

## SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – NOVEMBER 2025



### *Cllr Stephen Burroughes - Framlingham Division*

#### • SUFFOLK BUSINESS BOARD BACKS DEVOLUTION

The letter outlines the Board's strong belief that devolution will empower local leadership, attract significant investment and drive economic growth across the region. Suffolk's £21 billion economy is among the best-connected in the UK, home to globally recognised businesses and thousands of ambitious enterprises. The Suffolk Business Board, comprising leaders from key sectors across the region, is spearheading a new economic strategy aimed at accelerating inward investment, job creation and skills development.

The letter states:

"The ambitions and opportunities business can deliver needs the active support of a streamlined governance structure that can help create the conditions for growth. Which is why, as local business leaders, we endorse the proposal to create a Mayoral Combined County Authority across Norfolk and Suffolk – a transformative opportunity to unlock growth, give more power and decision-making authority to local people and shape a more prosperous future for our region."

The letter highlights the benefits of devolution, including local decision-making, guaranteed long-term funding and greater influence at the national level.

"Devolution means decisions made closer to home, by people who understand our local strengths, challenges and ambitions and want to help make things happen. It offers the opportunity to create high-quality jobs, attract long-term investment – including for vital improvements to infrastructure – and transform the delivery of public services in a way that reflects Suffolk's unique character and needs."

The Suffolk Business Board stresses that a directly elected mayor would provide strategic leadership and accountability to deliver on key priorities such as regenerating Ipswich, expanding clean energy innovation in East Suffolk, and growing the region's digital and technology sectors.

The letter also underscores the successful track record of collaboration between Suffolk and Norfolk, which has already attracted over £1.3 billion in investment and created and safeguarded more than 15,300 new jobs in recent years.

#### • COUNCILLORS APPROVE HISTORIC DEVOLUTION DEAL.

Suffolk County Council's cabinet has voted in favour of creating a new mayoral authority for Norfolk and Suffolk - which will bring £1 billion to the counties in the next 30 years - following overwhelming support from councillors. The new mayoral combined county authority (MCCA) would have access to a starting annual investment fund of £37.4 million - funded by the government. This is in addition to devolved funding from Whitehall to deliver public services.

The investment fund would enable the new mayor to support a wide range of long-term, locally-driven projects that will boost economic growth, improve infrastructure and enhance the quality of life for residents. This could include transport infrastructure, housing and education and skills.

The proposal to establish an MCCA received overwhelming backing by councillors at the full council meeting – with 98% voting in favour of the motion. In the future, Suffolk and Norfolk will be able to access multi-year,

cross government funding that would enhance the investment fund and enable better tailoring of that money to benefit local needs and opportunities.

Earlier this week the Suffolk Business Board gave its endorsement to the proposal to create an MCCA, calling it a 'transformative opportunity to unlock growth'. The Business Board, comprising leaders from key sectors across the region, is spearheading a new economic strategy aimed at accelerating inward investment, job creation and skills development.

Suffolk is one of six areas on the devolution priority programme. Alongside local government reorganisation, devolution will bring in the biggest change to local government for over 50 years.

#### • **OFSTED FINDS 'EARLY SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT' IN FRONT DOOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

The report, which noted 'early signs of improvement beginning to emerge' found:

- Children identified as at risk of harm receive prompt and appropriate responses with strong oversight and swift multi-agency collaboration
- Clear investment and support from the whole council for children's services
- High staff morale, stable workforce, strong peer and managerial support maintaining consistency for families despite leadership changes

The report also highlighted the following areas for improvement:

- Monitoring systems need to more reliably flag delays and support effective management decision-making
- More consistency in professional curiosity and threshold decisions needed
- Better recognition and response needed to patterns of concern when multiple or repeated requests are made for the same families

Since the ILACS report in August 2024, which found that the authority's children's services 'Require Improvement to be Good', Suffolk County Council's children's services have been on a transformation journey. The letter notes that leaders have 'Strengthened Oversight' of the service as a whole. This was a key area for development from the ILACS report, which is now considered a strength.

Work has also begun on an 'Integrated Front Door' for the service, which aims to provide a single, central point of contact for all children's social care and early help services. Information about children coming into the Local Authority will be centralised to enable swift, safe and consistent decision making. These changes will enable the service to consider children's holistic needs in order to make decisions about who and how is best to provide support to them and their families.

Practice Managers from Targeted Early Help services (Family Support) have recently joined the service's Integrated Front Door, Ofsted noted that 'The recent involvement of Family Support Practice Managers in Front Door services is a strength. Their oversight promotes consistent threshold decisions and enables prompt transition to and from Early Help.'

#### • **1,000-YEAR-OLD SIZEWELL SILVER COIN HOARD STAYING IN ITS SUFFOLK HOME**

Oxford Cotswold Archaeology carried out excavation works near the site of the future nuclear power station and discovered the lead and cloth package containing the mint condition coins. The donation to SCCAS from Sizewell C, means that the find will be curated for posterity in its home county and will be made available to researchers of all levels. Local and national museums can also apply for a short-term loan, so that as many people as possible can see it in the future.

The hoard features coins minted between 1036 and 1044 during the reigns of Harold I, Edward the Confessor, and the lesser known Harthacnut. Though a large proportion of the coins were minted in London, many coins were struck at other locations, including Thetford, Norwich, Ipswich, Lincoln and Stamford.

Affectionately known as 'the pasty' - for its visual likeness to a Cornish pasty - it is speculated that it was the savings pot of a local figure, who buried it as a precaution in the face of the social and political upheaval of the 11th century. The silver coin hoard is currently undergoing further conservation and research by specialists.

There is also a series of webinars being delivered by Oxford Cotswold Archaeology over the autumn and winter, to present findings from the ongoing excavations.

- **SUFFOLK RESIDENTS SAFER THAN EVER THANKS TO 70% INCREASE IN HOME FIRE SAFETY VISITS**

This increase in tailored fire safety advice and support came as Candle Fire Safety Week (20–26 October) coincides with Diwali, the Festival of Lights on 20 October, celebrated by Hindu, Sikh, and Jain communities, when homes are illuminated with candles and oil lamps (diyas). The timing served as a timely reminder of the importance of fire safety, particularly when using open flames in the home.

### **Preventing fires, protecting lives**

Despite being one of the smallest fire prevention teams in the country, the SFRS Prevention Team, led by Group Manager Lee Wilkins, has transformed home fire safety delivery across Suffolk.

The growth in HFSVs reflects improvements in working practices, stronger community engagement, staff training, and targeted support for vulnerable residents, ensuring help reaches those most at risk.

"Our focus is always on protecting residents where the risk of harm from fire is greatest – in their homes," said Lee Wilkins, Head of Prevention. "Every visit and educational session increases the likelihood that domestic fires can be prevented.

He continued: "With nearly 850 accidental fires each year across England started by candles, this week is a perfect opportunity to remind everyone to take simple precautions. Keep candles and oil lamps (diyas) away from flammable materials such as curtains, decorations and soft furnishings, place them on stable surfaces out of reach of children and pets, never leave them unattended, ensure they are properly extinguished, and make sure smoke alarms are installed and working."

### **Children and young people at heightened risk**

Children and young people are particularly vulnerable in domestic fires. According to the Home Office, over 350 children under the age of 11 are injured and seven are killed in accidental fires in the home each year. <sup>1</sup>

Many of these incidents result from the accidental misuse of equipment or open flames, highlighting the need for targeted education and preventative measures.

To address this, the Prevention Team delivers the SPARK programme, designed by the Service's Youth Education and Development Manager, Claire Watkins. The programme provides fire safety advice tailored to each Key Stage, ensuring it is both age-appropriate and engaging.

Schools are selected based on local fire and safety incident data and the needs of communities facing higher levels of risk, ensuring that safety messages reach children and young people aged 4–19 who need them most.

Since its launch in September 2024, SPARK has already been delivered to over 5,700 children and young people in the 2024–25 academic year alone - an **850%** increase compared with previous years.

### **Protecting the county's most vulnerable residents**

For Suffolk residents, individuals who qualify for a Home Fire Safety Visit (HFSV) are visited by a specialist practitioner or operational firefighters who will help create a tailored home fire safety plan. Those deemed most at risk also receive free smoke alarms or specialist equipment.

This includes the elderly, individuals with hearing or sight impairments, those with limited mobility, and people living with dementia, who may have a reduced ability to respond quickly to fire hazards.

A study published in the *Journal of Fire Sciences* found that fire injury risk increases with age, being more common in older individuals. <sup>2</sup> This is supported by data from the Home Office, published in 2024, which reported that in the year ending March 2024, 37% of all fire-related fatalities in England occurred among people aged 65 years and over, with a fatality rate of 10.9 per million for those aged 80 and over compared with 4.2 per million for the general population. <sup>3</sup>

Factors contributing to this elevated risk include physical frailty, cognitive impairments, and the use of medications affecting alertness and mobility. <sup>4</sup>

To help identify the most vulnerable in the community, the team has integrated with Safelincs, an online platform that allows residents or their carers to complete a virtual home fire safety check.

Based on the data entered, the platform alerts the Prevention Team to those considered most vulnerable and at higher risk. This approach ensures fire safety support reaches as many people as possible while prioritising additional resources for those who need it most. People deemed as low risk will still receive a bespoke Home Fire Action Plan.

### **Recognition and award success**

The team's achievements were recognised earlier this month with a Cabinet Member Award for Team Achievement, which was presented to them at this year's Service Awards.

### **• MAPPING PROJECT REACHES MAJOR DIGITAL MILESTONE**

Suffolk County Council has reached a major digital milestone in putting the county on the map. It has completed the Definitive Map and Statement (DM&S) consolidation project, using modern background mapping to prepare the updated legal record of public rights of way (PROW) such as footpaths, bridleways, and byways in Suffolk.

The consolidation project is the process of preparing a new digital DM&S that incorporates all legal changes since the previous issue. Moving away from hand-drawn maps and written notes, the council has created new versions of the maps from a digital database using specialist software against Ordnance Survey Mastermap base mapping. It has involved checking and digitising more than 10,500 individual routes across the county, ensuring they reflect the effects of more than 2,600 legal orders, including complex public path order packages.

This ensures that Suffolk's PROW network — which extends across thousands of miles of countryside — is properly recorded and accessible for generations to come. The updated Definitive Maps are clearer and easier to interpret and working from a digital database makes it easier to share data with a wide range of partners, including user groups, councils, developers, the National Trust, Natural England, and the Forestry Commission. Working copies of the maps are available for the public to view and download from the [Rights of Way and Access pages](#) of the Suffolk County Council website.

The second phase of the project will now commence, establishing a rolling programme of consolidation to incorporate future legal changes and addressing mismatches between the Definitive Map parish boundaries and current administrative boundaries. Suffolk's first DM&S was produced in the 1950s and was divided into 19 former rural and urban districts. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 now places a statutory duty on

councils to continually review the legal record of rights of way. The first consolidated map was completed for Ipswich in 2009.

- **SUFFOLK CELEBRATES FIVE YEARS OF INVESTMENT IN THE NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK**

Suffolk County Council is proud to mark five years of dedicated investment in the National Cycle Network – a key part of the county’s infrastructure supporting safer, greener, and more accessible travel for all.

In that time Suffolk County Council has secured more than £5 million to enhance the network across the county. This work has been delivered in partnership with Walk Wheel and Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans), the national charity responsible for maintaining and developing the Network. Together, they have delivered improvements in signage, route safety, and connectivity - helping thousands of residents and visitors walk, wheel, and cycle more confidently and more often.

Key areas of improvement include routes from Ipswich Hospital to the Waterfront area, Nacton Road in Ipswich, Main Road in Martlesham, and areas within Woodbridge as part of the town’s active travel project.

The Network plays a crucial role in connecting Suffolk’s towns, villages, and countryside — linking historic market towns, scenic coastal paths, and rural communities. It not only offers a low-carbon transport alternative but also encourages healthier, more active lifestyles.

Looking to the future, Suffolk County Council is excited to announce proposals for two pilot Quietways - low-traffic rural routes designed to form part of the Network and provide an even more comfortable and attractive experience for people choosing active travel. These Quietways, funded by Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, via Active Travel England are currently being explored between Carlton Colville and Barnby, and Onehouse to Woolpit.

**Cllr Stephen Burroughes**

*County Councillor for the Framlingham Division*

*Suffolk County Council*