

County Council report – July 2025

Suffolk Libraries to Become Suffolk Community Libraries from 1 June

The service will continue to operate as usual, with no changes for library users and all 45 libraries will remain open.

This ensures the council can continue delivering library services in a sustainable way, strengthening the role libraries play across Suffolk's communities.

Councillor Philip Faircloth-Mutton, Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality, said:

"This move is not just about preserving the service we have; it's about making libraries even more integral to the services we offer. While they already provide excellent spaces for reading and community engagement, we want to expand their role and ensure they become vital access points for a wide range of public services.

"We're incredibly grateful to Suffolk Libraries and all their dedicated staff for everything they've done, and for working closely with us to ensure a smooth transition. We value their expertise and passion, and we look forward to working with them as they become Suffolk County Council staff."

Suffolk County Council extends its sincere thanks to everyone involved in the transition and looks forward to this new chapter for library services in Suffolk.

For more information, please visit www.suffolkcommunitylibraries.co.uk

Council reorganisation affects us all - so have your say today

A new survey giving residents the opportunity to shape the future of councils and public services in Suffolk has been launched.

It's part of the Government plan to reshape and streamline councils in Suffolk to save money, reduce confusion and improve public services for residents.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for devolution, local government reform and NSIPs, said: "It's well known that we strongly believe that replacing Suffolk's six local authorities with a single new council would be smarter, simpler and better for our county.

"We've arrived where we have because early figures show it's the only way to save money, improve services and keep your council tax as low as possible.

"But that doesn't mean our proposal is the finished product. We want our plan to

improve residents' connection with their local council and we'd like their help to ensure that's the case.

“A key part of this work is finding out what people think about the state of local government in Suffolk – and what their hopes are for the future.

"After all, it's their council tax and services so what they think is vitally important.

“This survey will help us to develop our plan so that we can be confident it addresses the issues that matter most to you. I'd therefore encourage all Suffolk residents to take a moment to have their say.”

The survey only takes about 10 minutes to complete, and can be done online at www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution, by emailing devolution@suffolk.gov.uk or by calling 0345 603 1842 where a member of Suffolk County Council's customer services team can help residents to complete the survey.

People can also visit any of Suffolk's 45 libraries to complete the survey online.

It asks questions about local democracy – such as how you raise issues that need addressing, local decision making – such as how you might want to get involved and about the specifics of council reorganisation itself.

The survey is open for eight weeks – until 4 August 2025.

The survey will play a part in helping Suffolk County Council to develop a comprehensive business plan that looks at the best way to organise councils and deliver public services in Suffolk – so that the Government has all the information it needs to decide which proposal(s) to put out to public consultation.

From best practice elsewhere in the country to the costs of various options currently on the table, no stone is being left unturned.

Whilst a final proposal is still to be developed, Suffolk County Council believes that a new single local council is the smartest, simplest, and best option for the whole of Suffolk which will deliver the biggest savings and most sustainable service improvements.

The council argues that any alternatives will have to work hard to justify the risks of breaking up critical services like social care, creating new council boundaries and smaller population sizes.

Early analysis by financial consultants PwC suggests that establishing a single new local council could cost around £19 million but that this could be repaid quickest through the significant financial savings achieved by having one council.

Alternatively, the cost of breaking Suffolk into two or even three – as proposed by Suffolk's district and borough councils - would cost £7 million to £13 million more and, in the case of three new councils, that investment would never be repaid as there would be no savings to be found.

Councillor Rout said: “If we want our new structure to retain key local services and to be truly accessible, then the new council or councils needs to be able to afford to do so.

“Breaking Suffolk up would place such financial pressure on new councils that those small, discretionary local services we all value would be at risk from day one.

“To create a truly sustainable and effective council structure for Suffolk, one new council is not just the only viable option, but also the best one.”

Suffolk challenges Government on Planning reform at a National Infrastructure Conference

The Council and other speakers raised concerns that proposed changes to the NSIP regime were not suitably robust to manage the significant changes which NSIPs can bring to host communities, particularly with the proposed replacement of a statutory duty for pre-submission consultation with statutory guidance.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs, said:

“I’m proud that Suffolk County Council continues to lead the way with its NSIP expertise and influence and can bring together colleagues and speakers from around the country. “Suffolk has one of the greatest concentrations of NSIPs in the UK, and for me it’s important to ensure that local communities are considered first-and-foremost by local authorities, project promoters and government. “Today there were some robust discussions around government’s proposals to scrap the statutory duty to consult for NSIPs. “This is something that the county council fundamentally disagrees with - our communities need more and better consultation, not less. “We welcome any opportunity to further engage with Government to share our expertise as to what meaningful engagement should look like.”

The conference further cements Suffolk County Council’s recognised role as a Centre of Excellence for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) for its expertise when engaging with projects, such as Sizewell C, the Gull Wing, National Grid upgrades, solar farms and offshore wind farms.

£8m funding for Bus Service improvements

The funding from the Department of Transport’s Local Authority Bus Grant can be used to create new bus services or enhance existing routes.

Following on from previous grants from the Department for Transport to improve bus services, totalling £3.7m of revenue funding between 2023 and 2025, the new grant which has been allocated for 2025/26 comprises of:

- £2,805,076 revenue for delivering new or enhanced services.
- £5,229,805 capital for new and improved bus stops, bus stations, bus priority measures or vehicle upgrades.

This money will enable Suffolk County Council to invest up to £5 million in capital projects to increase bus priority on congested streets, make improvements to bus stops and gain a better understanding of the journeys people are taking, paving the way for more innovative fare offers in the future. The council also plans to upgrade the current Real Time Passenger Information system, giving live updates on when buses will arrive at stops across the county.

The remaining £2.8 million will be spent supporting the existing services on the county's bus network and working with bus companies to finalise several route improvements and new services, set to launch later this year.

The previous funding has created and enhanced more than 15 routes across the county, through the council's Bus Service Improvement Programme (BSIP). These included the first Sunday and evening service between Sudbury and Bury St Edmunds for more than 20 years and direct links from Haverhill and Mildenhall to the West Suffolk Hospital.

Successful bids will be contacted in the coming days with new and enhanced services coming online later this year.

A full list of enhanced and new services funded with the previous BSIP funding can be found at: [Bus Service Improvement Plan - Suffolkonboard](#) including videos from services who received BSIP round 1 funding.

Details of successful bids for the latest round of funding will be posted on Suffolk On Board.