

County Councillor Report March 2026

FLOODING ISSUES

Please see this statement from Paul West, Cabinet Member for Highways, concerning flooding. It relates specifically to Walton High Street, but contains more general advice on reporting flooding incidents :

Thank you for bringing the ongoing concerns regarding flooding at Walton High Street and High Road West to my attention. I have sought a detailed technical update from our Highways colleagues to clarify the current situation and the steps required to move forward. It is important to note that this is a complex, long-standing issue that Suffolk Highways has been actively monitoring since 2017. Detailed surveys of the catchment area have been conducted by specialists, which have identified the primary cause of the surface water ponding. While some minor defects were found in Highways assets, the major constriction resides within Anglian Water assets. Crucially, the entire drainage system for this area flows through an Anglian Water outfall pipe located beneath a private property on High Road West.

Extensive modelling shows that the drainage system is strictly constrained by the capacity of this specific Anglian Water storm sewer. Consequently:

- Highways works alone cannot resolve the problem; additional highway gullies would achieve very little as the "exit point" for the water is already at maximum capacity.
- A formal system upgrade from Anglian Water is required to improve the outfall pipe.
- Only once that downstream capacity is increased can Suffolk Highways effectively install additional measures to get water off the road surface faster.

To help prioritise this case for further action and potentially trigger a formal Section 19 Flood Investigation, we need robust evidence of the impact on residents. If five or more properties (homes or businesses) have experienced internal flooding during a single event, or if one property has suffered repeated internal flooding, the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) can escalate this to a formal investigation. This process can be a powerful tool in holding all Risk Management Authorities to account and prioritising investment. The steps for residents to take are :

- Report Internal Flooding: Please encourage affected residents and business owners to report any instances of internal flooding via the Suffolk Highways reporting tool.
- Provide References: If residents have already reported internal flooding, please provide us with the report reference numbers. We will review these as a matter of urgency to see if the threshold for a formal investigation has been met.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY MAINTENANCE

Suffolk County Council is responsible for 3500 miles of off-road public access footpaths and bridleways. These are supported by 3770 structures – bridges, boardwalks, revetments and signs. An investment of £3.9 million has been announced. This will allow for 735 priority structures to be repaired or replaced in the budget years 2026/27 and 2027/28. A survey has indicated that over the next 5 years 1800 structures will need to be refurbished or replaced. This vital investment is in addition to the £225,000 annual budget for infrastructure maintenance.

DAMAGED VERGES IN MORSTON HALL ROAD AND INNOCENCE LANE

I have lobbied Highways robustly on this issue, and raised it to the highest level, appealing to Paul West, Cabinet Member for Highways. I stressed that the shocking condition that the verges were left in following recent diversion of HGVs was unacceptable. If our environment is not maintained to a visually pleasing standard, our amenity and pride in where we live is reduced. Unfortunately, the decision to not intervene or take any remedial action has been upheld. This is not the result I and you wanted, and if it were my decision something would have been done to reinstate attractive green verges at those locations.

SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES

The results for children due to commence secondary school in September 2026 have been announced. There were 7742 applications in Suffolk. 92.9 % received their first choice, and 97.8 % received one of their three choices. For parents whose children did not receive one of their preferences, their names will automatically be placed on the waiting lists for those schools. Parents can also appeal against these decisions.

COUNCILLOR STUART BIRD B.A.(HONS)
COUNTY COUNCILLOR FOR FELIXSTOWE NORTH AND TRIMLEY DIVISION
TOWN COUNCILLOR FOR FELIXSTOWE PORT WARD