

Lavenham Parish Council report by Robert Lindsay County Cllr 4.6.26

New County Council

At our first meeting of the new County Council last month, Michael Hadwen, a Reform Councillor from Felixstowe was elected as leader of the Council and he announced his appointments to his cabinet. Greens have formed the official opposition group. I am the opposition spokesman for Highways and transport.

Ukraine and the new Reform administration

At the first meeting, my group tabled a motion saying the council supported the translation services the council provided. This was voted down by the Reform UK councillors. Reform UK's campaign literature had criticised the spend on translation services saying it was for those "refusing to integrate".

Most of the spend was for the Homes for Ukraine scheme, launched when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, supporting unaccompanied children seeking asylum and sign language for the deaf. Shortly after this the Reform administration took down the Ukrainian flag at its headquarters in Ipswich, raising the St George cross instead.

The Council raised the Ukrainian flag in solidarity with Ukraine when Russia invaded them in 2022. Cllr Hadwen, the new council leader, was himself criticised at the meeting for saying some years ago after the Salisbury poisoning that "Russia is not our enemy".

Latest Update on Local Government Reorganisation

Following the government's decision that it was minded to approve creation of three unitary councils in Suffolk, the councils in the county have banded together to create a website to provide the public with information on the plans and timeline for the changes. If all proceeds as planned, elections for the new 'shadow' authorities will be held next May in 2027, with the councils up and running from April 2028.

However, the Reform UK leadership at Suffolk County Council have announced that they will be making a legal challenge to the government about this decision, on the basis that they do not want the county split in three. Norfolk and Essex county councils, who are also run by Reform, are also challenging the reorganisation decision in their counties.

For information on the plans for Local Government Reorganisation in Suffolk, please see link to the website here: <https://www.suffolklgrhub.gov.uk/>

SEND service inspection

A new inspection report says the County's special educational needs services has improved, with the backlog of EHCP plans having been cleared but, it says, there are still many issues that it needs to tackle, particularly in communication with families, and between the NHS, schools and social care.

The SEND department is having to restructure itself to better handle EHCPs and there

appears to have been a recent rash of staff sickness. That put the department into “business continuity” on May 21st which means it is just prioritizing key work for, they estimate, a fortnight.

Unitaries legal challenge

Suffolk’s Reform administration has now sent its “pre-action” letter asking the Government to explain its decision and will consider initiating a judicial review if “a satisfactory response is not received”. I expect the Government will be easily able to explain its decision and I do hope Reform will not continue to waste untold amounts of tax payers money and time on this.

Suffolk’s Climate emergency rescinded, net zero “review”

Reform have, predictably, said they will review all actions taken as part of the climate emergency declared by the County Council in 2019. As I have said in an earlier report, the actions taken by the Council under net zero do not actually need reviewing, since that happens every year anyway and they have been found to have saved £4.8m a year.

Both the legal challenge and the net zero review are being mirrored by Reform controlled Norfolk and Essex and appear to be headline-grabbing stunts organized at the instruction of Reform Head Office.