

June 2025 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Proposal to create one new council for Suffolk reaches latest milestone

Work will continue on proposals to scrap Suffolk's six councils and replace them with a new, single, fit for purpose, authority delivering all public services - after the Government encouraged further work on the plan. The proposal, which independent analysis by accounting firm PwC shows would save over £104 million in just five years and £26 million a year thereafter, has been reviewed by the Government. The money saved could be reinvested in vital public services. Ministers have urged the proposal to be developed further ahead of the final plan being signed off in September 2025. The Government is encouraging all councils in Suffolk to continue to develop proposals for reorganisation. It's clear from their interim feedback that our single unitary council for Suffolk proposal best meets the criteria, and any alternatives will have to work hard to justify the risks of breaking up critical services like social care, creating new council boundaries and smaller population sizes. This is all quite apart from the significant extra cost of having more than one council. All the evidence shows that one council for Suffolk is the only viable option to deliver significant savings that can be reinvested into frontline services. In the first five years, early independent figures suggest a single council will save £104 million, while breaking Suffolk into three, as the districts and borough suggest, will cost taxpayers an additional £52 million. To be clear - their proposal would cost more than the current 50-year-old system! The savings from creating a single unitary council can be reinvested into frontline public services that benefit residents and ensure their council tax is as low as possible. The funding could be reinvested in services like pothole repairs, waste collection and disposal, housing, social care, planning, parks and leisure, supporting town centres, school placements and travel and street cleaning. But this isn't just about money, it's about people too. A single council will absolutely be able to reflect and serve the whole of Suffolk, rural and urban, and our plans will clearly show how local priorities and residents' voices can and will be central to decision making. If we're going to create a truly sustainable and effective council structure for Suffolk, then one new council is not just the only viable option, but also the best one.

More than one council would cost more. Creating two or even three councils for Suffolk, including a Greater Ipswich, has also been proposed by the five district and borough councils in Suffolk. If three were created, it would mean expanding Ipswich's current boundaries to include areas like Felixstowe, Woodbridge and possibly even Needham Market – as well as the villages in between. But having multiple councils would actually cost money, not save it, and the costs will take years to get back. A key part of this calculation is the cost of breaking up critical public services such as social care. The national report by PwC has shown that the financial cost of breaking up services into three councils would be over £150 million, not to mention the risk to vulnerable people caused by the upheaval.

It's time to shine the light on communities in Suffolk

The Suffolk Community Awards 2025 will recognise and celebrate all those who have improved the quality of life for communities across Suffolk. The Suffolk Community Awards, now in its sixth year, is brought together by Community Action Suffolk, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Association of Local Councils. This year's award ceremony is set to be another prestigious, heart-warming event showcasing the excellent work and achievements of individuals and groups across Suffolk, being recognised by 18 awards, including a new entry which will recognise one local councils' response to climate change. Other award categories range from youth participation and young person of the year to community building, contribution to volunteering, most active communities and council, councillor, young councillor and clerk of the year. Nominations are now open and must be made by Sunday 13 July at www.suffolkcommunityawards.co.uk

Once received, all nominations are carefully considered and judged by an expert panel before being announced at the award ceremony which will take place on Tuesday 23 September from the Museum of Food in Stowmarket. The event will be hosted by former BBC Radio Suffolk breakfast presenter, Mark Murphy MBE. The Suffolk Community Awards event organisers said:

“Volunteers, community leaders and organisations across Suffolk are the beating heart of the county. Their hard work, dedication and innovation makes Suffolk a better place to live and work. Our 3 organisations greatly value the massive contribution that the voluntary and community sector makes to our wonderful county. That is why we work together to host these awards. To recognise and celebrate their outstanding contribution to Suffolk life.”

These awards are a vital opportunity to shine a light on the remarkable efforts of our volunteers, community leaders, and local organisations. Their dedication continues to make Suffolk a fantastic place to live and work, and it's a privilege to recognise their exceptional contributions to our communities. To make a nomination for the Suffolk Community Awards, go to www.suffolkcommunityawards.co.uk

Suffolk man guilty of selling counterfeit goods

John Cooper, 65, of Rowan Close, Haverhill, who traded as John's Menswear, sold fake designer goods that included the brands Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, Gant, Tommy Hilfiger, Fred Perry and Lacoste. Cooper pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing in January 2024 at Cambridge Crown Court to five offences under the Trade Marks Act 1994. At a hearing at Cambridge Crown Court yesterday, the Court sentenced Cooper to 9 months in prison, suspended for 12 months. He was also ordered to complete 75 hours of unpaid work. The hearing was heard in front of Recorder H Cohen who granted an Order under the Proceeds of Crime Act for Suffolk Trading Standards to investigate the financial benefit made by John Cooper from the sale of the counterfeit clothing. An investigation was launched by Trading Standards following the seizure of 768 clothing items from a stall run by Cooper at Bury St Edmunds market in August 2023. The clothing included shirts, t-shirts, polo shirts, shorts, underwear and hats, with an estimated street value of £21,171.16. The equivalent retail value of the seized goods if they were genuine items is estimated at £61,589.81. John Cooper first came to the attention of Suffolk Trading Standards in March 2023 when the trademark representative React Services UK alerted the service to the stall in Bury St Edmunds. Trading Standards contacted Cooper and advised him of his obligations and provided guidance on how to check the stock he was selling was legitimate. Cooper denied that the goods were counterfeit, claiming that they were last season's stock, as well as second hand, vintage, and refurb stock. Covert test purchases of clothing were carried out on the stall which were confirmed to be counterfeit, which resulted in the raid on 9 August 2023. Further investigations found that Cooper was also advertising the fake goods from a Facebook Group. Not only is counterfeiting an illegal activity, it also takes away custom from legitimate, local, hardworking businesses. I am fully supportive of the action taken by the council's trading standards team in bringing this individual to task. Counterfeit goods may appear to be a cheap alternative, but they are, by their very nature, inferior products and anyone involved in counterfeiting in Suffolk should expect a visit, loss of the goods they have purchased and potential legal action. Anybody with information on individuals selling counterfeit goods can contact the Trading Standards team in confidence by calling Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.

Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division

Tel : 01728 628176 Mob : 07824 474741 E-mail : matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk