

BAWDSEY PARISH COUNCIL
SCC NEWSLETTER
FEBRUARY 2026

Applications open for new Suffolk Business Board members

Suffolk County Council is inviting applications from experienced and influential local business people to join the Suffolk Business Board, which was established in 2024 to help drive economic growth across the county.

The board meets 6 times a year to help shape economic strategy and priorities for Suffolk, oversee delivery of funded programmes such as business support and skills training, and work closely with partners such as district councils, neighbouring counties and national economic and trade bodies.

Existing [Suffolk Business Board members](#) include a strong core of local business leaders alongside representatives from education and key strategic partners. New members will be joining a dynamic and proactive group, with the opportunity to immediately begin contributing to Suffolk's economic development.

The recruitment comes at a key time, as the Business Board moves into its next phase of delivery, focusing on the investment and long-term economic priorities that will shape Suffolk for years to come.

Expressions of interest should be emailed to businessboard@suffolk.gov.uk by Monday 23 February with a short biography or CV and a brief cover letter outlining your interest in the opportunity and what area(s) of expertise you feel you could bring.

Board membership is a voluntary position, and terms are for up to three years from the date of appointment. The Business Board is supported by a dedicated team of council officers. Applications would be welcome from candidates with backgrounds in the key sectors as identified in the Local Growth Plan, including Agrifood, Clean Energy, Visitor Economy and Advanced Manufacturing.

The new members will fill two vacancies that result from existing board members coming to the end of their terms.

Suffolk County Council's chief executive to step down

Nicola Beach will leave at the end of March 2026.

Reflecting on her decision, Nicola said:

“Serving the people of Suffolk has been a great privilege and I am immensely proud of what has been achieved together over the last eight years.

“Leaving this job has not been an easy decision, and I have thought long and hard about it. However, I believe this is the right time to hand over leadership to those who can steer and support colleagues through local government reorganisation over the next two years, whatever option the Government decides to implement.

“I would like to thank all of my colleagues, Matthew and his Cabinet and all councillors for their support and I wish them the very best for the future.

“I do not have another role lined up – I am simply looking forward to a new change of pace and lifestyle, enjoying this wonderful county and taking time to travel and see family and friends.”

Amongst her achievements, Nicola has:

- Managed a budget of £850 million and led the authority's 6,294 staff, significantly improving the council's culture
- Negotiated local government reorganisation and created the legacy for lasting stability during the next phase
- Transformed adult social care and ensured the improvement in children's and young people's services
- Led the council and partnership response through the Covid pandemic
- Opened Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's new control room and ongoing improvements across the service
- Strengthened emergency planning and response, particularly during Storm Babet
- Opened the £146 million Gull Wing bridge in Lowestoft
- Brought the library service back in house

Nicola joined Suffolk County Council in May 2018 from Essex County Council, where she was director of infrastructure and environment. Previously she was chief executive of Braintree District Council.

Nicola's last day will be March 31st having completed her three months' notice period. She handed her notice in before Christmas, but it was agreed to hold the announcement until some important milestones had passed, including the closure of the LGR consultation.

Norwich to Tilbury pylon scheme is ‘un-coordinated decimation of our county’

The first Open Floor Hearing took place Tuesday 10 February in Ipswich, as an opportunity for interested parties to present their views in person to the Examination panel.

Councillor Richard Rout spoke on behalf of Suffolk County Council, citing a number of long-standing and unresolved objections as to why the council believes the current project proposal should not go ahead. These include:

- The lack of alternative proposals provided by National Grid
- Insufficient clarity on the need for a connection date of 2031
- Concern over working hours to include weekends and bank holidays
- Extensive tree loss and environmental impacts
- The need to protect and enhance the Dedham Vale national landscape
- The need for compensation measures in the Waveney Valley
- Higher quality and more robust outline management plans

The Examination stage is expected to take up to six months.

Council budget protects frontline services amid rising costs and demand

Demand pressures, particularly in adult and children’s social care, are expected to add £32.2 million to the council’s costs next year. As a result, around 77 pence of every £1 the council spends will go directly towards services for people, including public health.

The remaining 23 pence in every £1 will fund all other services, such as fire and rescue, highways and waste management, alongside the staff, infrastructure and technology that support service delivery across the council.

To deliver a balanced budget, councillors approved £46.5 million of savings. These will be achieved through service improvements, more efficient ways of working, and a reduction in employer pension contributions, made possible by the strong performance of the council’s pension fund. This reduction in employer contributions will not reduce employees’ pension benefits.

Councillors also agreed a 4.99% increase in the county council’s share of Council Tax, comprising a 2.99% general increase for county-wide services and a further 2% Adult Social Care Precept to help meet rising care costs.

For households, this means weekly Council Tax bills will increase by £1.23 to £25.90 for a Band B property – the most common in Suffolk – and by £1.58 to £33.30 for a Band D property.

Combined with a forecast 1% increase in the taxbase, the Council Tax changes will generate an additional £27.4 million for the council in 2026/27.

Alongside day-to-day spending, councillors approved a revised three-year capital programme, reduced from four years to reflect local government reorganisation planned for 2028. The programme will continue to fund essential projects such as school expansions and infrastructure improvements, while also investing in improvements to bus services, public rights of way, and cycling and walking infrastructure.

Councillors approved the budget at their meeting on Thursday 12 February 2026, following Scrutiny's examination of the proposals on 13 January and Cabinet's decision on 27 January to bring them to Full Council for approval.

The meeting can be watched back on [the council's YouTube channel](#). The budget papers can be viewed at committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk.

New SEND school and centre of excellence to be built in Bury St Edmunds

Run by Eastern Education Group and funded by the Department for Education, the school in Glastonbury Road will provide 90 places for students aged 14 to 19-years-old with special educational needs and disabilities

In a first for Suffolk, the new school will also become a centre of excellence and hub for SEND guidance, offering expertise to mainstream schools. Examples of this approach include providing outreach staff to work with mainstream schools and offering specialist expertise and training opportunities.

This hub model is increasingly encouraged by the Department for Education and is reflected in guidance from Ofsted around inclusive practice and system leadership. It launches Suffolk County Council's ambition to implement this model across the county with a number of other education settings.

This news comes just a week after it was announced that Suffolk County Council and Unity Schools Partnership will open a new SEND school in Saxmundham for 126 students with severe learning difficulties.

Both new provisions have been agreed by Suffolk County Council in line with its SEND sufficiency plans, which outline how specialist provision should be delivered across the county.

This new special school in Bury St Edmunds will share a site with Chalk Hill School special school which is due to open in Easter 2026. Chalk Hill will occupy the former Horringer Middle School building, while the second school will be built by the Department for Education on a field on the site. Eastern Education Group will run both schools.

Trial scheme to remove vehicles blocking road resurfacing work to begin

Suffolk County Council is to launch a trial scheme to remove vehicles that are blocking highways resurfacing work.

The move comes following repeated issues with vehicles across Suffolk that have been left in roads where works are scheduled, despite advance warnings they were due to take place.

This has led to the cancellation of entire resurfacing works or small areas being left where vehicle parking has prevented access for equipment.

Offending vehicles will be either moved to a safe place in line of sight from where they were parked, or to a secure compound in Bury St Edmunds.

Any vehicle which is moved to enable works to go ahead will be subject to a £70 Fixed Penalty Charge Notice, reduced to £35 if paid within 14 days.

Vehicles taken to the secure compound, due to there not being a suitable location near the works area to move the vehicle to, will also be subject to additional fees to recover their vehicle.

The trial scheme will be introduced in March and will cover the Suffolk Highways resurfacing programme up to May 2026.

The first site where it will be used is scheduled to be in Allington Walk, Haverhill, where two days of works are due to start from Wednesday March 18.

Under the removal scheme, the process would see:

- A temporary traffic regulation order (TTRO) advertised six weeks before work starting
- Warning signs erected and letters delivered to nearby residents and businesses clearly detailing whether vehicle removal will be imposed 2 to 3 weeks prior to the works date.
- No parking cones placed in the road and any vehicles parked on the road at the time of visit will have information cards placed on the windscreen two days before works start
- On the day, a District Civil Enforcement Officer will issue PCNs, offending vehicles photographed then relocated safely with the police informed
- Offending vehicles will be either moved to a safe place in line of sight, or if this is not possible to the secure compound in Bury St Edmunds
- Contact numbers and references will be left on site for the owner to call to locate/collect vehicle

Joint Chief Executives recommended for appointment

Mark Ash, the council's executive director of organisational change and local government reorganisation, and Andrew Cook, executive director of growth highways and infrastructure, would become Suffolk County Council's first joint chief executives. They will be charged with leading the council through the challenges of delivering local government reorganisation, devolution, maintaining essential public services and financial sustainability in the next two years.

Specifically, Mark would be responsible for local government reorganisation, devolution, transformation and change programmes. Andrew will be responsible for delivering safe, high-quality and reliable services to residents, robust financial controls and ensuring the council meets all its statutory duties and requirements following independent inspections. The joint chief executives would each lead on their own areas of responsibility but work together to ensure focus is maintained across the council's duties and priorities.

The decision, which will be taken formally by all county councillors when they meet on 19 March, follows a recommendation from the council's Staff Appointments Committee which met earlier today.

The county council's chief executive of eight years, Nicola Beach, is to leave her post at the end of March 2026, with Mark and Andrew set to take on their new roles from 1 April 2026 following a structured handover.

Tens of thousands of pounds would be saved because Mark and Andrew's existing posts would not be recruited into. The number of the most senior staff would therefore reduce by one and save up to £92,000 a year. Recruiting internally will therefore save time, money on salaries and recruitment, and make use of existing, well-developed relationships with partner organisations and knowledge of Suffolk.

The council's constitution requires it to have a designated head of paid service, responsible for leading the council's employees as they deliver services to residents. Significant uncertainty in the local authority chief executive recruitment market has led to many county councils, including Leicestershire, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Essex and Hampshire all making internal appointments in recent months, having advertised the roles externally.

Council objects to LionLink slamming lack of coordination and fears for communities

At its meeting on 24 February 2026, the county council's cabinet approved a 23,000-word response to National Grid's statutory consultation on LionLink, which closes on 10 March 2026.

Their selection of Walberswick as a landing site for the project demonstrates staggeringly bad judgement. It is a wholly inappropriate location and the construction impacts on this very special part of our Suffolk coast will be stark.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and NSIPs

Amongst its objections to the current plans are:

- disappointment that onshore cable routeing could not be shared with Sea Link
- the choice of Walberswick as a landing site and the long cable route to Saxmundham
- construction on a continuous basis including night-time working
- construction traffic use of the unsuitable Benhall Bridge
- private haul route which would cross the Fromus river and impact the setting of Hurts Hall
- multiple negative, highly sensitive consequences in terms of built heritage, archaeology, ecology, tourism, highways access, public rights of way, water courses and vegetation loss

National Grid's [public consultation](#) is open until 10 March, and the county council is encouraging anyone affected by the scheme to submit their views.

£50,000 Culture Project Fund backs 37 creative and community projects across Suffolk

The fund was created to boost cultural activity, widen participation and support creativity across the county. This year's successful projects span festivals, youth arts programmes, heritage initiatives, wellbeing-focused activities and community-led creative work, with grants ranging from £2,000 to £20,000. Among the projects funded are:

- Frame the Future at DanceEast an eight-week creative intervention using hip hop dance and film to support young people at risk of exclusion in Ipswich. Delivered in partnership with schools and specialist artists, it aims to build confidence, skills and wellbeing through co-creation.
- The Mid-Suffolk Light Railway Museum has secured funding to refurbish its accessible railway carriage, maintaining inclusive access for wheelchair users, families and visitors with additional needs, while supporting volunteer-led heritage restoration skills.
- The Bloom Community Engagement Programme, delivered by Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds, offers year-round participatory theatre and workshops across West Suffolk, including youth theatre, SEND provision, over-55s sessions and an annual Bloom Festival to strengthen community connections.

Cllr Nadia Cenci, Cabinet Member for Communities at Suffolk County Council, said:
“I’m delighted that we are able to support such a vibrant mix of cultural projects through this year’s Culture Project Fund. These initiatives show the imagination, talent and community spirit that make Suffolk such a special place.

“What stands out is how many of these projects are rooted in local people, supporting wellbeing, nurturing young talent and bringing creativity into our towns, villages and rural communities. The benefits of these art projects cannot be underestimated. They can change the lives of our communities across the county.”

The Culture Project Fund continues to support both established organisations and grassroots groups, strengthening Suffolk’s cultural landscape. Last year’s programme delivered meaningful outcomes, from improving wellbeing and confidence to widening access to heritage and cultural experiences.

One example was Status Creative CIC’s *Creative Connections* in Lowestoft, which brought together people with lived experience of domestic abuse through creative writing, poetry and music workshops in a safe, supportive space. Participants reported improved wellbeing, stronger social connections and renewed confidence.

Another was Woodbridge Tide Mill Charitable Trust’s Tide Mill Museum 3D Tour, which created an immersive online experience featuring 42 learning points, videos and audio content, enabling people worldwide, including those unable to travel to explore the historic mill year-round.

This year’s funded projects build on that growing legacy, ensuring culture continues to inspire, connect and enrich communities across Suffolk for years to come.

The full list of organisation receiving funding can be found here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/cultureprojectfund>

Andrew Reid
County Councillor – Wilford Division
Tel: 07545 423799
Email: andrew.reid@suffolk.gov.uk