

Report for Lavenham PC by County Councillor Robert Lindsay 3.4.25

Local Government Centralisation:

As predicted, the County Council's Conservative administration's submission to Government is for one unitary authority for the whole county.

The District Councils and Ipswich Borough are asking for preferably three or if not, at least two.

The Councils must submit their full business cases by mid-September but the Government is not yet saying which it prefers but may give some indication later this month.

Alongside this, a new directly elected Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk will be created as a whole new tier of government including a staff and potentially leaders of the unitaries. The mayor will be able to levy a precept to fund his or her office, so the idea that overall costs will be cut looks unlikely. This move is not really about cost savings or devolution in my view, it is more about Central Government wish to gain greater control of local authorities to more easily push development – or “growth” as they call it.

The current Government proposed time table of elections:

May 2026: The postponed Suffolk County Council elections are theoretically timetabled for May next year, but it is widely considered that the government is likely to postpone this again for another 12 months – so it is unlikely there will ever be another County Council election.

May 2026: The election for Mayor of Norfolk and Suffolk is scheduled to happen

May 2027: Elections for Parish Councils and for “shadow” unitary councillors.

May 2028: Suffolk County and Babergh district councils will dissolve, new unitary council(s) will commence.

Challenge to County's decision to take Suffolk Libraries in house refused:

Following the Cabinet decision in mid-March to take the libraries in house, both my group – Green, Lib and Independent - and the Labour group submitted requests that the decision be ‘called in’ – a process by which an issue can be tabled at a meeting of the council's Scrutiny Committee to be looked at more closely. Both the requests were rejected by the Council on Wednesday 27 March after being reviewed by the Council's Monitoring Officer.

Lower speed limit in Bildeston has cut average speeds:

A speed survey conducted by Highways in Bildeston a year after the 30mph limit was replaced by a 20mph limit shows that average speeds on the High Street dropped by 24% in northbound direction and 10% in the south bound direction.