

## **November 2025 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks**

### **Help shape next year's budget**

As Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for finance, I want to invite you to help shape our budget for 2026/27. Each year, the council faces difficult choices about how to spend public money – funding used for everything from keeping our roads safe to providing support for vulnerable children and adults who rely on social care. These services touch thousands of lives across the county, every single day. We know times are tough for many, and the same is true for councils across the country. Demand for our services keeps growing, while costs continue to rise. Yet again, we face hard choices about how to make limited resources stretch further. That's why your input matters. Our 2026/27 budget consultation is now open, and it takes just a few minutes to complete. Please visit [www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Budget2026-27](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Budget2026-27) to share your thoughts. The consultation explains how the council manages its finances, the cost-saving measures already in place and the different ways we can generate additional income to support essential services. We want to know:

- What council services have you used in the past year?
- To what extent would you support a rise in Council Tax?
- What should we prioritise when setting the budget?

These are simple questions, but they go to the heart of how we plan for the future. Looking ahead, Suffolk is preparing for an important change: local government reorganisation. Our preferred model is to have just one council in Suffolk delivering all services countywide. We argue that simpler, more joined-up services would bring long-term savings – which could be reinvested in those services. However, reorganisation will take time, and it doesn't change the challenges we face today. For now, we must continue to manage our budget responsibly to keep delivering essential services. This year, we have budgeted to spend £805 million. While this sounds like a vast sum, of every pound, 77 pence goes directly to adult social care, children's services and public health – crucial support for some of the county's most vulnerable people. The remaining 23 pence covers everything else, including fire and rescue, highways, public transport, waste management and the essential infrastructure that keeps the council running. Many of these services are required by law. We can't stop maintaining the roads or supporting vulnerable people. But we must keep finding better ways of delivering those services, making sure every pound is used wisely. We've worked hard over the years to innovate, make efficiencies and protect front-line services. In recent times, we've also used our financial reserves to help manage unexpected pressures. But our reserves are limited, and once spent, they're gone. Alongside careful budget management, we continue to lobby the government for fairer funding that reflects Suffolk's growing needs. We push for investment that keeps pace with demand and inflation, so we can maintain and improve the services you rely on. One of the few levers we control locally is Council Tax. Increasing it would provide more money to support the services we deliver. But we recognise the pressure households are under, and that's why your feedback is so important before any decisions are made. Every budget decision we take has real-world consequences – for schools, care homes, road safety and environmental projects that improve our quality of life. Without enough funding, some services might need to be delivered differently. Your views help us understand the impact and set the right priorities. Whether you use council services every day or only occasionally, we want to hear from you. All responses will be considered alongside input from local businesses, public sector partners, elected councillors and council officers as we shape the budget for 2026/27. The consultation closes on Tuesday 25 November.

### **Council urges communities to act as hearing for 'ill-considered' pylon project nears**

At its Cabinet meeting on 4 November 2025 we approved our Relevant Representations to the Planning Inspectorate during Examination – maintaining its long-held, staunch opposition to the scheme. The Examination period, expected to take place early in the new year, is a chance for those affected by the scheme to share evidence, objections or support. The process is designed to be transparent and inclusive, allowing community voices to be heard. This project is simply unsuitable, and ill-considered. With approval by Cabinet, we will be setting out to the Planning Inspectorate the

multitude of reasons why it should not proceed – not least that HVDC underground and offshore alternatives have not been properly considered. The county council's objections primarily include a clear preference for alternative options, in particular cable undergrounding, or possibly an offshore solution. SCC formally and strongly request National Grid pausing the proposals, to enable the effective consideration of the alternatives. This project is simply unsuitable, and ill-considered. SCC will be setting out to the Planning Inspectorate the multitude of reasons why it should not proceed – not least that HVDC underground and offshore alternatives have not been properly considered. Throughout the project's consultation periods and in this latest cabinet report, we have submitted tens of thousands of words to highlight a host of mitigations and issues with the scheme. Serious, fundamental concerns remain and we will pursue these and set out our position in front of the Planning Inspectorate in the new year. 32 Suffolk parishes would be directly affected by the project which would see 114 miles of pylons cutting through countryside, sensitive landscapes and communities in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex. SCC is urging local communities and parish councils to make sure that they are officially registered to have their say. Anyone wishing to formally take part as an Interested Party during the official Examination process, must [submit their details with the Planning Inspectorate](#) by Thursday 27 November 2025. It is vital that our local communities register in time, if they want their voice to be heard in front of the Planning Inspectorate. Even if the Secretary of State decides that it can go ahead, this is an opportunity to have an influence to shape, change, and improve the project. Unfortunately we have seen instances with other projects, where parishes have missed the deadline for registration and have been unable to participate in the Examination. Throughout the consultations for the scheme, SCC has put local communities at the forefront of our objections and recommendations. We will continue to do so through the Examination phase.

### **Suffolk residents safer than ever thanks to 70% increase in home fire safety visits**

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. 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 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 are particularly vulnerable in domestic fires. 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. 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. 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. For more information about home fire safety or to check your eligibility for Home Fire Safety Visit, visit [Check](#)

[if you're eligible for a home fire safety visit - Suffolk County Council](#), call 01473 260588 or email [fire.businesssupport@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:fire.businesssupport@suffolk.gov.uk).

### **New waterworks proposals to affect large area of Suffolk**

The developing projects are designed to ensure future supplies of drinking water for the East of England, one of the driest regions in the UK. It will help to alleviate the shortage of water supply for new businesses and new homes in north-east Suffolk. Essex and Suffolk Water's "Suffolk Water Recycling, Transfer and Storage Project" is made up of two key elements, the development of a new Advanced Water Recycling Plant, north of Lowestoft, capable of producing 11 million litres per day of purified recycled water, and strategic network enhancements that will support a more reliable and resilient water supply for the region. There is an urgent need for water in parts of our region... but these will be significant developments and we will be paying particular attention to proposals for coordinating with other significant infrastructure projects in the county. A network of proposed pipelines, connecting existing infrastructure to proposed pipelines and buried reservoirs, will reach from Bungay down to Leiston and Saxmundham and as far west as Eye. The project includes two underground drinking water service reservoirs, located near Eye and Heveningham. There is an urgent need for water in parts of our region, notably the Hartismere Water Resource Zone, that is holding back business growth and we acknowledge the need for this kind of water security project. But these will be significant developments across much of north and east Suffolk, and we will be paying particular attention to proposals for coordinating with other significant infrastructure projects in the county. Numerous Suffolk communities continue to experience a barrage of these large projects – Sizewell C, Sea Link, LionLink, offshore wind, solar farms and pylon routes. Project promoters have an absolute responsibility to coordinate with each other to mitigate the disruption to the everyday life of our residents – for example, reducing impacts by integrating transport and infrastructure challenges. These are not just an inconvenience to local people, but have many subsequent effects, such as disruption to local businesses, issues with access and rights of way, and health and wellbeing. Local communities and parishes are being encouraged to familiarise themselves with the plans and contribute to a consultation which is open until 10 December 2025. SCC will be reviewing the proposals and submitting our response – we encourage local parishes and communities to do the same. Information for Essex and Suffolk Water's "Suffolk Water Recycling, Transfer and Storage Project", can be found at [www.suffolkwaternetwork.co.uk](http://www.suffolkwaternetwork.co.uk)

### **Suffolk's recycling centres raise half a million pounds for charity**

The Benjamin Foundation, which operates re-use shops at Suffolk's recycling centres in Bury St Edmunds and Foxhall, is benefitting from the money to provide local families with childcare, mental health, youth, family and housing support services. The relationship between The Benjamin Foundation and the county council's recycling centres is helping us to protect the environment, but also supporting people too. A key part of this success story is the repair and resale of white goods. They are collected at Suffolk's recycling centres, repaired by The Benjamin Foundation's skilled technicians and sold in their charity shops, giving them a second life and helping families access affordable appliances. Suffolk continues to lead the way in sustainable waste management, and the relationship between The Benjamin Foundation and the county council's recycling centres is helping us to protect the environment, but also supporting people too. It's heartening to know that every fridge repaired and resold directly supports local young people and their families through The Benjamin Foundation's vital services – helping them to be safe, become independent and thrive throughout their life. The first re-use shop opened at Foxhall recycling centre in 2016, followed by one in Bury St Edmunds in 2020. To date, the initiative has sold over 603,000 items, generating over £530,000, with over 300 white goods sent for repair. For more information please visit [www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk](http://www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk)

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