



Cllr Chris Chambers

**Gipping Valley
Division**

www.chrischambers.uk

**May 2025
Report**



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Suffolk Highways launches weeds and grass management programme for 2025

Spring has sprung and Suffolk Highways has commenced its summer maintenance works, which will see teams cut thousands of miles of grass verges and treat 2,300 miles of weeds.

Grass cutting is scheduled to start in May, with the grass verges alongside A and B roads across Suffolk being cut first and receiving two cuts each summer.

Verges alongside smaller roads, such as the county's C and U class roads, will be cut once during the summer season.

Cutting is typically undertaken by tractors with a flail as this is the most efficient and effective way to undertake the vegetation works and dry weather is required as, similarly to household mowers, wet grass can clog the machinery.

These cuts are solely for safety purposes and district and borough councils will usually supplement these with amenity cuts throughout the year.

Suffolk Highways does not cut village greens, parks and open spaces, or rural verges that are not adjacent to the road.

Weed treatments have already commenced across the county.

Two treatments are applied to weeds in urban areas across Suffolk annually if it is deemed that the weeds may pose a safety risk due to obscuring visibility for road users or causing damage to pavements, kerbs, or surrounding walls.

Weeds in rural areas are not included in the annual weed treatment programme but will be treated on a site-specific basis if they are identified as being harmful or noxious.

All weed treatments are weather dependent and cannot be applied in high winds or if rain is forecast due to this reducing the effectiveness of the treatment.

Glyphosate is currently used for the treatment as this is not harmful to people or pets and has proved to be more effective than alternatives previously trialled in Suffolk.

However, a substitute for this is still being sought to support Suffolk County Council's continued ambition to protect and enhance the environment.

Further information on the [grass cutting programme](#) and [weed treatment programme](#), including the planned dates for this to take place in local areas, can be viewed on the council's website.

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99% of pupils receive a preferred primary school place on National Offer Day

99.36% of children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of their three preferred primary schools and 96.27% were offered a place at their first preference school.

Suffolk County Council received 6,695 applications from parents and carers indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2025.

Families who applied online can log in to the online service from today to see the school their child has been offered. They will also receive an email to confirm this offer unless they have indicated that they do not wish to. Letters will be sent to parents who made a paper application by second class post today (16 April 2025).

Once school places have been confirmed, parents need to consider how their child will get to and from school. If their child is eligible for Suffolk County Council funded school travel, they will receive an email by 9 May 2025 with details of how to opt-in.

Any parents or carers with a child born between 1 September 2020 and 31 August 2021 who have not yet applied for a school place should make an application immediately. Information on how to make an application can be found on the [School Admission pages](#) or by contacting Suffolk County Council on **0345 600 0981**.

For further information on how to view your offer online and guidance on what to do if you have not received your preferred offer, please read the [School admissions FAQ page](#).

Infrastructure reform could silence Suffolk's communities in 'energy onslaught'

Suffolk County Council has serious concerns about proposed reforms to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, as announced by government (Wednesday 23 April).

It is part of plans to cut by a year, the delivery of clean energy projects, public transport links, and other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

This has potential for a significant impact on Suffolk's communities who are at the forefront of many NSIPs including solar farms, offshore energy and nuclear.

One of the proposals is to remove the duty on project promoters to consult and engage with communities before a project is presented to the Planning Inspectorate. Further, the duty to have regard to any comments on voluntary consultations undertaken by a promoter is also proposed to be removed.

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Instead, there will be statutory guidance for developers with an expectation that consultation and engagement will still take place, prior to submitting an application.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs, said:

"These proposals to remove the duty on energy developers to consult with councils and local communities, are staggeringly tone deaf.

"Our communities need more and better consultation - not less. If the Secretary of State wants more opposition from local people to his decarbonisation targets, this is precisely the way to do it.

"For countless NSIPs past and present in Suffolk, local communities are rarely given the consideration and respect they deserve. These proposed changes claim to recognise community voices, but I fail to see how removing consultation can help make residents feel more involved.

"The minister may claim that these reforms will stop communities 'feeling fatigued and confused' with technical documents. However, I suspect these feelings are likely to be replaced with ones of anger and being ignored.

"Project proposers for large scale solar farms and the like, will be rubbing their hands together knowing that they can bypass community engagement completely and go straight to submitting their application. Engagement and consultation takes time and costs money, and given the amateurish approach we are already seeing from solar developers in the county it is highly unlikely that they will be willing to do this.

"Staggeringly, even if a developer chooses to undertake a voluntary consultation, the government is also proposing removing the duty to listen to what has been said.

"To publish such a radical amendment to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill just 24 hours before oral evidence was to be heard, has given no time for proper public scrutiny. It is an act of cowardice and only serves to further undermine public faith in the planning process.

"Our county is facing an energy project onslaught. I have previously described Suffolk's NSIP landscape as the Wild West – these proposed reforms sadly just reinforce my view."

Suffolk County Council will be submitting written evidence to the Bill Committee outlining its concerns and opposition to the proposed changes.

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OPINION: Suffolk's Local Offer to Care Leavers

Column by Councillor Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services.

There are around 900 Suffolk children in the care of Suffolk County Council.

Children come into care for all sorts of reasons, of the children I have spoken to it can be because they have been bereaved, because their parents are unable to care for them due to their own challenges, or because they are not safe at home. The children in care that I have met are the most resilient and brilliant children.

Leaving care can also be a difficult transition.

Care Leavers often do not have the help of a family, to seek out new opportunities, find somewhere to live, and support them to develop the skills to get them ready for life. That's where we come in.

Local Authorities have a collective responsibility to actively promote the life chances of children in care and care leavers and provide them with the best possible care and protection, as if they were our own children. This is known as being a 'Corporate Parent' and it means doing everything we can for every child in the council's care and every care leaver.

Put simply: we want our care leavers to have the same opportunities as other children, because they deserve that.

It can be actions that may seem little – simply being a listening ear or offering advice on every day issues can make a huge difference to a young person who has not had the family support that many of us may take for granted.

Most young people leave the care of the local authority at the time of their 18th birthday, but our support continues beyond this, as any parent's support would - to help our young people to adapt to independent living; be that through support to access further education, employment or housing.

Suffolk County Council's Leaving Care Service works in close partnership with other agencies, such as health, schools and colleges, employers and the voluntary sector to identify relevant opportunities for all care leavers across the county and beyond.

Working with our care leavers around the county, Suffolk County Council has agreed a Local Offer to care leavers, which describes what they are entitled to, what Suffolk County Council provides, and how care leavers can access support from a range of services, including support with accommodation, financial advice, wellbeing and relationship support.

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Turning 18 can feel daunting, with lots of familiar things coming to a sudden end. Our Staying close team works with young people to help them plan and prepare for moving on once they are 18. The team can support our young people with a smooth transition into housing, place they can call home, alongside a package of emotional and practical support as they transition into adulthood and develop the skills they need to achieve independence.

The Local Offer also includes support to ensure our young people have the skills and access to resources they need to take their first step into training or employment.

One way we do this is through The Family Business.

The Family Business is Suffolk County Council's innovative employment model, providing care leavers with employment opportunities. We do this by behaving as if they were our own children; being their champions and using our vast network to open the door to opportunities that they may not otherwise have access to.

It includes ring-fenced apprenticeships within Suffolk County Council, employment opportunities with local businesses, and a bespoke training and support programme through an 8-week Skills Academy, which prepares our young people for work to set them on the path to success.

Since its launch in September 2023, the Family Business has grown with more employers coming on board.

If you can support a Care Leaver with employment opportunities, we would love to hear from you. Please contact us at thefamilybusiness@suffolk.gov.uk.

To learn more about The Family Business, watch our film detailing the impact of the support employers could provide.

The Family Business is Suffolk County Council's innovative employment model, designed to empower care leavers on their journey to success. It includes ring-fenced apprenticeships, employment opportunities with local businesses, and a bespoke training and support programme.

Our [Local Offer to Care Leavers can be found here](#).

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