

Parish Report – April 2025

Councillor

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Suffolk Libraries

At Cabinet on 18 March, the council administration voted to bring Suffolk's libraries back in-house at the end of the current contract for the library on 31 May. Suffolk Libraries, who have held the contract since the service was divested in 2012, were the only bidder for the contract, but negotiations broke down and the council felt it had no alternative but to bring the libraries back under council control. The proposal to do this was passionately opposed not just by Suffolk Libraries, but also Suffolk residents and the many volunteers and Friends groups who work for and raise money for libraries in their communities. Many of them attended the Cabinet meeting and protested outside Endeavour House, or asked questions during the meeting.

Following the Cabinet meeting, both my group and the Labour group submitted requests that the decision be 'called in' – a process by which an issue can be tabled at a meeting of the council's Scrutiny Committee to be looked at more closely. Both the requests were rejected by the council on Wednesday 27 March after being reviewed by the council's monitoring officer.

Local Government Reorganization Proposals

Proposals from all Suffolk councils were submitted to the government by 21 March, and as noted in last month's report, Suffolk County Council has announced that it will be proposing one single unitary council for Suffolk. Subsequently, all the district and borough councils have now voted to propose multiple unitaries as their preferred option. All the councils now need to prepare a business case and submit it to the government by September. The government should announce by the end of the year what local government in Suffolk will look like in future.

The plan is for a mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk to be elected in May 2026, and the government's public consultation on a new Mayoral Combined County Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk is open until 13 April if you are yet to share your views. You can fill out the consultation survey here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution>

Norwich to Tilbury Pylon Scheme

National Grid undertook final consultations for this project in Suffolk in March, in anticipation of receiving a Development Consent Order application later in the year. Suffolk County Council has welcomed a series of changes to the latest set of plans, evidence that National Grid has listened to some of the council's concerns and those of local communities. However fundamental differences remain, with the council clear that offshore and undergrounding solutions should be priorities for the scheme. National Grid have confirmed that undergrounding through the Waveney valley, which the council were hoping for, is now not likely to happen. The council has pledged to continue to fight for no pylons, and if the scheme is agreed, for proper compensation for residents and communities.

Suffolk Archives Exhibition Nominated for Award

Suffolk Archives' recent exhibition, The Arrivals: Celebrating Migration to Suffolk, has been nominated for Community Engagement Programme of the Year at the prestigious 23rd annual Museums + Heritage Awards. The exhibition explored historical and contemporary migration experiences to Suffolk since the end of World War II, including oral history recordings, stories of migrant entrepreneurs, and archive materials from the Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality (ISCRE). Visitors learned about Jewish refugees, Polish soldier Marion Laskowski, the Windrush generation, and saw examples of traditional clothing from around the world. Suffolk Archives' latest exhibition is Departures, which explores emigration from Suffolk. It will be running at The Hold, on Ipswich waterfront until 31 May, with a programme of tie-in events. Visit www.suffolkarchives.co.uk for more details.

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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>