in the country for carbon reductions. There is no waste here for Reform to cut; the programme makes money for the taxpayer. Removing the label doesn't remove that fact; it just throws away the credit.

"And let's be clear about Reform's headline 'saving'. The renewable electricity tariff was a fixed-term contract, always due for review when its term ended. They haven't discovered a saving; they've found a routine review point that was arriving anyway and dressed it up as decisive action, which would have happened irrespective of the local elections.

"By their own test, that a scheme must show clear benefits or real savings, the council's energy efficiency programme, which we refined in January of this year, passes comfortably. So what, precisely, are they cutting? The answer appears to be nothing."

During the Conservative administration, Suffolk County Council focused on practical measures that delivered measurable results. Strategic changes to heating controls at Endeavour House reduced gas consumption by more than 42%, while the council's first solar car park at Beacon House will save over £50,000 a year. Alongside wider

investment in energy efficiency across council buildings, these measures reduced costs, cut emissions, and delivered real benefits for Suffolk residents and taxpayers. Conservatives believe these projects demonstrate that environmental responsibility and savings for taxpayers can go hand in hand.

As your County Councillor for Carlford Division, we know that our villages were some of the worst affected by flooding during Storm Babet and as we can see with the current weather pattern and sustained heatwave here in Suffolk, our climate is most definitely changing. I am therefore concerned by the new administration's blanket decision to simply undeclare the climate emergency without understanding the impact of doing so and I shall continue to do my best to speak up for our rural communities.

New Reform administration accused of 'shutting down democracy' at Suffolk County Council Cabinet Meeting

I am concerned by the decision taken by the new Reform administration's decision to limit democratic scrutiny at Cabinet meetings. At a recent Cabinet meeting where councillors were due to consider significant matters including road improvements and the travel policy for young people over 16 years old.

At the start of the meeting, Cllr Michael Hadwen, Leader of Suffolk County Council, announced that councillors would be restricted to asking only one question on each agenda item. Traditionally, councillors are permitted to ask up to three questions, allowing for meaningful scrutiny, clarification on behalf of residents.

Robust scrutiny is an essential part of local democracy. Restricting councillors' ability to question and challenge decisions on matters of significant public interest reduces transparency and weakens accountability at Suffolk County Council.

The Post-16 Travel Policy Statement for 2026/2027 School Year

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet met to discuss the Council's Post-16 Travel Policy Statement 2026/27.

During the meeting, councillors questioned the Cabinet Member on several aspects of the policy.

Concerns were raised about the low level of public participation in the consultation and questions asked what steps being taken to improve engagement in future. Officers said they are looking at ways to increase participation in consultations and are continuing to explore alternative transport options.

Other issues discussed included changes in family circumstances and whether the Equality Impact Assessment adequately reflects this. Officers explained that the

policy is based on the existing eligibility criteria, including entitlement to free school meals, which are not changing. While individual circumstances may vary, the income threshold and eligibility criteria remain without changes under the current policy.

Perhaps most prudent in the predominantly rural Division of Carlford, concerns were raised about the limited transport options available in rural areas and what support is provided for post-16 students living in those communities. Officers said these issues are reflected in the policy, particularly for students living more than three miles from their place of education. They added that the aim is to ensure suitable transport options are available and that students are directed towards the most appropriate provision.

Suffolk residents deserve transparency over Suffolk County Council's Judicial Review plans

The Conservative Group at Suffolk County Council have called upon the Reform UK administration to provide a full explanation for its decision to pursue a Judicial Review of the Government's decision on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Following pressure from the Conservative Group, an Extraordinary Cabinet meeting was scheduled for 29 June to discuss the proposed legal challenge. However, councillors have not received a clear explanation of the legal grounds for this action, despite the significance of the decision and its potential legal and financial implications for Suffolk residents

The Leader of the Council has decided not to share the correspondence sent to the Secretary of State setting out the Council's intention to pursue a Judicial Review, despite the impact of this decision for Suffolk residents and taxpayers.

Local Government Reorganisation will have a profound effect on the future of Suffolk, and any attempt to challenge the Government's decision through the courts must be subject to proper scrutiny and transparency. This is particularly important given that councillors were previously advised by officers that there appeared to be no grounds for a legal challenge to the Government's decision.

I believe that residents deserve clear answers before public money is committed to what could become a lengthy and costly legal process.

However, the papers for the Extraordinary Cabinet meeting went on to reveal that the decision to take the Government to court over Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) was taken by the Leader of the Council alone, and that legal proceedings were already issued on 24 June, before councillors or the public had any say.

The Cabinet held on 29 June, far from being where the decision was made, was asked only to "note" a decision the Leader has already taken and to agree to continue proceedings that have already begun. The administration also asked Cabinet to declare the decision "urgent" so that it cannot be called in for scrutiny.

The Conservative Group has consistently said that any challenge to the Government's decision must be properly scrutinised and taken in the open. The papers show it was neither.

Councillor Richard Rout, Leader of the Conservative Group at Suffolk County Council, said:

"There is a glaring irony at the heart of this. The Reform administration is taking the Government to court for, in their words, failing to follow a proper and transparent process. Yet they have taken this decision in exactly the way they accuse the Government of behaving - behind closed doors, by one man, before anyone else had a say.

"The papers make it plain. The Leader decided to take action against the Government on his own authority. The claim was filed on 24 June. And only now, after the event, are his fellow councillors being handed the papers and asked to rubber-stamp a decision that has already been taken and acted upon.

A decision of this magnitude, committing the whole county to legal action against the Government, demands openness and proper scrutiny. Instead, it was taken behind closed doors and presented to councillors after the event. The council's own constitution says decisions should be taken with a presumption of openness and transparency.

If this challenge fails the council will have to pay not only its own legal costs but most of the Government's too - and it is being funded by raiding the council's reserves. This is being done completely the wrong way around - you make your case to councillors and the public first, then take a decision on whether to write a huge cheque.

I will continue to work with colleagues to continue to hold the administration to account.

Suffolk County Council received welcome CQC "Good" rating for Adult Social Care

Suffolk County Council has welcomed the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) latest assessment of Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care services, which has once again awarded the service an overall rating of "Good."

The assessment reflects the significant work undertaken by the previous administration to transform Adult Social Care, strengthen services, and ensure they remained sustainable for the future.

Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger, former Cabinet Member for Adult Care at Suffolk County Council and current Deputy Group Leader, said:

"I'm really pleased to see Suffolk receive this recognition from the CQC. I know just how much hard work goes into delivering Adult Social Care, and this report reflects the dedication and professionalism of our staff and partners, who make such a difference to people's lives every day.

"Having served as Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care during the period covered by this inspection, I'm particularly pleased to see the recognition for the focus on

helping people remain independent, the strength of our safeguarding arrangements, and the way services work together.

“The report also highlights areas where we know there’s more to do, particularly around waiting times and support for unpaid carers, and it’s important that the council continues to build on this strong foundation.”

I’d like to add my voice to congratulating Adult Social Care staff and partner organisations on this positive assessment and thank them for their continued dedication to supporting Suffolk residents.

Work on a new Suffolk Minerals and Waste Plan now under way

[The existing Suffolk and Minerals Waste Plan](#) was published in 2020 and is now in the process of being updated.

The plan plays a vital role in supporting economic growth, protecting the environment and ensuring communities continue to benefit from well-planned development.

The first stage of work on a new plan is a [‘call for sites’ survey](#) which is now open and closes on 27 July 2026.

It invites landowners, operators and others to suggest possible sites. This helps the county council understand what land is available and where development could take place, before any decisions are made.

Once adopted, the new plan will set out how Suffolk will provide for a steady and adequate supply of minerals - such as sand and gravel - alongside identifying the infrastructure needed to manage waste.

However, there are a number of stages to go through, including further public consultations and Examination, before the new plan is formally adopted - which is expected to be in late 2029.

[Find out more about the new Suffolk Minerals and Waste Plan and make a submission to the ‘call for sites’.](#)

Surface dressing season for Suffolk's roads gets underway

New ways of working will be trialled as Suffolk Highways launches its annual surface dressing programme to help maintain and improve roads across the county.

During the 2026 season, running from this week to August 8, 759,000 square metres of road – equivalent to 106 full-size football pitches - will be treated, delivering safer, longer-lasting surfaces for residents, businesses and visitors.

Surface dressing is a fast, efficient and sustainable way to maintain roads. It seals the surface, restores skid resistance and protects against water damage, helping extend road life and reduce the need for more costly repairs.

This year will also see new innovations introduced:

- Variable Message Signs (VMS) at busier sites, providing advance warning and live updates
- A new product called Lockchip will be trialled on nine sites across Suffolk, helping to seal down the new surface and reduce loose chippings.

Residents can support the works by moving vehicles from affected areas in advance, helping teams complete the programme quickly and efficiently.

Surface dressing is significantly quicker than full resurfacing, reducing disruption for road users.

Before work begins, targeted patch repairs are completed to ensure the surface is fit for treatment.

The road is then fully cleaned before a layer of bitumen is applied, followed by stone chippings which are rolled in to create a durable surface.

The process is completed with further sweeps to remove loose material and ensure safety for road users.

Drivers should take extra care going through sites and keep speeds down to protect both their vehicles and the workforce.

Residents are advised to avoid newly treated surfaces until instructed and to check footwear if walking on it is unavoidable.

Businesses will remain open throughout the works and pedestrian access will be maintained wherever feasible.

Suffolk Highways also reminds residents to stay alert to scams - neither the organisation nor its contractors will offer to carry out private driveway or property works.

Suspicious cold callers can be reported to Citizens Advice on 0808 223 1133.

Information boards will be placed at the ends of affected roads, and more details can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/surfacedressing.

For further enquiries, contact Suffolk Highways at customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk or call 0345 606 6171 (Monday–Friday, 8:30am–5:30pm).

Suffolk businesses to benefit from expanded apprenticeship support scheme

Staff and businesses in Suffolk are set to benefit from new apprenticeship opportunities, with extra support now available to help employers recruit and upskill their workforce.

The expanded Levy Support Scheme allows large employers which pay the apprenticeship levy to transfer levy funds to other businesses. This reduces or removes apprenticeship training costs - opening the door to new recruitment and training opportunities.

Suffolk County Council is working in partnership with Apprenticeships Norfolk to build on the proven success of their Levy Support Scheme, which has seen more than £6 million transferred to over 280 businesses, supporting nearly 660 apprenticeship starts across Norfolk.

Funding being pledged by employers will directly support local economic growth and strengthen supply chains, helping employers invest in the local skills they need.

The scheme is backed by Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, local further and higher education providers, and a wide network of employers committed to strengthening the county's skills pipeline.

Several major employers, including East Coast College and Suffolk County Council, have already pledged or are in the process of pledging unused levy funding as part of the scheme.

Micro-businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), who make up the majority of Suffolk's economy, stand to benefit the most, with levy transfers helping to remove financial barriers to training.

The funding will help staff take on higher-level training and gain professional qualifications that might otherwise have been out of reach.

Employers benefiting from the Norfolk scheme report that this has strengthened skills within their teams and improved staff retention.

Businesses interested in pledging unused levy funding can find further information through the Levy Support Scheme on the [Apprenticeships Norfolk website](#).

Suffolk businesses seeking advice on apprenticeships and skills support can contact the Apprenticeships Suffolk Team at apprenticeships@suffolk.gov.uk