

Report for Lavenham PC 23.9.25 by Robert Lindsay, County Councillor

Footway from Green Willows to connect to rest of village

I was pleased to hear that the parish's CIL bid for this, from the district's pot, has been approved. This, I think, is the first funding for a pavement Babergh have ever approved from its CIL pot and it has been something of a precedent for Babergh and County Highways working together. Now that Highways has the funding it is up to Highways to deliver it and I know this can be a very lengthy process. Both the County Council and Babergh council will dissolve in 2028 so it is important I and the Parish keep on at Highways and their contractor to complete the pavement before then.

Tree on High Street

I have been liaising with Highways and closely with the resident who has been afflicted by a lime tree shedding branches on to their gate and pavement on the High Street, damaging the gate, several times over the past few months. At the time of writing, Monday 22nd, I have been promised a meeting with their arboricultural officer who has assessed the tree after each incident. Highways is still insisting this not an emergency but have said they are scheduled to prune it next month i.e. October.

Donkey sanctuary looking for new home

I heard that horse and donkey charity French's Care Haven, which rescues unwanted animals and also offers mental health therapy for humans, is about to be evicted from the land it rents near Groton. On contacting founder Jann Turner, I learnt that it is seeking to purchase 20 acres of grazing land within a ten mile radius of Hadleigh. I said I would let my parish councils know in case they knew of anyone who might be interested in selling. Jann's contact details are on her website:

<https://www.frenchscarehaven.org.uk/>

One Suffolk or three Suffolk councils?

We had an interesting debate at an extraordinary county council meeting designed to get the council to endorse the Conservative administration's proposal for one unitary council, to be submitted to Government by the end of this month. The endorsement was carried by the majority Conservative vote but all opposition councillors (save 2 Reform) voted against, believing that most residents (who will not get to vote on this) prefer councils and councillors that are closer to them.

The business case makes much of cost savings, which they say will be used for funding market towns and 16 area committees (and somehow creating a "pro-active highways service that says 'yes' more often"). But their paid consultants say these savings won't emerge until five years after the merger, long enough to cast doubt on whether they will emerge at all. Also, how any surplus is spent will be entirely up to whatever administration is elected to the new unitaries, not the current one at the county council, elected 5.5 years ago.

The Government is expected to make a decision around March, but this could slip. Starmer recently sacked the minister, Jim McMahon, in charge of the process.

Slap on wrist for using public money to promote "one Suffolk"

In your August meeting I mentioned the Conservative administration's spending of public money to promote their plan for a Suffolk mega unitary.

We estimate that marketing spend has now ratcheted up to about £140k.

It turns out that after this was publicised, the Government issued a letter to all chief executives of local authorities saying:

"We would like to also take this opportunity to remind you of your responsibilities under the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authority Publicity. Please do take care in having regard to ... the principles of objectivity and even-handedness and particularly paragraph 16 which states that local authorities should not use public funds to mount publicity campaigns whose primary purpose is to persuade the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy."

County council AND Mayoral Elections May 2026

The Government's official position since December 2024 was that County Council elections would be postponed for 12 months until May 2026. There was much speculation that this would again be cancelled because people would only be electing a body that lasts for two years before being dissolved. However as that date creeps ever closer, without any change of heart from Government, it is looking more and more likely that Suffolk County Council elections will be held then, at the same time as the Norfolk Suffolk Mayoral elections.

Progress on recycling household waste including food waste

New Government rules coming into force next year rightly insist councils must now collect and recycle glass and foodwaste and more plastics from the doorstep.

District councils are responsible for collecting the rubbish and the county council has to handle it at the depots.

On Tuesday 15 July, the administration decided to put £5.9m into updating the recycling centre at Great Blakenham so that it can handle more recyclable waste. Biffa runs the centre and this means it will charge them less for the service.

Separately, the council has signed a four-year contract to process all the county's food waste collected from the kerbside from next year at Adnams' anaerobic digestion plant near Southwold. The waste will be used to generate biomethane that can be connected to the gas grid and also used as a fuel for Adnams' lorries. The residue can be turned into fertiliser for nearby farmers.