

Walton & The Trimleys County & Town Councillor Report for

September 2026

During the month of September, the following have been achieved:

1. Following a detailed investigation into the Dunwich Heath wildfire, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has concluded that the cause of the fire cannot be determined. While investigators were able to identify the general area where the fire originated, the severity of the fire meant that any potential evidence that may have identified a cause was destroyed. Although the cause remains undetermined, this incident serves as a reminder of how quickly fire can spread during periods of prolonged dry weather. We continue to encourage residents and visitors to take extra care in the countryside and follow wildfire prevention advice to help protect Suffolk's communities, wildlife and landscapes.
2. Suffolk County Council has set out the first phase of how it intends to strengthen resilience on the A14 transport corridor around Ipswich. The council's Cabinet was asked to give the go-ahead at its meeting on Thursday September 17th for work to begin on a Pre-Strategic Outline Business Case (PSOBC). This will see the council refresh the data around different potential options to relieve pressure on the road network and Orwell Bridge. Using the latest traffic modelling, updated forecasts, incident data, environmental constraints and cost estimates, the PSOBC will examine six traffic options. They are:
 - A. A replacement or alternative crossing of the River Orwell, without determining at this stage whether this would be a bridge or tunnel
 - B. A replacement or alternative crossing with a direct A12 link south of the A14/A12 Copdock junction
 - C. A northern by-pass route for Ipswich
 - D. An Upper Orwell-style town centre crossing in Ipswich
 - E. A resilience package, including local junction improvements, urban traffic management, incident management and operational measures
 - F. Assess how many people must switch to public transport or alternative travel to reduce traffic pressure

Continuing to call on the government for improvements at the Ely and Haughley rail junctions - capable of removing up to 98,000 lorry journeys a year – would form an important part of any strategy. Freight movements linked to Port of Felixstowe are forecast to grow, while major developments such as Sizewell C will add further demand on the road network. But the ageing Orwell bridge – opened in 1982 - will require increasingly significant maintenance, with two major sets of maintenance works anticipated between 2026 and 2031. The Cabinet were told that major infrastructure options could cost between £500 million and more than £1 billion and take seven to ten years or more to deliver, so government sponsorship and investment would be essential. Preparing the Pre-SOBC is expected to cost up to £300,000, funded from the Local Transport Grant already earmarked for resilience work. If approved, work on the Pre-SOBC is anticipated to take around six months, leading to an evidence and options report

around spring 2027. Subsequent stages could progress through the Department for Transport's business-case process toward potential construction from 2036, subject to Government gateways and funding.

3. The County Council is acting on early warning signs as budget forecasts at the end of Quarter 1 show an estimated £7.8m overspend in the council's 2026-27 budget. The 2026-27 budget was set by the council's previous administration in February 2026. Cabinet Papers published today confirm that the council is currently forecasting a £7.8m overspend if spending is to continue as it has done, by the end of this financial year. Now the council has issued a directive to its senior staff to take necessary measures to mitigate expenditure to reduce the forecast overspend.

4. Suffolk County Council's new administration is calling on the Government to level-up years of significant underfunding for the county's children and young people. Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, Cllr Simon Alders, has written to the Secretary of State for Education to demand action on what he describes as a longstanding funding injustice and to end the postcode lottery. In a letter sent to Education Secretary Lucy Powell MP, Cllr Alders sets out concerns that Suffolk continues to receive significantly less funding than comparable authorities for children's social care and education services. This is despite growing demand and a rising population. For children's social care, Suffolk allocates £957.92 per head. This is the second lowest spend compared to neighbouring counties – more than £200 less than children and young people in Norfolk, and well below the national average. In addition, the amount Suffolk receives per pupil for education services is £200 less than pupils in Essex. Suffolk receives £5,200 per pupil, with Essex receiving £5,400 and Norfolk £5,350. The national average is just over £5,250.

5. On the 16th September, the Felixstowe Town Assets & Services Committee held its meeting to discuss the towns assets and where investment is being made. The agenda to this meeting can be found at the following link and the minutes will be published in due course:

[Assets & Services - Felixstowe Town Council](#)

6. There was an event on 19th September to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Felixstowe Library. This was attended by the Mayor along with all 3 County Councillors for Felixstowe where a tour of the library was conducted. The library has had substantial investment of recent years which is enjoyed by all the community including a new archive storage unit for historic newspapers that was constructed by the Men's Shed in Trimley St. Mary.

7. 11 – 20th September involved Felixstowe Heritage days and was seen as a great time enjoyed by all. There were numerous places open within Felixstowe and surrounding areas like the Two Sisters that hosted the Trimley Station Regeneration Project. This was a great opportunity for the Heritage buildings like Felixstowe Museum and the Town Hall to encourage the public to enjoy the vast history that this peninsular area has endured and enjoyed over time.

8. The Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service received its first appliance from an upgrade of 11 appliances that are due to be delivered into the service during October. This is a planned fleet upgrade to replace aging equipment and provide the latest equipment to our service.

For constituents that wish to get in contact with myself, my email address is tristan.gale@suffolk.gov.uk and is the preferred method of contact, phone number is 07860 910565 which is a SCC phone that is not always monitored.

Councillor Tristan Gale

County Councillor for Walton & The Trimleys Division

Cabinet Member for Planning, Devolution and The Fire & Rescue Service

Felixstowe Town Councillor for the Walton Parish Ward