

Samford Division Annual Report for 2025

March 2024

Idling Campaign: On March 1, 2024, Suffolk County Council launched a campaign urging drivers to switch off their engines when parked, particularly outside schools, to protect children's lungs from unnecessary pollution. This campaign was supported by pupils and staff at Castle Hill Infant and Junior School.

Bus Services Funding: Suffolk County Council announced a £3.6 million investment to strengthen and expand the county's bus network. This funding was allocated to support operator- and community-led proposals for new or enhanced services across the county.

EV Charging Infrastructure: The council secured £7.3 million to develop electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure across Suffolk. This investment aims to provide solutions for residents without off-street parking, including kerbside charging points, community charging hubs, and car park charging stations.

Pothole Repairs: Suffolk Highways began trialing new pothole repair methods using the Roadmender Elastomac solution, which results in sealed, longer-lasting repairs and lowers the carbon footprint of repairs by 80%.

April 2024

Road Resurfacing Project: The council commenced its largest ever resurfacing project, aiming to upgrade 421 roads across Suffolk. This project includes surface dressing and machine resurfacing to prolong the life of road surfaces and improve skid resistance.

Primary School Admissions: On National Offer Day, 99.36% of children were offered a place at one of their three preferred primary schools, and 96.52% were offered a place at their first preference school.

SEND Reform: Kathryn Boulton was appointed as the new independent chair of the Local Area Partnership's SEND Improvement Board, tasked with overseeing the implementation and review of plans aimed at improving SEND services in Suffolk.

May 2024

Six New Projects for Ipswich: Suffolk County Council announced funding for six new community projects in Ipswich, including a viewing platform on Stoke Bridge, lighting and sound equipment for music gigs, and a theatre project to bring together young people from across the town.

Suffolk Business Board: A new Suffolk Business Board was established to represent the local business community, help steer Suffolk's economic strategy, and create a stronger, higher-skilled local economy.

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New Cabinet Changes: Matthew Hicks, leader of Suffolk County Council, announced changes to his Cabinet at Suffolk County Council with immediate effect.

Funding for Digital Tech Innovation: Suffolk County Council, working with Norfolk County Council and Connected Innovation, secured funding from Barclays Eagle Labs Ecosystem Partnership Programme to boost support for the region's digital technology sector.

Foster East Initiative: Eleven local authorities across the East of England joined forces to recruit more foster carers to look after some of the region's most vulnerable children.

June 2024

Rogue Trader Prosecution: A rogue Suffolk trader admitted taking thousands of pounds from customers for work that was never carried out or which was sub-standard.

Fire Safety Breaches: An Ipswich property management company and its director were found guilty of breaches of fire safety legislation.

Cold Caller Warning: Suffolk Trading Standards reminded residents to stay alert to the risk of being ripped off by cold callers knocking on their doors.

July 2024

Suffolk Youth Climate Conference: On July 3, 2024, 250 young people participated in the Suffolk Youth Climate Conference held at Suffolk One Sixth Form College. The event was organized by the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership and featured guest speakers like Chris Packham, Lord Deben, Kids Against Plastic.

Local Visitor Economy Partnership Status: Suffolk and Norfolk were awarded joint Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) status by Visit England. This accreditation supports collaborative working locally and nationally to grow the local visitor economy.

August 2024

SEND Services Investment: Suffolk County Council's Cabinet discussed a further investment of £9.1 million over three years to expand special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services at its meeting on July 24, 2024. The investment would pay for new permanent SEND staff and contracts to secure more educational psychology capacity. This follows an Area SEND inspection by Ofsted and CQC in November 2023, which found widespread failings across the Local Area Partnership.

Baby Friendly Award: Suffolk County Council's Children and Young People's Community Health Service received the prestigious Baby Friendly Award from the UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) Baby Friendly Initiative. The service achieved Stage 3 accreditation, recognizing its

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high standards of care and support for infant feeding. The award was presented at an award ceremony on July 16.

September 2024

Council's actions bring hope to local communities despite pylon project approval: On September 12, 2024, the Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, approved National Grid's Bramford to Twinstead pylon project. Despite objecting to the application, Suffolk County Council's influence led to the Secretary of State acknowledging the importance of local authorities' approval of National Grid's detailed construction and environmental management plans. This recognition sends a strong message to National Grid and other project promoters that they cannot just do as they wish.

Plans unveiled for A12 Major Road Network improvements in East Suffolk: Suffolk County Council unveiled its proposals for improvements to the A12 in East Suffolk, between the A14 Seven Hills junction and A1152 Woods Lane in Melton. The scheme is designed to upgrade key junctions on the A12, enhance bus journeys, and improve local walking and cycling connections. These improvements will provide greater access to the east coast, easing congestion and network disruption during construction.

Suffolk County Council launches £500,000 Culture Project Fund: Suffolk County Council announced the launch of its new £500,000 Culture Project Fund aimed at strengthening and supporting local arts and museum projects across the county. The fund offers three tiers of grants to ensure both grassroots ventures and larger, more established organisations have equal opportunities to access funding. The fund supports projects designed to reach, engage, and inspire people and communities to take part in and enjoy arts and museums.

October 2024

Flood Prevention Investment: Suffolk County Council announced its intention to invest another £1.5 million to carry out important flooding prevention work. This follows extensive work already completed since Storm Babet, including clearing more than 111,000 drains and significant road repairs. The council has written to the Flooding Minister, Emma Hardy MP, demanding the government step up and provide the additional £20 million needed to complete the work.

Pothole Prevention Programme: The council launched a pothole prevention programme to target areas of Suffolk's Road network that could worsen when the winter weather hits. Teams with additional resources and the latest technology have started visiting and treating locations susceptible to deterioration. The programme aims to treat areas of Suffolk's roads earlier to

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reduce the number of more substantial defects that may cause safety concerns to road users throughout the winter.

Royal Opening for the Gull Wing Bridge: Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, officially opened the Gull Wing Bridge in Lowestoft. The new bridge opened publicly to pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles in September and is already bringing huge benefits through reduced congestion and improved mobility around the town.

November 2024

Warm Homes Suffolk Loans: Suffolk County Council is offering interest-free loans to help make residents' homes warmer, safer, and cheaper to run. The £3 million project fully opened to homeowners across Suffolk on November 1, 2024. The loan scheme supports Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan by increasing the number of properties with energy-efficient and low carbon energy measures installed.

Department for Education welcomes SEND improvements: The Department for Education (DfE) met with senior leaders from Suffolk County Council and the NHS to review the impact of wide-ranging improvement plans for special educational needs and disabilities services (SEND). The DfE welcomed the improvements and the evidence of impact but recognized the considerable challenges that remain to reach the required targets.

December 2024

Suffolk communities to suffer from lack of energy project coordination: National Grid's decision for the LionLink interconnector project to make landfall at Walberswick will have serious implications for Suffolk's coastal and inland communities, and environment. The interconnector is a new subsea cable, creating an electricity link with the Netherlands, and connecting to a Dutch offshore windfarm. The county council has raised concerns about the lack of coordination between National Grid's own projects, LionLink and Sea Link.

Suffolk County Council Cabinet approves £2.7m funding for Benacre flood protection scheme: A vital scheme to protect the A12 and surrounding homes near Lowestoft from being regularly flooded can now proceed. The council had already pledged £2m to the Benacre flood relief scheme, but the extra £2.7m will ensure it can now go ahead. The scheme will see 82 hectares of grazing land transformed into saltmarsh, along with the construction of clay embankments and two new pumping stations.

January 2025

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Ageing Well: Building Stronger, Healthier Communities for Our Older Residents: The key findings and recommendations from this year's Annual Public Health Report focus on the vital theme of "Ageing Well"²⁵. The report highlights the importance of age-friendly communities, addressing barriers such as digital exclusion, loneliness, and limited access to public spaces.

New Cabinet Role to Lead on Devolution and Local Government Reform in Suffolk: A new Suffolk County Council cabinet role responsible for devolution and local government reform has been created, following a reshuffle announced by council leader Cllr Matthew Hicks. Cllr Richard Rout has been appointed to the role, which comes as Suffolk is one of only six areas in the country chosen by the government to be fast-tracked for devolution and local government reform.

February 2025

Suffolk County Council Confirms 2025/26 Budget: The council confirmed its budget for the forthcoming financial year, focusing on protecting essential services and supporting the county's most vulnerable residents. The budget for 2025/26 was approved at a meeting of all councillors on February 13, 2025, with an emphasis on meeting rising demand for children's and adult care services¹². The council's budget will increase by 6.7%, from £752.9 million in 2024/25 to £803.7 million in 2025/26. Despite a slight uplift in Government funding for local authorities, rising costs and growing demand have required the council to set significant savings targets to balance the books. The council has approved £10.9 million in new savings, which will focus on restructuring and transforming how services are delivered. Suffolk County Council's share of Council Tax will rise by 4.99% next year, which includes a 2.99% general increase and a further 2% dedicated wholly to helping meet the rising costs of social care.

Arts Organisations and Museums Across Suffolk Get £500,000 Funding Boost: Thirty-three arts organisations and museums from across Suffolk were awarded funding from Suffolk County Council's £500,000 Culture Project Fund. The successful bids range from £1,000 to £27,000. The new fund, which was launched last year to boost cultural activity across the county, attracted 131 applications, requesting a total of £2 million in funding. The level of ambition and creativity shown in the applications was truly inspiring, demonstrating the incredible talent and passion that exists within Suffolk's cultural sector. This funding will help bring new artistic experiences to local communities, support the growth of creative industries, and celebrate Suffolk's rich heritage.