

SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL
HELD IN THE TOWN HALL ON TUESDAY 10TH FEBRUARY 2026 AT 7.00PM

Present: Mr A Welsh – Mayor of Sudbury, in the CHAIR
Mr N Bennett Miss A Owen
Ms J Carter Mr T Regester
Mr K Graham Mr N Younger
Mr J Jeagar

In attendance: Mr C Griffin – Town Clerk
Ms L Smith – Babergh District Councillor

1. APOLOGIES AND APPROVAL OF ABSENCES

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs M Barrett, Mr S Hall, Ms E Murphy, Mr A Osborne, Mrs J Osborne and Mr A Stohr.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillors Ms J Carter, Miss A Owen and Mr T Regester declared that they were also Babergh District Councillors.

Councillor Ms J Carter declared that she was also a Suffolk County Councillor.

3. DECLARATIONS OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

No declarations of gifts or hospitality were made.

4. REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

No requests for dispensations had been received.

5. TO CONFIRM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

Confirmation of the minutes was deferred until the private and confidential session at the end of the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the council meeting held on 13th January 2026 are an accurate record and are to signed by the Chairman.

6. QUESTIONS AND REPORTS**a. Public Forum –**

- A member of the public expressed his frustration at the poor quality of road repairs in the Sudbury area. Members sympathised with him and asked County Councillor Jessie Carter to pass his concerns on to Suffolk Highways.

b. Policing Report – The police had attended an earlier meeting with some councillors to discuss local issues. The Mayor had passed on the concerns raised about dangerous driving in Mayflower Road during school drop-off and pick-up times.

c. Mayor's Announcement – The Mayor confirmed that he would be holding a charity event on the evening of 17th March and he hoped many members would be able to attend. He would also be walking a 26 mile route from the Abbey at Bury St Edmunds to Sudbury Town Hall on 8th April and was looking to raise as much money as possible through sponsorship for his charities.

d. County Councillors' Reports – Councillors Ms J Carter had sent in her report, which had been circulated before the meeting, and is included at **pages 134 to 137**. No points were raised for discussion.

RESOLVED

That County Councillors Ms J Carter be thanked for her report.

e. District Councillor's Report – Councillor J Carter had sent in her report, which had been circulated with the agenda, and is included in **pages 138 to 139**. No points were raised for discussion.

RESOLVED

That District Councillor Ms J Carter be thanked for her report.

7. TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES

Planning, Development and Highways Committee on 26th January 2026 and 9th February 2026 – The Chair summarised the minutes.

Finance Committee on 3rd February 2026 – The Chair summarised the minutes.

Leisure and Environment Committee on 27th January 2026 – The Chair was not present but the members discussed the minutes.

8. TO SET A DATE FOR THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Chairman informed member that the date of the annual town meeting needed to be set by the council and must fall between 1st March and 1st June each year.

RESOLVED

That the annual town meeting take place on Wednesday 1st April 2026, starting at 7:00pm.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC (WHICH TERM INCLUDES THE PRESS)

That pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s.1(2), the public be excluded from the meeting for the business specified in items 9 and 10 as the publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

9. TO EXPLAIN THE FUTURE STRATEGY FOR FLINT LODGE

RESOLVED

See CONFIDENTIAL Annex A, minute pages 140 to xxx.

10. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL LEGAL, CONTRACTUAL AND HR MATTERS

RESOLVED

See CONFIDENTIAL Annex A, minute pages xxx to xxx.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 8:31pm.

Chairman

DRAFT



Report for February 2026 to Sudbury Town Council - From Jessie Carter (SCC Councillor)

Date: 06/02/2026

Email: jessie.carter@suffolk.gov.uk

Phone: 07955 434411

Bus Improvements

Last week I met with someone from Transport Made Simple Group, who operate Konectbuses' and Simonds' buses across Suffolk and the rest of East Anglia.

I spoke to him about the desire for a circular bus in Sudbury, which would include the new Aldi placement, the health centre and the need to stop along Waldingfield Road. I was informed that there is a proposal for a reduction in services on the 42 / 60 buses (not affecting the Bury St Edmunds service) to Halstead & Braintree, they will merge and become a 2 hourly service. If the proposal is accepted, it will happen 10 / 12 weeks after acceptance.

We spoke about efficiency and reliability and to combat this there are future plans (not happening this year) to break down the Bury / Colchester / Braintree route.

Making three separate routes.

Balingdon Street Crossing

I met with Sudbury's highways engineer as I received a 2nd report of an incident on the Balingdon Street Crossing. I have asked before and had been told there was no one to put a sign due to it being a conservation area and also no room for bollards, but a requested has been put in to remark the crossing. I will update the highways committee on whether this will happen or not.

Bus Gate, Chaucer

After speaking with Cllr West I can confirm that the TTRO, which was required to undertake trial holes prior to the works, has now been cancelled, as SCC will look to do these during construction to minimise disruption to the local community.

It is my understanding that SCC has requested a change to the materials used for construction of the gate. Previously, timber rail fencing was going to be used, but a decision has now been taken to use hoop barriers instead.

This change has resulted in the requirement for a revised design, which highways are currently in the process of finalising.

However, the revised design will require review and approval from an engineer and will also need to be signed off collectively by SCC and their Construction team. This will not be an instantaneous process, and a Road Safety Audit may also be necessary to inform the design and subsequent estimate.

Due to the above, it is unlikely that a final estimate and works order can be raised before

March. Once this has been received, the Construction team will then be able to schedule the works in, and Cllr West will then be able to provide me with an indicative date for completion.

Secondly, SCC are currently looking at implementing our Moving Traffic Enforcement powers in the summer of this year. The initial sites will be in Ipswich, as detailed in the Cabinet Report from about 2 years ago. Once these are up and running, SCC will then consider new sites (on a priority/cost benefit basis) - however, this is not likely until 2027 at the earliest.

Local elections in May 2026 postponed

At council on Monday 12 January, a debate was held in the morning about the resource implications of an election in May on the delivery of Local Government Reorganization in Suffolk. The Conservative administration unanimously voted down an amendment proposed by my group that the council was in favour of the elections going ahead, although we spoke passionately about the importance of Suffolk voters getting to have their say. A Cabinet meeting was held following the council debate, where the administration voted unanimously to write to the government outlining capacity concerns that might be felt if elections were to go ahead. On 22 January, the government announced that the elections in Suffolk, and in 28 other councils around the country, would not take place in May this year.

The elections were postponed already in May 2025, so this second postponement means county councillors will be serving a seven-year term instead of four years. As part of the Local Government Reorganization process, unitary councils are due to be in place in the county from April 2028.

Council budget 2026-27

At Cabinet on Tuesday 27 January, the budget for the 2026-27 financial year was presented for approval. The council is planning to raise council tax by the maximum 4.99% this year, reflecting the serious financial concerns it is facing. The budget for 2026-27 is forecast to overspend by £5.9m and the council will need to draw that from its reserves to balance the books. It is also planning savings of £46.5m across the council to make ends meet, and is predicting a budget 'gap' of £23.4m for 2027-28 and £24.6m by 2028-29 which it will need to fund by savings. Cost pressures for the council include care purchasing in adult social care, high-cost social care placements for children and young people and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Regarding SEND, the council holds a 'negative reserve', a debt of education funding under the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) that the government allows it to hold until 31 March 2028. This is a national issue rather than just relating to Suffolk County Council, but the council will not be able to repay it if the government calls it in: by the end of 2027-27 it is forecast to be -£252.3m. Although the council is allowed to hold the debt, it is spending millions on interest costs to service the debt, by 2027-28 the cost of that will be £8.9m. There are also concerns about the amount of money the Local Government Reorganisation will cost the council. This is currently estimated as £47.8m overall, but will be divided between all Suffolk councils.

Net Zero Carbon Report

Also coming to Cabinet on Tuesday 27 January was the annual report on the council's efforts to reach net zero carbon by 2030. In view of the Local Government Reorganisation and Suffolk County Council not existing past 2028, the target has been adjusted to a 63% reduction in emissions by 2027-28 and will only include scopes of emissions that the council is in direct control of – that is, excluding things like its supply chain, or staff commuting to work. In addition, to reflect the financial position of the council, any measures taken by the council towards this will now have to create an in-year financial saving: this means that the financial benefit from it must be greater than the cost. The work undertaken so far for the net zero programme has saved the council many thousands of pounds, for example changes to the heating controls in Endeavour House should reduce energy costs by £30k each year, and a new car park solar array and battery storage at Beacon House is expected to save more than £50k a year. The council is also involved in a heat network project in Ipswich to heat large buildings using energy from the River Gipping.

Suffolk Roads Rated Red by UK Government

The government recently released RAG (Red, Amber, Green) ratings each county based on how effectively they use the government's highways maintenance funding. Suffolk's road maintenance was rated as Red, the worst category. This has struck a chord with residents in the county, who have been clear that they agree and want the quality of Suffolk's roads to improve. Suffolk County Council's administration, however, has denied that the rating is accurate, saying that overall the condition of Suffolk's roads are rated Amber, with the overall Red rating being arrived at because the Department for Transport did not include in its assessment £10m of highways funding that it brought forward from the 2025-26 financial year and invested early in a resurfacing programme in 2024-25. The council has met with the Department for Transport to press for the Suffolk rating to be raised to Amber, pointing out that Department for Transport data shows that only 3% of the county's A roads is in poor condition, which is better than the England average. In addition, in December the council received £2.9m from the Department for Transport's Incentive Fund, which rewards authorities with a record of good performance in highway maintenance.

New 20mph Policy

At Cabinet on Friday 9 January, a new 20mph speed limit policy was approved with the aim of making the process for communities to apply for a 20mph speed limit easier and more streamlined. From now on, any application for a new 20mph limit in an area where recorded average traffic speeds are 28mph and under is likely to be approved by the council. The local county councillor must also be in favour of the change, and there should be majority support from residents. My group pointed out that the new requirement to prove majority support for the new speed limit was likely to make the process more onerous for town and parish councils rather than less. The council states that local engagement needs to be carried in the community, for example a survey or

consultation of residents living on the roads/in the area. Any new 20mph limits will also still need local funding to be in place, unless the scheme aligns with a council programme as part of the Local Transport Plan. The new policy is based on recording speeds as follows:

- Below 28mph – likely to be accepted, with a speed limit sign only, although signs warning that a 20mph zone is ahead may be required
- Between 28 - 32mph - unlikely to be acceptable with signing alone. Gateway signing and traffic calming throughout the area may be required
- Above 32mph - Unlikely to be acceptable without extensive traffic calming measures such as road humps, plus night-time lighting. It would also be subject to a Road Safety Audit

You can read the new policy here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/imported/20mph-speed-limit-policy-criteria.pdf>

DRAFT



Babergh Report

February 2026

By Cllr Jessie Carter

Car Parking Charges

Cabinet agreed by majority to go ahead with increasing car parking charges.

This was backed up by independent evidence showing that the parking charges brought in last January haven't had a noticeable negative impact on town centres. Charges remain in line with nearby areas, season tickets and concessions are still available, Blue Badge holders continue to park for free, and there are still some free parking options. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cllr Smith & Cllr Hendry for their questions and their debate during the cabinet meeting.

Sustainable Travel Working Group

Cabinet agreed to disband the Sustainable Travel Working Group, as it's now completed the work it was set up to do.

Hamilton Road

The wasteland at Hamilton Road has now been cleared.

Local Government Reorganisation Consultation:

There's a statutory consultation underway on the future structure of local government in Suffolk, which closes on 11 January 2026. This consultation invites views on two main proposals for how council services could be delivered in the future:

- A model with three new unitary councils covering west, east and south Suffolk, backed by district and borough councils; or
- A single unitary council for the whole county, proposed by Suffolk County Council.

The three-unitary option, known as "Suffolk to the Power of Three," aims to:

- Provide more locally focused services and improve accountability;
- Make faster decisions tailored to local communities; and
- Improve efficiency and financial sustainability with projected savings and reinvestment in services.

This is an important opportunity for local residents, businesses and organisations to shape how services like planning, housing, waste, and social care are governed in the future, so I encourage councillors and our community to engage with the consultation while it's still open.

Helping Households Eat Well and Save Money

There's a new free resource available for residents that aims to help people eat healthier meals, cut down on food waste and save money on food shopping.

Through a partnership called Feel Good Suffolk which includes Babergh & Mid Suffolk councils working with other councils and NHS partners households across Suffolk can now get free premium access to the FiveDinners.com meal-planning website for this year. Normally this service costs about £86 per year, but residents just need to sign up with their postcode and district no payment details needed.

Once signed up, people get weekly personalised meal plans and fully tailored shopping lists that can be adjusted for numbers in the household and dietary needs (like vegetarian, gluten-free, low cost, quick meals, etc.). The idea is that planning meals this way will make it easier to cook healthy food, cut down on waste and reduce overall food bills.

It's a straightforward way for families and individuals to get support with meal planning and food budgeting, while also helping reduce food waste in our community.

Inspiring Creative Careers for Young People

On 26 January 2026, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, working with East Suffolk District Council and MENTA, launched a new programme called *Careeriosity* aimed at helping young people explore career opportunities in the creative industries. The initiative is designed to bridge the gap between education and employment by providing free hands-on experiences, industry insights, practical workshops, and talks so that participants can better understand what careers in creative sectors look like and what routes are available to them.

Careeriosity is open to young people aged 12—25 across the Babergh, Mid Suffolk, and East Suffolk areas, and participation is completely free. The programme focuses on building curiosity, confidence and clarity about future pathways — including apprenticeships, further education and employment — and connects them with real industry professionals who can share insights about skills and opportunities.

Councillors involved have highlighted the importance of giving local young residents access to creative skills development and real world career advice, helping them see the full range of innovative and exciting opportunities available locally and beyond.