

County Councillor Report

March 2026

COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTION

The election due in May 2026 has now been reinstated, following a previous decision to defer it. This will be to elect County Councillors for the remaining period that Suffolk County Council is in existence, until 01 April 2028. Elections will be contested on revised Division boundaries, returning 70 Councillors rather than the current 75. I intend to stand in the election, and hopefully continue to serve you to the best of my ability. My Division remains very little altered, still covering Walton and the two Trimleys. It will now be called "Walton And Trimley" rather than "Felixstowe North and Trimley".

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

Our Chief Executive, Nicola Beach (in post since 2018) is leaving the role at the end of March 2026. The controlling Conservative Group has considered how to replace her. Legally we have to have a nominated Head of Paid Service. With the position due to be abolished in April 2028, it would have been difficult to recruit a suitable candidate. Therefore it has been decided to appoint two joint Chief Executives from within our organisation. The role has been offered to and accepted by our two most senior and experienced Directors, who will combine the function with their existing jobs. These are Andrew Cook, Director of Growth, Highways and Infrastructure; and Mark Ash, Director of Organisational Change and Devolution. The proposal has been endorsed by the Staff Appointments Committee, and has to be formally ratified by Council on 19 March. Not only is this a pragmatic decision, it will also save money. The two Officers will receive an increase in salary, but this will be considerably less than the salary for a replacement Chief Executive.

HIGHWAYS ENFORCEMENT TRIAL

Suffolk County Council is to launch a trial scheme to remove vehicles that are blocking highways resurfacing work. The move comes following repeated issues with vehicles across Suffolk that have been left in roads where works are scheduled, despite advance warnings they were due to take place. This has led to the cancellation of entire resurfacing works or small areas being left where vehicle parking has prevented access for equipment.

Offending vehicles will be either moved to a safe place in line of sight from where they were parked, or to a secure compound in Bury St Edmunds. Any vehicle which is moved to enable works to go ahead will be subject to a £70 Fixed Penalty Charge Notice, reduced to £35 if paid within 14 days. Vehicles taken to the secure

compound, due to there not being a suitable location near the works area to move the vehicle to, will also be subject to additional fees to recover their vehicle. The trial scheme will be introduced in March and will cover the Suffolk Highways resurfacing programme up to May 2026.

Removal of vehicles will be a last resort but unfortunately there are occasions when it is necessary. Each time a resurfacing scheme has to be cancelled costs the Council Tax payer money, as well as the frustration of having to reschedule and notify residents again. Each abortive visit where works are unable to take place costs in the region of £15,000. This cost covers items such as wasted material, plant, labour and equipment hire. Abortive works also impacts future programmed work delivery.

Under the removal scheme, the process would see:

- A temporary traffic regulation order (TTRO) advertised six weeks before work starting.
- Warning signs erected and letters delivered to nearby residents and businesses, clearly detailing whether vehicle removal will be imposed, 2 to 3 weeks prior to the works date.
- No parking cones placed in the road and any vehicles parked on the road at the time of visit will have information cards placed on the windscreen two days before works start.
- On the day, a District Civil Enforcement Officer will issue PCNs, offending vehicles photographed then relocated safely with the police informed.
- Offending vehicles will be either moved to a safe place in line of sight, or if this is not possible to the secure compound in Bury St Edmunds,
- Contact numbers and references will be left on site for the owner to call to locate/collect vehicle.

DAMAGED VERGES IN MORSTON HALL ROAD AND INNOCENCE LANE

I am currently engaged in dialogue with County Highways concerning the damage to these verges, following the recent diversion of traffic due to the A14 being closed because of an accident. I received a further communication today confirming that the sites do not meet criteria for intervention. I have referred this to the Cabinet Member stating that this is totally unacceptable. If repair or reinstatement action is not taken the verges will remain rutted, unsightly and scruffy. If such damage is not rectified then our public realm slowly deteriorates, and residents' amenity and pride in their environment is diminished.

COUNCILLOR STUART BIRD B.A.(HONS)

COUNTY COUNCILLOR FOR FELIXSTOWE NORTH AND TRIMLEY DIVISION

TOWN COUNCILLOR FOR FELIXSTOWE PORT WARD