June 2026 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

I was humbled and honoured to be re-elected as your County Councillor in the May 2026 elections. I look forward to continuing to represent this wonderful part of Suffolk, as the best I can. Once again, a huge thank you and as always please do get in touch if I can help in any way.

Suffolk Conservatives announce new team at Suffolk County Council

Following the local elections on 7 May, the Leader of Suffolk County Council, Councillor Matthew Hicks, formally stood down as Leader of the Council at the Annual General Meeting on 21 May. Matthew has also decided that the time is right to step back from leading the Conservative Group. At the Suffolk Conservative Group's Annual Group Meeting, Councillor Richard Rout was elected as Leader and will now lead the group in opposition at Suffolk County Council. The Deputy Leader role will be shared, with Councillors Joe Mason and Beccy Hopfensperger being appointed.

Councillor Matthew Hicks said: "Following the local election results last week, while I remain Leader of the Council until its AGM on 21 May, it will then be time for a new administration to take control of Suffolk County Council. I would like to thank the many councillors, staff, stakeholders, businesses and community groups I've worked with for their hard work and diligence on behalf of our great county over the last eight years. Following the AGM, I have decided that I will return to the backbenches and, from there, do all I can to continue to achieve the very best for Suffolk's residents."

Locality Budgets and Local Highway Budgets

In 2026/2027, Suffolk's county councillors have been given a locality budget of £420,000, divided between them; each councillor has £6,000 to spend. Councillors are able to make recommendations about funding from this budget for local projects in their division, which should benefit the community. Last year groups and projects that benefitted included: village halls, sports and social clubs, and toddler groups. If you have a project that needs funding, please contact myself to make enquiries.

With Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) confirmed, and the creation of three unitary authorities from the 1st April 2028, a two-year allocation has been for the period to 31st March 2028. The total Local Highway Budget is £1,050,000, which is shared equally between the 70 County Councillors. This equates to £15,000 for each County Councillor. Local Highway Budgets are primarily intended for use on minor transport improvement schemes that are supported and/or promoted by the relevant County Councillor to address local needs and quality of life issues. It can only be used to fund capital work to Suffolk's highway and transport infrastructure and may be used in combination with other funding.

SCC Reform Group call for a Judicial Review of Local Government Reorganisation

Cllr Richard Rout, Leader of the Conservative Group at Suffolk County Council, has today responded to the decision by the Reform UK Group to call for a judicial review of the Local Government Reorganisation decision made by the Government in March. Responding to the announcement, Cllr Rout said: "It's well known that we believe the government reached the wrong decision on LGR. In fact, their proposals contain nonsensical boundaries and will doubtless cost more than the current system. However, not liking a decision is not grounds for judicial review. What has been described by Reform thus far sounds like a spurious scatter-gun approach – they don't even seem to know on what grounds they are challenging. To succeed, a judicial review needs to show the decision was

illegal, irrational, or procedurally flawed. A few short weeks ago, council staff were advising us none of those tests are met here. The irrationality bar is ludicrously high and even if a procedural flaw were found, the Secretary of State could simply make the same decision again. A judicial review that costs a fortune, goes nowhere but drags on for months.

Removal of Ukraine flag by new Reform UK administration

The Suffolk Conservative Group has condemned the decision by the new Reform UK administration at Suffolk County Council to remove the Ukrainian flag previously displayed at Endeavour House, describing the move as sending the wrong message at a time when Ukraine continues to suffer devastating losses due to Russia's illegal invasion. The decision also comes amid continued warnings from UK security agencies about growing Russian cyber threats targeting local authorities and public infrastructure in the country. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has repeatedly warned that Russian-aligned groups are actively targeting UK councils because of Britain's support for Ukraine.
It's hugely disappointing and divisive that one of Reform UK's first acts controlling the County Council is to take down the Ukrainian flag, which has flown here since Russia's illegal invasion. It would have been quite possible to install an additional flagpole to fly the St George's Cross, had they wished to do so. Reform's leader in Suffolk famously said, 'Russia is not my enemy' - it hasn't taken long for him to prove this. Clearly, he doesn't stand with Ukraine and is no friend of the displaced Ukrainian families that now call Suffolk home. In Essex, Reform UK at least had the courtesy to try to find a new home for the Ukrainian flag and attempted to liaise with the Ukrainian community. In Suffolk, no such steps have been taken, and we're simply told the flag is being stored by the council's facilities management team. During the previous Conservative administration, Suffolk County Council unanimously approved a motion condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine and supported efforts to assist refugees fleeing the conflict. Since then, the Homes for Ukraine scheme has supported more than 1,700 refugees who came to Suffolk fleeing the war.

Reform UK leader's controversial social media past overshadows first SCC Council meeting

At the first meeting of Suffolk County Council's new administration was plunged into chaos and overshadowed by the new leader's refusal to distance himself from past controversial statements on social media. A point of order raised by the leader of the opposition led to the Chairman of the council opening the debate, with challenges coming from across the chamber. Councillors called on Reform UK's new leader of Suffolk County Council, Councillor Hadwen, to distance himself from his previous conduct on social media, which included:

Stating that Russia was not his enemy, around one month after the Salisbury poisonings
Stating Enoch Powell 'was right'
Stating he would like controversial political commentator Milo Yiannopoulos to be his Public Relations Manager

Cllr Richard Rout said:
"It's hugely disappointing that the first meeting of this new council administration was totally overshadowed by the new leader's controversial social media past.
"This wasn't just a single comment; it is a pattern of behaviour that scares and alienates people across Suffolk. Not least the Ukrainian residents who now call our county home due to Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine.
"Given these comments were made some time ago, we thought it only fair, in the light of the huge public and staff outcry at these remarks, to give the new leader the opportunity to publicly address his past comments and distance himself from them. That he chose not to do so, and remained silent, is a huge shame as it was a real opportunity for a fresh start with our communities and council staff."

Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division
Tel : 01728 628176 Mob : 07824 474741 E-mail : matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk