

PUTTING SUFFOLK COMMUNITIES FIRST

Our Strategic Priorities



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Introduction

Suffolk has entered a new chapter.

Residents voted for change because they wanted a county council that is honest about the challenges it faces, serious about reform and focused on protecting communities across our county.

For too long, people have felt disconnected from decision making. Infrastructure has struggled to keep pace with growth, roads have deteriorated, services have become increasingly stretched and taxpayers have too often been left wondering where their money is going.

This Strategic Statement sets out the direction of Suffolk County Council under Reform UK leadership.

It establishes our priorities, defines the principles that will guide decision making and creates a framework for accountability across the authority.

Our administration will be guided by a simple principle:

Communities must come first.

This means:

- residents' voices are always heard
- being transparent with Suffolk's residents, whether or not things are going well
- relentless focus on delivering better services and at less cost to the Suffolk taxpayer
- prioritising the frontline services that everyone values

- more innovation than you've ever seen from this council
- opposing inappropriate large housing developments
- ruthless efficiency in how we operate.

This document will not sit on a shelf gathering dust. It is a strategic outline of this administration's policy priorities and will guide departmental planning, spending priorities, procurement, performance management and service delivery across the council. Crucially, it provides a framework for a more detailed corporate strategy that we will publish later in 2026 and where you will see our truly unique approach to leading public services.

Progress against these priorities will be monitored regularly and reported publicly.

We will be honest where challenges exist, ambitious where improvement is possible and determined to restore confidence in Suffolk County Council.



Councillor Michael Hadwen
Leader of Suffolk County Council

Our Governing Principles – how we will work

Everything Suffolk County Council does under this administration will be guided by five core principles.

1. Honesty and Common Sense

Residents deserve absolute transparency about how we spend their money, how we are performing and how decisions are made – whether or not things are going well.

We will publish information clearly, explain major decisions honestly and tell people about challenges directly.

2. Managing Money Responsibly

Every pound of taxpayer money must be treated with care and respect - as if it were our own.

We will slash waste, get better deals from the companies we buy from and focus spending on the frontline services that matter to everyone.

3. Residents' Needs First

Policies and projects must actually benefit Suffolk residents, not bow to pointless targets or political fads.

Local people, local services and local voices must always come above everything else.

4. Getting Things Done

The council must become more responsive to people's needs, move quickly and decisively and focus on results that matter. Too much time spent on processes and bureaucracy means we're not improving lives.

We will prioritise delivering better services and tear up processes that get in the way.

5. Pride in Suffolk

Suffolk is a county with a proud history, strong identity and enormous potential.

We will protect and celebrate our heritage, environment and way of life while preparing Suffolk for the future.



Priority Actions – what we will do first

Rebuild Trust

We have a responsibility to rebuild public confidence in Suffolk County Council.

We will work with staff to:

- conduct in-depth reviews of how the council works and how it spends public money
- be transparent with the findings (subject to commercial sensitivity)
- improve how big decisions are made
- boost scrutiny and accountability
- overhaul how we buy in supplies and services from third parties.

We will ensure Suffolk County Council becomes a modern, fully accountable and transparent authority.



Fix Suffolk's Roads

Suffolk's road infrastructure hasn't had the investment it needs for many years.

We will:

- wage war on the pothole crisis
- support and challenge our highways service to be more innovative and make improvements that people will visibly notice
- press for long term solutions to A14 resilience and traffic congestion in Ipswich
- campaign for the Government to make improvements to the A12, A14 and A11
- prioritise key rail infrastructure upgrades, such as the Ely and Haughley junctions
- improve bus services and travel choices for Suffolk's communities.

Infrastructure investment must put the needs of residents first.





Prioritise Frontline Services

In one way or another, Suffolk County Council touches the lives of everyone in Suffolk. This is especially noticeable and significant through our vital frontline services that people rely on heavily.

We will prioritise those services, while making the council ruthlessly efficient in its management and support services.

This means saving money where we can to reinvest where it is needed most.

We will focus on the services that make the biggest difference to people's lives.

Right Start in Life

Every child and young person in Suffolk deserves the best possible start in life, and opportunities to thrive. To do this, they - and their families - need our support. Working with schools, partners and families, we will give that help early, protect the vulnerable and create opportunities for children and young people to succeed.

We will:

- give children the best start in life, from pregnancy through to school and beyond
- provide the right support at the right time, preventing problems from escalating
- protect vulnerable children and young people from harm
- deliver SEND reform with partners, creating an education system that supports those that need it
- strengthen specialist support in mainstream schools so children get a good education closer to home
- shape services with children, families and partners, not just for them
- support children in care and care leavers to be safe, ambitious and successful
- help young people prepare to be independent, healthy and employed adults who are part of their community.

The right support, in the right place, at the right time - for children and young people in Suffolk.



Responsible Growth

Housing and economic growth must work for Suffolk's existing communities.

Sustainable development, economic investment and creating high-quality employment opportunities must be properly planned and supported by necessary infrastructure – like post offices, schools, doctors' surgeries and dentists. It's not enough to assume that services that exist now can cope with future demands.

We will:

- robustly challenge inappropriate large housing developments
- fight for vital community facilities to be built
- protect the character of Suffolk's towns and villages
- ensure planning decisions fully take into account the impact on local people
- work constructively with major employers and support small and medium-sized businesses

- support investment in our major growth sectors, where Suffolk plays a critical role in the wider UK economy
- ensure local residents have the skills they need to get the jobs they want.

Growth must improve quality of life, not undermine it.



Defend Suffolk Life

Suffolk's coastline, countryside, farmland and historic communities are among our greatest strengths. They must be protected for future generations of residents and visitors.

We reject the expensive and ideological "climate emergency" agenda adopted by the previous administration. It places unnecessary financial burdens on residents while delivering little measurable local benefit. This administration will be practical, balanced and community-focused.

We will:

- review and end wasteful net zero projects that do not provide clear value for Suffolk residents and redirect spending toward frontline services
- defend Suffolk and our agricultural way of life from inappropriate solar farms and other large infrastructure projects on productive farm land
- resist major projects that damage Suffolk's coastline, countryside or communities without meaningful local benefit

- support flood and drought resilience
- protect Suffolk's heritage, local identity and culture
- champion Suffolk's farming, fisheries, tourism, food and coastal industries
- promote responsible stewardship of the county's natural environment
- protect Suffolk communities from fire and other threats through prevention and emergency responses.

We can support growth while protecting the communities and landscapes that make Suffolk unique.



Reforming the Council

Suffolk County Council must be an organisation that delivers for residents.

We will work with senior staff to:

- demand high standards and celebrate success
- recruit people based on merit, not ideology
- train and promote our staff
- strengthen internal communication
- promote seamless cross-department working.

This administration is committed to the rule of law. We will comply with all legal obligations while using every legitimate democratic and judicial tool at our disposal to protect Suffolk's interests.

Other than those required by law, we will eradicate all divisive diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) objectives and policies from this council.

We believe in treating every resident and member of staff with equal respect and dignity, regardless of background or identity. Council resources will be refocused on delivering fairness for everyone, based on individual need and not group identity - putting our communities first.



Protect Suffolk from Local Government Reform

Suffolk's communities should not be divided by costly and disruptive Government meddling.

We believe the proposed Local Government Reorganisation will fragment services, weaken accountability and create unnecessary bureaucracy – costing tens of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money and putting vulnerable people at risk.

This administration will fight to protect the services that we provide to our residents.

We will:

- explore all available legal and democratic avenues to oppose proposals that are not in Suffolk's best interests, including Judicial Review
- resist proposals that divide Suffolk into competing authorities
- fight for fair and equal countywide services
- ensure local communities retain a strong voice in decision making

- ensure that any devolution deal is in the best interests of Suffolk and continue to call for real devolution with power to the County Council
- be a strong voice at the table so that Suffolk's interests are always represented
- if needed, stabilise services during any national reform process.

Residents deserve effective local government focused on them, not years of costly reorganisation and inward-looking upheaval.



Our Commitment to Suffolk

This administration will work differently to those that came before.

We will be honest about challenges, transparent about decisions and focused on Suffolk residents above all else.

We will put communities first and work every day to rebuild confidence in Suffolk County Council.



Our Plan on a Page

Communities Must Come First. That principle sits at the heart of everything we do. Our Strategic Priorities set out how Suffolk County Council will focus on the needs of residents, protect valued services and deliver practical improvements that make a difference to communities across the county.

At the centre is our commitment to communities, supported by five guiding principles: Honesty and Common Sense, Managing Money Responsibly, Residents' Needs First, Getting Things Done, and Pride in Suffolk. These principles will shape every decision we make and the way we work as an organisation.

Around these sit our eight priority actions: Rebuild Trust, Fix Suffolk's Roads, Prioritise Frontline Services, Right Start in Life, Responsible Growth, Defend Suffolk Life, Reforming the Council, and Protect Suffolk from Local Government Reform (LGR). Together, they provide a clear focus for action and a framework for delivering better outcomes for Suffolk residents.

This plan is our commitment to being transparent, accountable and focused on results. By putting communities first, we will work to rebuild confidence in the council and ensure Suffolk remains a place where people, families and businesses can thrive.



This information is issued by:
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