Suffolk County Council Report – Constable Division

October 2026
By Darius Laws

Access to Swimming Facilities

It is incredibly disappointing that Kingfisher Swimming Pool has had to close due to safety concerns. I am worried about overall swimming capacity in South Suffolk and have asked Suffolk County Council's Cabinet to take an interest in this because our children must have access to swimming lessons and the opportunity to learn this vital life skill.

Ipswich and Orwell Bridge Transport Plans

We welcome the proposed transport plans for Ipswich and the Orwell Bridge but believe there is also a need for practical short-term solutions while any new route is developed, as it is unlikely to be delivered before 2040 at the earliest.

It is important to keep all options on the table in order to find a long-term solution for Ipswich and Suffolk residents, particularly when the Orwell Bridge closes and congestion in and around Ipswich worsens. We have raised concerns about the option of building a tunnel, which was previously considered but removed from earlier business cases due to its significant cost.

We will continue to monitor the development of the business case, ensuring that local communities are properly heard through consultation and that any solution delivered for Suffolk represents good value for money.

We also urgently need rail network upgrades to enable more freight to be transported by rail rather than on our roads. This is something our region's MPs and business leaders have long called for, but ultimately the Department for Transport must approve the necessary infrastructure improvements.

Concerns About Restrictions on Councillors Asking Questions

We have serious concerns about the new administration's approach to scrutiny and transparency.

In response to a question from our (Conservative) Group Leader at the September Cabinet meeting, the Leader of the Council stated that he intended to bring forward "resolutions to protect the constitution and officers from harassment in terms of questions from councillors". He also suggested there was "an inappropriate number of questions and requests being put to officers".

These comments followed questions from opposition councillors to the Monitoring Officer regarding the Council's decision to launch a judicial review against the Government concerning Local Government Reform.

Despite promises of openness and transparency, these proposals suggest the opposite approach. Attempting to restrict the questions councillors can ask council staff risks undermining legitimate scrutiny and democratic accountability.

We will continue to press for transparency, proper scrutiny, and clear answers on behalf of Suffolk residents. Councillors have a responsibility to hold the administration to account, and residents deserve answers to legitimate questions about decisions that affect their communities.

Redmere Wind Farm Proposal

We have outlined our opposition to the proposed Redmere Wind Farm, which could see up to 31 turbines, with a maximum tip height of 220 metres, constructed across Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

We are calling on the current administration at Suffolk County Council to ensure that the views of residents and businesses are fully considered throughout the planning process. The scale of the project would have a significant impact on the landscape across the three counties and could affect both the environment and nearby communities.

Suffolk Creates 648 New School and SEND Places

At least 648 new school and SEND places have been created for Suffolk children and young people this academic year, including 243 specialist SEND places delivered through an £8.6 million investment in additional provision across the county.

The new capacity includes:

- 405 mainstream school places
- 243 additional SEND places

The programme supports the Council's strategic priorities, including a commitment to giving children and young people the best possible start in life by ensuring they can access the right support at the right time and in the most appropriate educational setting.

It also reflects an ambition to strengthen local education provision and ensure that children and young people with additional needs can receive support closer to home wherever possible.

New Family Help Service Makes Support Easier to Access

Since 1 September, families contacting the service, either directly or through referrals from professionals such as teachers, GPs or health visitors, have experienced a much simpler approach to accessing support.

Instead of navigating multiple services and repeating the same information, families now receive a single assessment, one family plan, and a dedicated practitioner to coordinate support. This means families should only need to tell their story once.

Family Help supports families facing a range of challenges, including school attendance, emotional wellbeing, parenting, SEND needs, and wider issues affecting family life.

The service forms part of Suffolk's wider Families First transformation programme, which is bringing services and safeguarding partners closer together around children and families.

Alongside Family Help, Suffolk is testing a new Multi-Agency Child Protection Team, bringing together professionals from children's social care, police, health and education. The model aims to strengthen information sharing, improve decision-making and provide a more coordinated response when children are at risk of significant harm.

The trial will run for 12 weeks and, if successful, will be rolled out across the county from March 2027.

When a family gets in touch, practitioners work with them to understand their circumstances, identify what support may help, and agree a plan tailored to their needs.

By bringing services together, Family Help makes it easier for families to access the right support at the right time, helping children stay safe, healthy and achieve their full potential.

Referendum on Asylum Centres

At the recent Full Council meeting, the ruling administration brought forward a motion calling for referendums to be held before asylum seekers could be permitted to stay in Suffolk.

In my view, this seemed largely pointless, as any referendum, potentially costing up to £1 million, would be purely advisory and have no binding effect. On that basis, I abstained from the vote, as I do not believe taxpayers' money should be spent on symbolic gestures with no practical outcome.

Meanwhile, councils across the country continue to spend valuable time debating national and international issues, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict. While these are undoubtedly important matters, they are not issues that local councils have the power to resolve.

Time and again, residents tell me they want councils to focus on the basics and deliver essential local services effectively. Improving our roads and fixing day-to-day issues remain key priorities for many people.

On that basis, I will continue to escalate issues affecting our area of Suffolk. You can help too. If you spot a pothole, damaged road sign, faded road marking, or other highways issue, please report it via:

https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/highway-maintenance/report-a-highways-issue

You will have noted recent new road markings in around Bear Street Nayland, I impressed upon Suffolk Highways the urgency of the yellow lines outside the school and I'm told that further line

markings will happen soon. I also note one of the Nayland 'entry' signs to the west of the village has fallen over and I'm told a replacement will be here soon. Speeding in the village remains an occasional problem and I know some people want 20 MPH whilst others just want enforcement of the existing rules, our volunteer speed watch do their best but it is impossible to police every idiotic driver. I continue to welcome views on the speed limits in Nayland.

Finally...

Thank you for taking the time to read this update.

You can contact me at **darius.laws@suffolk.gov.uk** or via WhatsApp on **07786 007560**.

I always welcome hearing from local residents about issues affecting our communities.