County Councillor Report for Parishes - October 2026

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Crisis and Resilience Fund

Suffolk County Council's Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) provides support to low-income households facing unexpected financial hardship, including loss of income illness, domestic abuse, flooding, theft or the breakdown of essential household items. Support can include crisis payments of heating oil assistance and advice to improve longer-term financial resilience.

Residents can check eligibility and apply via the page on the Suffolk County Council website.

Proposed Referendum on Asylum Accommodation

At Full Council in October, the Reform UK administration approved a motion to explore holding a Suffolk-wide referendum in May 2027 on housing people seeking asylum.

The Green, Liberal Democrat and Labour groups opposed the proposal, arguing that decisions on asylum accommodation are made by the Home Office rather than Suffolk County Council, meaning a referendum would have little practical effect while potentially costing £1-2 million at a time when the council faces significant financial pressures.

At the same meeting, a Green party motion supporting the RNLI was passed unanimously.

Family Hubs Consultation

Cabinet has agreed to consult on proposed changes to Family Hub services. Suffolk is receiving £6.5 million through the government's Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies Programme, but the council is also considering reducing the number of Family Hub buildings, with services potentially moving into libraries and community venues.

The council says outreach services and staffing levels will increase, but concerns have been raised about the impact on families who have limited transport options, disabled children or additional support needs.

An eight-week public consultation is expected shortly:

https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/consultations-petitions-and-elections/consultations

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Scrutiny Update

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny recently reviewed the high number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). The council is refreshing its approach, including earlier intervention, improved careers advice and better access to mental health support.

Scrutiny Committee has also agreed to establish a task and finish group to review circumstances surrounding governance concerns raised in a Section 5A report presented to Cabinet in September.

Preparing for Winter Flooding

As winter approaches, residents are encouraged to review flood preparedness measures. Although Suffolk County Council continues to develop flood prevention schemes with partners across the county, property owners also have an important role in maintaining ditches and watercourses where they are responsible.

Useful information:

- Check flood risk: https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk
- Watercourse maintenance: https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/maintenance-of-ditches-and-other-watercourses
- Highway drainage works: https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/highway-drainage
- Flood reporting: https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/report-a-flood-in-suffolk

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Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has been shortlisted for two national Excellence in Fire & Emergency Awards:

- Emergency Services Collaboration of the Year for the Suffolk, Norfolk and Hertfordshire Fire Control partnership.

- Youth Champion of the Year for Claire Watkins and her work leading the Spark education programme. **Spark** is an engagement programme that works with schools, colleges and community groups to help young people understand:
- Fire safety
- Road safety
- Water safety
- Anti-social behaviour
- Risk-taking behaviour

The service has also seen a record number of applications for on-call firefighters following the Dunwich Heath wildfire.

Chief Fire Officer Jon Lacey has announced his retirement after 34 years in the fire and rescue service.

Free Driver Support for Over-60s

The Grand Driver Scheme continues to offer free driving assessments and road safety workshops for Suffolk residents aged 60 and over.

The scheme provides:

- **Free driving assessments**, lasting around **90 minutes**, with a qualified instructor accompanying drivers in their own vehicle on familiar local roads.
- **Free three-hour workshops** covering Highway Code updates, hazard perception, health and mobility, alternatives to driving, and planning for continued safe driving in later life.

More information: www.grand-driver.co.uk

Halloween Recycling

Residents are encouraged to reuse, swap or donate unwanted Halloween costumes and decorations rather than disposing of them. Donations can be made at Suffolk recycling centres and batteries should always be removed and recycled separately.

Pub is The Hub

Pub is The Hub has launched a Hospitality Grant Scheme to help rural pubs expand community services, including village shops, cafés, play areas and other community facilities.

More information: https://www.pubisthehub.org.uk/

Sea Link Decision

The Government has approved National Grid's Sea Link project despite continued objections from Suffolk County Council and many local communities regarding environmental impacts, construction disruption and cumulative infrastructure pressures.

Community Funding

If your parish council or community group has a project that may benefit from Locality Budget or Highways funding, please get in touch. I am also happy to help signpost other community projects towards appropriate funding sources. Please email me with your proposal.

Emergency Preparedness

Government guidance recommends households consider how they would manage during a major disruption lasting up to 72 hours.

Simple preparations include:

- Essential medication and glasses
- Bottled water and non-perishable food
- Torches and spare batteries
- Charged mobile phones and power banks
- Important contact numbers
- A battery-powered radio

Checking on vulnerable neighbours is also an important part of community resilience.

Activity Report

October was a busy month for resident casework. I helped residents with flooding concerns, highways and footpath issues, community facilities, heritage assets and church projects, while continuing to work closely with parish councils to find practical solutions to local problems.

I am supporting **Redlingfield Parish Council** with fencing proposals for the community field ahead of planned tree planting and expect to contribute funding from my locality budget.

I met with Revd Canon Eleanor Goodwin and other stakeholders regarding reinstatement of the historic footbridge entrance to Redlingfield Church. There is strong local support for **rebuilding the bridge** and work is underway to clarify ownership, highways requirements and potential funding opportunities. I hope to support the project financially.

During a visit to Hoxne with Adrian Ramsay MP, I met residents concerned about the **future of the Swan Inn**. Since then, I have been working with the Parish Council and Mid Suffolk District Council officers to seek assurances that this important listed building is properly protected while vacant.

Following my visit to Laxfield Parish Council, I have been helping local groups **explore funding opportunities** for church repairs and community projects, flood defences for community buildings, as well as requesting improvements to the village pavement network.

I visited Metfield Parish Council to review **highways safety concerns** and discuss vegetation management and road safety issues. While there, I also learned more about the village's wartime history, including the site of one of the largest munitions explosions of the Second World War. A highways report is now being prepared for Suffolk Highways.

On behalf of residents across the division, I raised flooding concerns at October's Full Council meeting. I specifically asked **what assurances could be given to Hoxne residents,** where 25 properties flooded during Storm Babet and a number of Section 19 recommendations remain outstanding. I am still seeking further clarification about the use of temporary flood defences on listed buildings.

I attended the **People's National Emergency Briefing** at Laxfield Village Hall on 9 October.

Continuing professional development remains an important part of my role as County Councillor. During October I attended planning training on changes to the National Scheme of Delegation, a Suffolk Fire and Rescue resilience briefing following the Dunwich Heath wildfire, the Suffolk Highways Forum on flooding and winter maintenance, and briefings on SEND provision, Family Hubs and children's services.

Secondary School Applications

If your child is due to start Year 7 in September 2027, applications must be submitted by 31 October 2026.

www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions

Remembrance Day

November provides an opportunity to remember those who gave their lives in service to our country. There are church services across the division and joining residents in paying tribute to past and present members of our Armed Forces.

Remembrance Day Events

Parish	Arrangements
Eye	Act of Remembrance at the Town War Memorial at 10.45am, followed by a Service of Remembrance at St Peter & St Paul's Church from approximately 11.10am
Laxfield	Service at All Saints Church from 10.00am, followed by the 11am silence at the War Memorial

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Social Media and Useful Links

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/scc.green/

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/suffolkgreens/

Suffolk Green Group: https://suffolkgreens.org.uk/

Cost of Living Support: https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk

Flood Information: https://suffolkprepared.co.uk/get-prepared/risk-advice/flooding/
