

January 2026 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Statement on provisional local government finance settlement 2026 to 2027

Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council's deputy leader and cabinet member for finance, economic development and skills, said: "We are deeply disappointed by the government's [provisional local government finance settlement](#). Our current understanding is that Suffolk County Council now faces a £6 million budget gap — £3.5 million worse than we had previously forecast. "This is despite government assumptions that councils will raise Council Tax by the maximum amount every year, and the introduction of a so-called 'fairer' funding model. In reality, the government has shifted resources towards metropolitan areas at the expense of rural counties like ours, while injecting very little new money into the system. "This settlement makes an already difficult financial position even more challenging. We will continue to press for a genuinely fair funding formula that properly reflects the needs and costs of delivering services in rural communities."

Hidden batteries could spark Christmas chaos: How you can stay safe

Items such as toys, power tools, vapes, small gadgets and even cards can contain hidden batteries, and sometimes it is not possible to remove them. If these items and their batteries are not disposed of correctly, they can explode and cause huge blazes at recycling centres and waste transfer stations, or even at home. The warning comes from Suffolk County Council, FCC Environment and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, in order to prevent avoidable fires. Do not put batteries or items containing batteries in any of your bins at home. Take them to the battery recycling point at your local recycling centre, or local shops – [use the battery recycling locator](#) to check your nearest location.

If you are unsure if your item contains a battery, do not throw it in any of your bins at home, take it to your local recycling centre for experts to check. Incidents can also delay bin collection services, reduce opening hours at recycling centres, or even close them – and this time of year, is when the industry is at its busiest. FCC Environment operates 11 recycling centres and three waste transfer stations on behalf of Suffolk County Council, and has seen a sharp rise in the number of fires fuelled by wrongly disposed batteries and electronic items. In April, a battery sparked a fire at FCC Environment's Red Lodge site near Newmarket which took eight days and 660,000 litres of water to extinguish, causing £60,000 of damage. Hidden batteries start real fires, and we're urging residents across Suffolk to take care this Christmas and dispose of batteries and items at local battery recycling points across the county. If not recycled properly, subsequent fires endanger the lives of recycling centre staff, firefighters and local residents. We've seen first-hand in Suffolk how incorrectly disposing of batteries can pose a danger to the environment and local communities.

Incidents can also delay bin collection services, reduce opening hours at recycling centres, or even close them – and this time of year, is when the industry is at its busiest. Statistics from the National Fire Chiefs Council suggest that there were over 1,200 preventable battery fires across the UK in 2023, up by over 70% from 2022. Fires caused by batteries in recycling centres are completely avoidable. By removing batteries from items before disposal and following the guidance provided, you can help prevent dangerous incidents and keep our communities safe. Please take that extra moment - it really does make a difference. For more information about recycling batteries and other items, visit www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk

Firefighter applications surge as Suffolk boosts female representation

Applications to join Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) have surged by 32% compared to last year, highlighting a growing interest in a career that makes a real difference to local communities.

This year's recruitment drive also saw a significant increase in female representation among successful candidates, with women making up 17.2% of the recruitment pool compared to 11.7% last year, which represents a 38% rise. This marks an important step toward building a workforce that truly reflects the communities it protects. The campaign drew applications from across England, and even attracted one candidate from Wales, highlighting the strong appeal of a career in the fire and rescue service, and the commitment of those willing to travel to pursue their chosen profession. This year, 389 people applied, up from 280 in 2024, demonstrating that more individuals than ever are motivated by a career in public service. To ensure fairness and consistency, SFRS hosted a series of mandatory taster sessions to launch the campaign, giving candidates the best possible introduction to the role of a firefighter. These sessions provided an opportunity to meet crews, tour stations, and receive guidance on preparing for each stage of the process. PPE measurements were also taken to ensure readiness for later assessments. Due to high demand, an additional taster session was hosted, alongside a virtual option for On Call firefighters, Wholetime transfers, and those unable to attend in person. It is anticipated that 64 candidates will be added to the Service's recruitment pool, ensuring there have suitable applicants available when firefighter positions arise. This represents a 100% increase on last year's pool of 32. For information about future recruitment opportunities, visit [Current Vacancies - SFRS](#).

Primary school application deadline approaches

Applications should be made for children born between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2022 who are due to start primary school from September 2026. An application for a full-time school place must be made even if a child is already attending a nursery class in an infant or primary school, a pre-school or a family hub next to a school site. Parents and carers need to apply for a school place by the closing date of 15 January 2026 to make sure they have the best chance of securing a place at their preferred school. It is important that parents and carers consider how they will get their child to and from school before making a school application. We also recommend applying for more than one school and up to three schools can be listed in order of preference. If you are planning to move house, or you think your circumstances may change before September, it is still essential to make an application on time using the child's current address. Further information to help parents and carers with this process is available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions.

Applications should be made online as this will mean parents and carers will receive a confirmation of their application. They can then log onto the online service on the National Offer Day (Thursday 16 April 2026) to see their school place offer and they will also be sent an email to confirm this offer on the same day. If a parent or carer is unable to apply online then they should complete a paper application (CAF1), however these cannot be acknowledged, so it is suggested parents and carers obtain proof of postage. For those who completed paper applications, offer letters will be sent out by second class post on the National Offer Day. School Travel eligibility is based on a child attending their nearest suitable school that would have had a place available. This might not be the catchment area school. To find out more about SCC's school travel policy please visit www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel. Applications can be made at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions, where further advice and guidance is also available.

Alternatively, parents and carers can call 0345 600 0981 for a paper application (CAF1).

Last year, Suffolk County Council offered 96.3% of children a place at the primary school their parent or carer listed as their first preference when they applied on time. If parents and carers do not apply by the closing date, their application may not be dealt with until after places have been offered to those who applied on time.

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