

Cllr Elaine Bryce Carlford Division December 2024 Parish Newsletter

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To strengthen our local economy



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To protect and enhance our environment

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Suffolk Regiment archives available to view at West Suffolk House

Historical records charting more than 270 years of active service for the Suffolk Regiment have found a new home thanks to support from two councils.

The charitable trust which runs the newly refurbished Suffolk Regiment Museum at the historic Gibraltar Barracks on Out Risbygate, Bury St Edmunds, had been looking for somewhere nearby to bring its archives, including those on loan – under one roof.

West Suffolk Council already has strong links with the Suffolk Regiment, including a gallery on display at the council run Moyses Hall Museum.

Now the co-owners of West Suffolk House, West Suffolk Council, and Suffolk County Council have worked with the Suffolk Regiment Trustees to bring its archives to the public building where they will be available for people to view by appointment.

Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality said:

“We are delighted to have worked with West Suffolk Council and the Suffolk Regiment Trustees to bring these important historical archives together in West Suffolk House.

This partnership ensures the rich history of the Suffolk Regiment is preserved and accessible for generations to come, further strengthening our shared commitment to celebrating Suffolk’s heritage.”

Cllr Ian Shipp, Cabinet Member for Leisure at West Suffolk Council said:

“We and our residents are proud of our history and heritage in West Suffolk and our strong association with the armed forces. Celebrating and connecting people to their heritage is part of our work to support thriving communities. The Suffolk Regiment is a key part of that heritage.

“We already work closely with the Suffolk Regiment trustees through our work with them at Moyses Hall Museum and so we are extremely pleased that we, and Suffolk County as co-owners of the building, have been able to support the charity with a new home for their archives, close to the regimental museum.”

The Suffolk Regiment Archives will be available to view by appointment on Wednesdays and Thursdays from April 2025. Anyone wishing to view the archives should contact the Museum, contact details on the Museum website below.

For more on the Suffolk Regiment Museum including opening hours visit:
www.suffolkregimentmuseum.co.uk

For more on the Suffolk Regiment Gallery at Moyses Hall Museum, visit:
www.moyseshall.org/about/suffolk-regiment-gallery.cfm

Suffolk's rural communities hit by loss of £3 million in Government funding

£3 million of vital public funding - designed to support rural communities in Suffolk - will be cut by the government next year, it has been revealed.

The funding, known as the Rural Services Grant (RSG), was introduced in 2016/17 to support councils who serve rural communities and sparsely populated areas where it costs significant amounts of money to deliver public services. Suffolk County Council will, from April 2024, no longer receive the grant. [The government announced last week that the funding will be redirected elsewhere](#) – adversely impacting rural areas like Suffolk.

CLlr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Economic Development and Skills, said:

“It is deeply disappointing that the government has once again made a decision that disproportionately harms rural areas.

“Delivering essential services, like bus services, social care and road maintenance, is inherently more expensive in county areas like Suffolk due to our sparse population. The decision to scrap this grant compounds the challenges we are facing already with the rising costs of services like adult and children's care and home-to-school transport.

“Yet the government continues to overlook these realities, prioritising urban areas instead.

“It is becoming clear that any additional funding promised to support local authorities is to be undermined by cuts and additional costs elsewhere. This is a troubling pattern where supposed solutions offer no real relief and councils are faced with great financial uncertainty.

“I am concerned that the government's response to rising local government costs is to shift the burden onto residents, forcing councils to impose steep Council Tax increases to balance the books. This approach is both unsustainable and unfair to those in rural communities.”

Nationally, the Rural Services Grant is worth £110 million a year to rural communities. Other counties, including Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire and Northumberland have also spoken out about the removal of the rural grant.

Cabinet approves bold new vision for Suffolk's future

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet has approved ambitious new plans to position Suffolk as a national leader in sustainable growth and innovation.

Suffolk's Economic Strategy, also known as a Local Growth Plan, has been developed by the Suffolk Business Board in collaboration with businesses, partners and stakeholders across the county.

It seeks to harness Suffolk's unique strengths, including its thriving renewable energy sector and innovative, collaborative business environment, to transform the region into a hub for clean technology, long-term economic prosperity and competitiveness.

By 2045, the strategy sets out to achieve:

- An additional £14 billion contribution to the economy, surpassing the average growth rate in England
- 45,000 more people qualified to Level 3 or higher
- 35,000 more people participating in the workforce
- A significant increase in average wages across the region.

At its core is EPIC Suffolk, a framework to guide investments and funding priorities built on four key pillars: **Economic wellbeing, Productivity, Inclusivity, and Clean growth.**

Mark Pendlington, Chair of the Suffolk Business Board, said:

"This strategy is all about boosting opportunity and growth as we plan a massive collaborative effort to secure a prosperous and sustainable economic future for Suffolk.

"It reflects the views of many hundreds of leaders from across business, local authorities, education, health and the voluntary sector, all of whom have shared their ideas and expertise, and have been very clear about the challenges and opportunities we face.

"We all recognise Suffolk's role as a key driver of the UK economy and are determined to promote Suffolk as one of the best places in the country to live, work, learn and invest."

The strategy identifies several key areas for economic growth:

- **High Growth sectors:** Suffolk is already a national leader in clean energy, with offshore wind and nuclear projects at the forefront. The county's agri-food and drink sector is set to grow through sustainable practices and agri-tech innovation, while the county's ports and logistics sector is a critical gateway for UK trade.
- **Emerging and Value Growth sectors:** Suffolk's technology sector also shows strong potential for growth, in areas such as ICT, digital creative industries, life sciences and financial services. Elsewhere, there are opportunities to further improve productivity and job quality in advanced manufacturing, construction, health and social care, and the visitor economy.

- **Tech Convergence:** Suffolk has the potential to become a leader in Tech Convergence, where technologies such as digital, AI, clean tech, robotics and satellite applications intersect and integrate with existing industries, creating an environment ripe for innovation and growth.

To support Suffolk's continued growth, the strategy places a strong emphasis on workforce development and infrastructure. Investments in skills, housing, digital connectivity, and road and rail networks will be critical to meeting the demands of a growing economy and ensuring that the region remains competitive in the global marketplace.

The strategy is underpinned by a comprehensive investment plan which aims to attract £4 of private investment for every £1 of government economic funding, including a multimillion-pound pipeline of projects to boost productivity, create jobs and attract new companies to Suffolk.

Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Economic Development and Skills, said:

"This new strategy represents a bold vision for Suffolk's future – a county in which, by proving its competitiveness and levels of productivity, we can all be proud.

"For residents, it means better jobs, improved infrastructure and greater access to skills training, creating opportunities for everyone. For businesses, it fosters a dynamic environment driven by innovation, sustainability and cutting-edge technologies like AI and clean technology.

"Together, these efforts ensure Suffolk isn't just a leader in growth but an exceptional place to live, work, learn and invest."

The Suffolk Business Board was mobilised in May 2024, following the government guidance that the work of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership should be brought to a close. The Business Board comprises 17 members representing business, education, voluntary sector and local government and is responsible for the economic strategy for Suffolk and steering of former LEP-led functions.

The Economic Strategy will be discussed at the meeting of Suffolk County Council's Cabinet on Tuesday 3 December 2024. Papers for the meeting can be viewed at <https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk>

OPINION: Why we're already thinking about the 2025/26 budget

Column by Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Economic Development and Skills.

Suffolk County Council wants to hear your views on how we manage our budget for 2025/26. Can you spare a few minutes to answer three quick questions?

Our short survey asks for your views on the council's financial priorities and Council Tax. You can find it at www.suffolk.gov.uk/budget, and it's open until Monday 16 December.

This year, we are preparing to navigate another challenging budget. Demand for essential public services like adult and children's care continues to rise, but public funding has not kept pace. Balancing the books continues to require new approaches and tough choices.

Your feedback will help guide those decisions, ensuring we prioritise the services that matter most to Suffolk residents.

This year, Suffolk County Council has a budget of around £752 million. Of every pound we spend, 77 pence is dedicated to supporting people directly. This includes vital services such as adult and children's care and public health. These services are a lifeline for many, providing essential support to some of our most vulnerable residents.

The remaining 23% of the budget is used to fund other critical areas such as fire and rescue, maintaining roads and pavements, climate initiatives, managing waste, and bus services. It also supports the infrastructure, staffing and technology needed to keep the council and its services running.

As a council, we are legally required to deliver most of these services. This means we cannot choose to simply stop maintaining local roads, supporting vulnerable children and adults or disposing of Suffolk's waste.

What we *can* do, and strive to do constantly, is find more efficient ways to deliver these services, ensuring every pound is spent as effectively as possible. We've also built up reserves to help during tough times, but these reserves are now being drawn down. This is not a long-term solution. We cannot keep doing it.

Despite these challenges, we are on track to meet this year's budget, which includes £43million in savings. This is thanks to the hard work and dedication of our staff who have managed resources carefully and responsibly.

However, financial pressures remain, particularly as we head into the winter months. This is a time when demand for adult social care increases, and our Highways teams work around the clock to keep roads safe in difficult conditions.

These pressures are not unique to Suffolk; councils across the country are grappling with similar challenges. Many are facing critical funding issues as they attempt to balance rising costs with stagnant or reduced public funding.

To address these issues, the council regularly lobbies the government for additional support. We work closely with Suffolk's MPs to explain our financial situation and advocate for fairer funding. The council's leaders also meet with government representatives to highlight where increased investment is most urgently needed.

These efforts have had some success. For example, in the Chancellor's Autumn budget, there was recognition of local councils' needs with additional investment in roads and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision.

However, these gains are offset by new cost pressures, such as the rise in employers' National Insurance contributions, which will follow from next April. But it remains uncertain whether local governments, including Suffolk, will receive adequate compensation for these increases. We know that we will not receive any compensation towards the increased costs of our suppliers.

Meanwhile, the government has announced that the rural services grant, which has helped councils in sparsely populated areas manage the high costs of service delivery, will be scrapped and redirected elsewhere. This will adversely impact councils like Suffolk.

The Local Government Provisional Financial Settlement, due for publication before Christmas, will provide a clearer picture of what funding Suffolk can expect for the coming year. Until then, the full implications of these policy changes will remain uncertain.

Beyond government funding, the other significant way we can increase our budget is by raising Council Tax. This would provide more money to support the services we deliver, from adult and children's care to road maintenance.

We know that any decision to raise Council Tax has a direct impact on our residents, which is why we are seeking your views before making any decisions. Our survey asks whether you would support an increase in Council Tax next year.

Without adequate funding, some services currently provided may need to be delivered differently and more cost-effectively. These decisions will affect everyone in Suffolk, so your views, via the survey, are important.

Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts by visiting www.suffolk.gov.uk/budget

Council calls on government to prevent scrapping of influential department

The CAA is intending to close down its Airfield Advisory Team.

Through its work on major infrastructure projects, officers at Suffolk County Council have learned that the team will not be available to provide advice to planning officers or planning inspectors after March 2025.

Suffolk County Council has written to Mike Kane MP, Minister of State for Aviation, to review the proposal.

The Airfield Advisory Team has been instrumental in helping to shape improvements to infrastructure projects and informing planning across Suffolk. This includes the proposed Norwich to Tilbury pylon project, as part of National Grid's 'Great Grid Upgrade' and other proposed energy projects such as solar farms and wind turbines.

Without this team, it is anticipated that there will be no robust and effective advice to support the design and delivery of new infrastructure projects, and that this will compromise scrutiny of their design and delivery.

The impact of obstructions such as where pylons are placed or the glare from solar farms may also limit the commercial, strategic, and recreational operation of airfields across Suffolk and the rest of the country.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Cabinet Member for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, said:

"The effective and technical advice that we have received from the Airfield Advisory Team has been essential to a number of projects that we respond to, on behalf of Suffolk's communities.

"As an example, they have directly helped with making improvements to the Norwich to Tilbury pylon project, to lessen the impact on Suffolk residents and businesses.

"Without such expertise, considerable projects such as pylon runs or solar farms could end up being put in ill-informed locations, risking the viability of existing airfields, and the safety of those that use them and who live and work nearby.

"As such, we have written to the Minister for Aviation, asking that he work with the CAA to reconsider the scrapping the Airfield Advisory Team."

In July 2024, Suffolk County Council raised its concerns about the proposed Norwich to Tilbury pylon project when it formally objected to plans, published at the time.

Amongst a number of fears, it cited that there would be "serious implications on nine airfields" with pylons close to runways which, in some cases, could possibly stop flying all together.

Suffolk County Council's letter to Mike Kane MP, Minister of State for Aviation, can be read on suffolk.gov.uk

Suffolk discoveries rewrite the history of the East Anglian Kingdom 1,400 years ago

A new book details how 5,000 items of metalwork discovered by four local metal detector users during 10 years of archaeological fieldwork in Rendlesham, Suffolk, have helped change the way academics think about the earliest English kings and their kingdoms.

The fieldwork and significance of the finds, co-ordinated by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS), are shared in the new book, *Lordship and Landscape in East Anglia AD 400–800*, released this week.

The journey started in 2008, when a landowner contacted SCCAS for assistance following finds made on their property. Over the following decade, SCCAS co-ordinated archaeological investigations of the local area that identified the site of an East Anglian royal settlement - with the invaluable expertise of four experienced detectorists recovering and meticulously recording thousands of metal finds of archaeological interest, including precious metal jewellery and coinage.

A team of experts, funded by a project grant from The Leverhulme Trust, reconstructed the layout and history of the settlement, its place in wider landscape, the social connections and trade networks of those who lived there, and details such as the metalworking techniques of the master crafters who worked there.

As a result of all this work, experts have determined that:

- The royal centre at Rendlesham – covering an area of 50 hectares (approximately 70 football pitches) – is the largest and wealthiest settlement of its time known from England
- For 150 years, from AD 580 to 730, Rendlesham was the centre of royal power in this part of the kingdom – the place where the kings stayed, dispensed justice, feasted followers, received envoys, and had coinage minted
- Analysis of metal-detected finds from other places in Suffolk and Norfolk has enabled the identification of similar settlements to Rendlesham – centres from which royal power was exercised over other parts of the kingdom

Professor Christopher Scull, Cardiff University and UCL Institute of Archaeology, who led the research project, said:

“Since its discovery on the eve of the Second World War, the royal burial ground at Sutton Hoo has stood alone as an enigmatic memorial to the East Anglian kings of the seventh century.

“But our ground-breaking research involving Rendlesham has not only identified the places where these kings lived, and from which they ruled, but also how their ancestors fought to establish a kingdom after the collapse of the Roman world.

“These societies were more sophisticated, and more widely connected, than we previously thought. We are able to show how local leaders from what is now south-east Suffolk established a wider rule over what is now Norfolk and Suffolk, and how they ruled their kingdom through royal centres such as Rendlesham. We also believe that the legacy of Roman rule helped shape the geography of the early East Anglian kingdom.”

Following these significant discoveries, the journey continued with SCCAS conducting a separate phase of archaeological fieldwork as part of the *Rendlesham Revealed* project funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, involving local communities to undertake further excavations that have uncovered additional evidence of the royal settlement, including a great hall and possible temple.

Councillor Philip Faircloth-Mutton, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality, said:

“Suffolk continues to reveal its extraordinary history and international significance. We owe the discovery and understandings of the royal settlement at Rendlesham to the landowner for allowing access, to the four local metal detectorists who were instrumental in discovering the site, to all the professionals and academics involved in realising the importance of what has been found, and to the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service for coordinating.

“With the cooperation of responsible metal detector users, who choose to work with our archaeological service, it shows how all parties can come together and make a powerful contribution to archaeological research and protect our shared heritage.”

Lordship and Landscape in East Anglia AD 400–800 is published by the Society of Antiquaries of London, with grants from the Marc Fitch Fund, The Sutton Hoo Society, University College London, Historic England, and the Scarfe Charitable Trust.

The book was made possible following project funding by The Leverhulme Trust through the Institute of Archaeology, University College London working in partnership with the University of East Anglia, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service.

Lordship and Landscape in East Anglia AD 400–800 is available to order from the [Pen & Sword Books website](#).

The metal-detected finds from Rendlesham are held by Colchester and Ipswich Museums and will be on permanent display at Ipswich Museum when it reopens.

Suffolk and East of England councils seek fairness in the face of energy projects

Suffolk County Council is joining with other local authorities in the region to challenge National Grid and the government on energy projects, demanding fairness for their communities and environment.

The county councils from Suffolk, Essex, Norfolk and Lincolnshire all face similar challenges with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) being planned for their counties.

These are typically related to energy projects, including solar farms, wind turbines, pylons and the infrastructure associated offshore wind farms, such as substations and cabling.

Two of Suffolk County Council's main concerns, shared with the other counties, are:

- The uncoordinated approach to NSIPs - this is creating significant challenges for Suffolk's rural communities under the current planning policy as applied by the planning inspectorate and Secretary of State
- The government's 2030 target for decarbonising the electricity grid – this is too hasty, making it impossible to deliver alternative solutions to pylon projects like Norwich to Tilbury

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Cabinet Member for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, said:

"Along with colleagues from neighbouring county councils, we are asking government and National Grid for fairness to our communities.

"Unbelievably, many energy projects are simply not being coordinated, even those proposed by the same umbrella organisation. This means upheaval for local communities, unnecessary infrastructure, construction and disruption – all of which is preventable, if only there was some organisation.

"Successful motions at our full council meeting last week (12 December 2024), saw references to the impacts that significant energy projects will likely bring to Suffolk – which are also felt across Essex, Norfolk and Lincolnshire. For example, many energy projects significantly threaten Suffolk's best and most versatile farmland, our rural communities and landscape."

Suffolk County Council has had a longstanding position to support the need for low carbon energy to provide energy security for the country, and the progress to net zero – but not at any cost.

Cllr Rout continues:

"The government's urgency to decarbonise the grid by 2030 is causing damaging decision-making and threatening the food security, habitats, and natural beauty of our countryside and its communities.

“It means the only solution for grid upgrades to projects like Norwich to Tilbury, are pylons. There are other viable alternatives, such as offshore or underground cabling. These options have still not been properly costed, despite what the government or National Grid may say, and are likely to prove more beneficial and efficient if given suitable consideration and time.”

‘Your county needs you’ – search gets underway for new Armed Forces Commissioner for Suffolk

Suffolk is seeking a new Armed Forces Commissioner.

The successful candidate will play a key role in supporting the UK Armed Forces community in the county for a three-year period from mid-March 2025.

This voluntary, non-political role includes chairing the Suffolk Armed Forces Covenant Board, set up by Suffolk County Council and partners to ensure that those who serve or who have served in the UK Armed Forces and their families, are treated fairly.

Suffolk is home to Wattisham Flying Station, RAF Honington, Rock Barracks near Woodbridge, plus reservists based in Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich, RAF Honington and Lowestoft.

There are an estimated 30,000 veterans in Suffolk of which around 10,000 are of working age.

The Board’s work includes help with wellbeing for veterans and families, encouraging GP practices to become ‘Veteran Friendly’ accredited, and providing additional educational and emotional support for children from service families.

Lee Holloway, the current Armed Forces Commissioner for Suffolk and a former naval officer, said:

“It has been a privilege to lead the county’s Covenant Board in supporting our Armed Forces.

“There is an increasing and diverse range of support services which have come about through partnership working whether they are delivered by professionals or indeed volunteers. I wish my successor the very best of luck.”

Councillor Mick Fraser, Armed Forces Champion at Suffolk County Council said:

“This is a fantastic opportunity for someone to provide independent leadership to Suffolk’s military community, whilst also working closely with our council and other partners to drive organisational change that’s of real benefit for our Armed Forces.

“I’d like to thank Lee Holloway for all his work over his term. I have no doubt that we’ll find the right replacement and would urge those interested to come forward and apply now.”

Anyone wishing to apply must be able to volunteer 16 days (split into 32 half days) of their time in total each year, but it is not a prerequisite for a candidate to have directly served in the UK Armed Forces.

They will, however, need to learn about issues affecting the local UK Armed Forces community – consisting of regular military, the reserves, service families, veterans, and cadets.

Applications for the voluntary position will be accepted until 5pm on Friday 17th January 2025, to enable the successful candidate to start their three-year appointment in mid-March 2025.

Further information on the vacancy, application process and Suffolk's Armed Forces Covenant can be found at: www.suffolkmilitarycovenant.org.uk

Consumers warned by Trading Standards to look out for dangerous faulty goods

Suffolk Trading Standards is warning consumers to be on their guard over the festive period against unsafe products from abroad which find their way on to the UK marketplace.

Thousands of goods have been intercepted at Port of Felixstowe by Suffolk Trading Standards Imports Team so far this year, and with Christmas approaching the demand for products rises seized.

Since January this year 349,000 consumer goods were checked by Suffolk Trading Standards Imports Team at the Port of Felixstowe and were refused entry into the UK because they were unsafe or non-compliant, but some do still slip through the net.

Graham Crisp, Head of Suffolk Trading Standards, said:

“The Port of Felixstowe is a huge gateway to the UK and our officers work extremely hard to intercept these dangerous items before they reach the marketplace.

“However unsafe goods can still slip through and I urge the public to be on the lookout for them and to let us know as soon as they come across them.”

Examples of products stopped include:

- 74,565 toys
- 104,983 electrical goods
- 62,815 lighting kits, of which approximately 45% were fairy or Christmas lights, including outdoor lighting
- 38,248 cosmetics
- 965 e-scooters
- 30,898 chargers and adaptors
- 2,900 unsafe telescopic ladders

Officers also detained 500 counterfeit 'Dyson' hair dryers. When testing was conducted the products were found to be an electrical shock and fire risk.

The product overheated, did not cut off, started to smoke and both externally and internally the product started to melt.

The plug was incorrectly rated and the fuse fitted did not meet the requirements of BS 1362.

Other products that raised cause for concern were consignments of 300 unsafe air-fryers, 900 pet heating blankets, 3,000 fan heaters and 2,000 unsafe wall chargers.

Many of these products were destined for sale by third-party sellers on online marketplaces.

Councillor Steve Wiles, Suffolk County Council Cabinet member for Public Protection, said:

["The work of Trading Standards in trying to keep us as consumers safe from dangerous and shoddily-made goods cannot be praised highly enough."](#)

["The numbers of items intercepted reflects the need for people to be vigilant about what exactly they are buying, particularly online."](#)

When looking for dangerous goods, signs that a product is unsafe or dangerous, can include:

- Faulty wiring in an electronic appliance
- Misleading or poorly spelt labels
- Unclear instructions and/or absence of safety markings

Safety risks for consumers to be aware of include:

- Small magnets and button batteries that are easily accessed in toys and products that are appealing to children could cause choking and harmful side effects if swallowed
- Danger of electric shock or fire risk from unsafe electrical products
- Exploding lithium-ion batteries in unsafe e-bikes and scooters
- Collapsing telescopic ladders presenting a serious risk of injuries
- Banned ingredients found in cosmetic products, such as hydroquinone in illegal skin-lightening creams and non-compliant gel nail kits
- Children's clothing that could present strangulation risks
- Infant products that could cause suffocation

The Government department responsible for Product Safety, The Office for Product Safety and Standards provides the funding for Trading Standards officers to operate at UK ports and borders.

Anyone unsure about the safety of products in England and Wales can contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133.

For more information about the work of Trading Standards across the UK go to the Chartered Trading Standards Institute at <https://www.tradingstandards.uk/>

Suffolk councillors to consider devolution and council reorganisation

Suffolk County Council will hold an extraordinary meeting of councillors, and a meeting of its Cabinet, to debate and then decide on whether or not to put Suffolk forward for the government's new devolution and reorganisation programme.

The government has required that formal notice be given if Suffolk wishes to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme by 10 January 2025. Therefore, the meetings, both to be held on 9 January 2025, will see all 75 councillors debate and vote on a proposal to recommend Suffolk is at the front of the queue. Following the Full Council meeting, the Cabinet will make a final decision.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

"The government has set out its devolution and reorganisation proposals and has asked that Suffolk County Council submit an expression of interest by 10 January if we wish to be part of the Devolution Priority Programme. As a result, we must hold these extraordinary meetings. On 9 January, all Suffolk County Councillors will be given an opportunity to have their say before a final decision is made by Cabinet.

"Changes of this scale create an opportunity to streamline local government, empower joined-up decision making, save taxpayers money and ensure councils are resistant to economic challenges.

"I welcome the positive engagement of Suffolk's district and borough councils. This is a significant decision and one that will not be taken lightly."

On 16 December, the Government published its much-anticipated [English Devolution White Paper](#), outlining plans for broader and deeper devolution coupled with a programme of coordinated local government reorganisation.

Key to the proposals is a reorganisation of council structures, particularly in two-tier areas like Suffolk, with a shift away from district, borough and county councils towards unitary councils. The government argues that unitary councils can deliver better outcomes for residents and save money that can be reinvested in public services.

For most areas, the government says that this means creating councils serving populations of 500,000 or more, with exceptions where they make practical sense.

Alongside reorganisation, the government is also proposing to create new Mayoral Authorities – with a single directly elected Mayor covering larger geographies (for example

Norfolk and Suffolk) and with powers over strategic policy areas like transport infrastructure, health improvement and blue light services.

At this stage, no decisions have been made about what will happen in Suffolk.

The meetings will be held consecutively from 2pm in the King Edmund Chamber at Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX. The meetings will be live streamed on the council's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/SuffolkCC>

Papers for the meetings can be viewed at <https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk>