A Summary for the Little Cornard Annual Parish Meeting 2025
10 Key Activities for the year.

➢ New Independent Chair appointed to drive forward SEND reform. – April 23

Suffolk County Council can announce that Kathryn Boulton has been appointed as the new independent chair of the Local Area Partnership's SEND Improvement Board. She has 37 years of experience working in children's services, most recently acting as Corporator Director of Children and Family Services at Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision is delivered by the Local Area Partnership in Suffolk, which includes Suffolk County Council, NHS Suffolk and North-East Essex Integrated Care Board and NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board.

- The SEND Improvement Board was set up in response to the inspection of SEND services in Suffolk in November 2023
- Councillors approved an extra £9.1 million **for SEND services** in **July 2024**
- **In January 25 -** Department for Education welcomes SEND improvements and evidence of impact, but all recognise there are still challenges to overcome.

➢ Over 400 Suffolk roads set for upgrade as largest ever surfacing project gets underway – May 2024

Residents across Suffolk are set to benefit from 421 newly surfaced roads this year (1 April – 31 March)- almost doubling the number of roads completed last year, as Suffolk Highways' largest ever resurfacing programmes got underway. This will be completed in early April 25.

➢ East of England local authorities collaborate to appeal for more Foster Families - June 7000 in care - 150 new per month

Eleven local authorities across the East of England have joined forces in a bid to collectively recruit more foster carers to look after some of the region's most vulnerable children.

Suffolk is taking part in a new initiative for fostering under the banner Foster East. There is an urgent need for foster carers in the East of England with more than 7,000 vulnerable children already in the care of their local authority, **and a further 150 children coming into care every month.**

The is has led to having access to powerful new films promoting the importance of local fostering. – on the Suffolk website. Visit fosterandadopt.suffolk.gov.uk

➢ Suffolk County Council Backs Youth Justice Plan with a focus on keeping families together.

Suffolk County Council has backed the Youth Justice Plan 2024/25 **at a meeting of Full Council on 11th July.**

The plan has a focus on supporting young people into education, training and employment and reducing the numbers of young people offending, supporting the council's ambition to keep more families together and to keep Suffolk safe. Each year the Suffolk Youth Justice Management Board produces a Youth Justice Plan for Suffolk.

- **Council's shock at £600m Sunnica solar farm go-ahead in West Suffolk – August 2024 – post election**

  Suffolk County Council has expressed its extreme disappointment that a huge solar farm has been approved in West Suffolk. **The Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Ed Miliband MP**, has announced that approval had been granted for the Development Consent Order, as proposed by Sunnica Ltd. **The project will see 2,792 acres of solar panels and battery storage, installed across parts of West Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. – Surrounding 3 villages.**

- **Suffolk residents will be able to access electric vehicles on a short-term basis, from next summer September announcement**

  A trial of electric community vehicles is set to launch next summer in Suffolk, with the tender process beginning this autumn. **Plug In Suffolk Car Clubs** will be placing sixteen electric vehicles across eight locations in Suffolk which local residents can book by the minute, hour or day. Planned locations include Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket**, Sudbury,** Needham Market, Stowmarket, Lowestoft and Woodbridge.

  Members of the public interested in this project are urged to sign up to the mailing list to receive updates as the project progresses – search**: *Plug in Suffolk Car Clubs - Mailing List***.

- **Solar Together launches in Suffolk – September 2024 -**

  Residents of Suffolk can come together to invest in renewable energy **sources through a group-buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage**. Solar Together Suffolk helps homeowners feel confident that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from qualified installers. Over 3000 residents had signed up by October 24

  Richard from Bures, near Sudbury, recently shared his experience *with Solar Together Suffolk* and said:
  "*Excellent! Solar Together Suffolk took all the hassle of finding a provider, and the group-buying secured me a better discount than trying to do this on my own. It was a no-brainer.*"

- **Suffolk County Council set on major investment to further protect Suffolk from flooding as it calls on Government to 'step up' - October 24 – 12 months on from Storm Babet.**

  - SCC set to agree £1.5 million to deliver first phase of works identified in initial flood investigation reports
  - ***Authority calls on Government to recognise ongoing impact of Storm Babet and fund £20 million of further prevention work urgently needed***
  - Extensive work already completed since Storm Babet including more than 111,000 drains cleared and significant road repairs

- **The County Council leaders have proposed one council for Suffolk**

  One council for Suffolk would make delivering public services simpler, cheaper and quicker, and better meet the needs of residents and businesses, county leaders have said.

  Following a recent government announcement that Suffolk's county, district and borough councils will be replaced with a single-tier system, Suffolk County Council argues that consolidating all services under one unitary authority is the only effective way to deliver against the government's criteria for local government reform.

The move would see all council services, such as waste collection and disposal, housing, social care, planning, highways maintenance, leisure, school placements and travel and street cleaning, all provided by one authority - rather than the six that currently exist in Suffolk. Bringing together district, borough and county council functions is expected to reduce duplication, lower administrative costs and ensure a more coordinated and cost-effective approach to delivering essential services.
The council warns that splitting services among multiple bodies would force the duplication of essential functions - such as social care, highways maintenance and schools - currently managed at a county level.

The key benefits of one council are:

- **Simpler for residents** – one council would make it easier to understand and contact local government
- **Clearer accountability** – there would be less confusion over who is responsible for what
- **Better use of funding – a more coherent, strategic, financially sustainable, county-wide approach to budgeting**
- **Better alignment of services** – since everything is under one roof, services can be more easily coordinated, creating opportunities to improve services for residents
- **More efficient decision-making** – with just one council, decisions can be made more quickly
- **Stronger leadership** – a single, visible and accountable body providing a clear strategic voice for Suffolk.

The council submitted its initial proposal to the government **by 21 March***, with a more detailed business case to follow later in the year***. The government will then undertake a public consultation.**

➢ **Council's budget prioritises vulnerable residents and essential services**

Suffolk County Council has unveiled its proposed budget for 2025/26, with a strong focus on supporting vulnerable residents across the county.

Under the proposals, the council's net budget would rise by 6.7%, from £752.9 million in 2024/25 to £803.7 million in 2025/26. Key allocations include:

- £18.1 million extra for children's services, ensuring continued support for young people and families in need
- £35.2 million extra for adult care, aimed at addressing the growing demand for social care services.

To help fund these essential services, the council is proposing a 4.99% rise in Council Tax. This would consist of a 2.99% increase in general Council Tax and an additional 2% specifically for adult care services.

In conclusion may I thank all the Parish Council members and parishioners for their support to me during the year.

James Finch - 20 May 2025