

Parish Report – February 2025

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Devolution and Local Government Reorganization

Following the publication of the government's White Paper on devolution in December, the council held an extraordinary meeting on Thursday 9 January to decide whether to pursue inclusion in the Devolution Priority Programme. Councils had to submit an application for this 'fast-track' devolution by Friday 10 January, including a request for local elections in May to be cancelled if this would assist them to prepare for an accelerated process including mayoral elections in May 2026. The government has now agreed this should go ahead. However it is unclear just when elections to the new unitary councils will be.

LOCAL HIGHWAYS BUDGET; there is £3,000 allocated for your new SID

FLOODING IN CHAPEL LANE; I have been trying to help Clare \graves with some queries about their flood grant.

Suffolk's SEND Needs Assessment

SEND needs in the county are rising and expected to rise further, and that delays in EHCP assessment, ADHD and autism assessment and support, and access to mental health services for young people were unsatisfactory and in some cases getting worse, like speech and language therapy. The report recommends engagement with families and young people, address inequalities in service provision and improve planning for future services.

Council Budget 2025-26

On Tuesday 28 January, SCC Cabinet voted to approve the proposed budget for 2025-26. This included approving a maximum rise in council tax this year of 4.99%, including the 2% social care precept for adult care. The budget relies on delivering £28.4m of savings and mitigations across council services. Cost pressures for the council include care purchasing for adult social care, Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and placements for children in care. . The government is yet to come up with a solution for this issue, which affects many local authorities, not just Suffolk. The DSG debt is largely down to the cost of services for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

SCC Carbon Net Zero

At Cabinet on Tuesday 28 January, the annual report was presented which details the council's progress towards its target of net zero carbon by 2030. The council is not on track to achieve this target. It has achieved a 2% reduction in emissions overall during 2023-24, but Scope 3 – the largest scope and the one the council has least control over, as it includes the emissions of council suppliers (for example home to school transport) – has increased by 2% this year due to an increase in the standard conversion factor for bus travel emissions, and a rise in staff travel due to increased demand for care services. The council is trying to reduce Scope 3 emissions, and currently 40% of the council's top 100 suppliers have a carbon reduction plan for their businesses. It is unlikely the council would be able to be completely carbon free in

future as large vehicles like fire engines would require fossil fuels, but it is possible that the council could offset remaining carbon emissions by planting trees in the county.

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Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and support:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>

Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safety-advice-in-the-community/what-to-do-in-a-flood>

<https://suffolkprepared.co.uk/get-prepared/risk-advice/flooding/>

Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>