

Haverhill Town Council

Minutes of a Meeting of Haverhill Town Council's



FULL COUNCIL

Held on **Monday, 27 July 2026 at 7.00pm** at Haverhill Arts Centre, High Street, Haverhill

Present: Mayor L Miller-Jones
Councillor A Brown
Councillor J Burns
Councillor P Firman
Councillor P Hanlon
Councillor M Martin
Councillor J Mason
Councillor D Page
Deputy Mayor D Smith
Councillor L Smith
Councillor A Stinchcombe
Councillor J Teixeira

Apologies: Councillor B Davidson
Councillor Q Cox
Councillor J Crooks
Councillor A Luccarini

In Attendance: Colin Poole, Town Clerk (for item C26 109)
Vicky Phillips, Deputy Clerk
County Councillor Paul Littman
County Councillor Luke O'Brien

There was one member of the public present.

Welcome:

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised the meeting was being recorded.

MINUTES

C26 **Apologies for Absence**
/101 The above apologies were noted.

C26 **Declaration of Interests and requests for dispensation**
/102 None

C26 **Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held Monday, 29 June 2026**
/103 It was proposed by Councillor D Page, seconded by Councillor P Hanlon that the minutes of the meeting held Monday, 29 June 2026 be agreed as a true record.

RESOLVED

C26 /104 To note progress of actions arising from the minutes not covered by this Agenda
None

C26 /105 Reports from District/County Councillors on issues pertinent to HAVERHILL and the PUBLIC FORUM

a) Police Report:

None

b) Ambulance Report

Councillor A Brown reported that a meeting had taken place. It was a positive meeting, they are still trying to resolve the issues but the main problem being ambulances are still getting hung up at the hospitals. Calls have increased by 7% and funding has only gone up by 2%. It was also confirmed that they will be gathering data on where ambulances are getting to before they are turned around, but it will be a few months before this is ready.

c) Suffolk County Councillors

Councillor Luke O'Brien reported on the following:

- Reported the water leak along Watting Road to Anglian Water and Suffolk Highways.
- Received a request for Locality Budget funding to support a charity fireworks display at Haverhill Rovers, which is also being supported by other Councillors.
- Received correspondence regarding uncertainty over responsibility for maintaining an area of land, which may fall under the ownership of First Port Management Company.
- Reported that he is looking exploring the possibility of organising a People's Assembly, as an exercise in direct democracy. He explained that this would be similar to a People's Forum, providing an opportunity for residents to discuss local issues, with discussion being minuted and appropriated actions identified. The proposal is an early stage and he has been speak to a number of people about setting this up. Rev. Max Drinkwater has offered St Mary's Church as a potential venue. This event is likely to take place next year and Councillor O'Brien will contact the Town Clerk to discuss the proposal further.

Councillor J Mason sent his report prior to the meeting and highlighted the following:

- Climate and Environmental Spending
 - Forest City
 - Free Parking. Discussion took place around the statistics and data, how this has positively affected numbers of people using the car parks and how this will now increase business in the town.
 - A1307 resurfacing on the incorrect day
 - Crossing at Watting Road
 - Water Leak at Watting Road, Councillor J Mason, Councillor P Hanlon and Councillor O'Brien will collaborate to get this fixed.
- Councillor A Brown reported that he had look at the OffWat page due to the amount of water leaks in Haverhill, and suggested that this issue be brought before the MP, Councillor J Mason confirmed that this had been done.

It was agreed that the Town Council write to the MP about the number of leaks around the town and the impact to the quality of the water that this may have.

Proposed Councillor A Brown, seconded Councillor A Stinchcombe

RESOLVED

Councillor J Mason also reported that the proposal for the Burton Centre Court would no longer go ahead, as the community group involved has withdrawn. He explained that the area could not be converted into a formal park as the original surface has been removed. Any future development of the site would need to be led by either a community group or West Suffolk Council.

Members discussed possible future uses for the court. Councillor A Brown suggested the area could be developed as a basketball court, which as Suffolk County Councillor would fall under Councillor P Littman's remit.

d) District Councillors

Councillor P Firman reported an open drain on the Junction at Wrattling Road, opposite Millfield Way. Councillor O'Brien confirmed he would report as a matter of urgency.

e) Town Councillors:

1. Councillor A Brown reported on the following:

i. Royal Mail Post box doors being removed without notices for the public.

It was proposed by Councillor A Brown and seconded by Councillor A Stinchcombe, that the Clerk write to Royal Mail to request signage be placed where these are being removed.

Councillor D Smith to forward contact details.

RESOLVED

ii. Residents have raised concerns over safety along the Railway Walk. He has liaised with Suffolk Police and suggested that the installation of CCTV along the route could help address concerns. He also suggested that District Councillors explore funding opportunities for the CCTV.

Councillor J Mason advised that the relevant contact is PC Owen Smith, Suffolk Police, who is leading Operation Brightway, an initiative launched in response to issues in Haverhill, including those affecting the Railway Walk. It was agreed that the Clerk invite PC Smith to attend the next meeting to provide an update.

iii. Raised concerns that the investment being made in the High Street could be undermined by ongoing issues with street drinking and ASB. He explained that a member of his family had personally experienced abusive and intimidating behaviour from street drinkers, highlighting the impact such incidents can have on individuals. He added that, if these issues continue, they could discourage people from visiting and spending time in the High Street.

Councillor J Burns confirmed he had been asked to provide historical data in relation to CCTV.

Councillor P Hanlon advised that incidents should be reported by calling 999, as the Police response times are very quick.

2. Councillor D Smith reported:

Town Clerk

Deputy Clerk

- i) that he had attended the Development Control meeting at West Suffolk, regarding the Local Plans. The initial scoping consultation finishes on Thursday. There will be the opportunity to look at what sites have come forward. Councillor D Smith will report back.
 - ii) He had also attended the Police and Crime Scrutiny Panel, the main subject for the PCC is the conversation being engagement. The other was on Police stations within the county, Councillor D Smith will report back to the next Full Council meeting on the latest update on the Blue Light Hub.
 - iii) There was also a reaffirming of West Suffolk Council's commitment to the stewardship of the planet, which was supported by all sides of the chamber.
3. Councillor P Firman reported on the electrical issue at the Market Square, which was more significant than originally thought and may now take longer to fix. Councillor Firman explained that the contractors are working hard to fix the issue but that there had been little information given out. Councillor J Mason will write an email and report back.
 4. Councillor J Burns had submitted his report prior to the meeting (Appendix ii).
Councillor D Smith thanked Councillor J Burns for installing the speed meter along Eastern Avenue, which had confirmed there was no problem with speeding.

f) Public Forum:

A member of public raised concerns around the new parking meters and that they were no not now accepting coins.

Councillor J Mason assured the member of public that the new machines did accept coins and that there was a review of feedback from customers taking place.

C26 Mayor's Report (appendix iii)

/106 Mayor L Miller-Jones gave members a report on the Mayoral events that she had attending since the last meeting:

- Meadows Care Home
- Unveiled the Kerala Association Action plan, then had short meeting with them where they expressed their interest in working with the Town Council.
- 100 years of Scouting
- HTTA Summer Lunch
- Thetford Civic Reception

Mayor L Miller-Jones thanked those members who had attended her charity Quiz night, which had raised in total £165 for REACH. Mayor L Miller-Jones is planning to hold another one on Friday 11th December. She is also doing a 'Jailbreak' on 8th-9th August and a Bingo night. Mayor L Miller-Jones invited members to all events and will send out further details.

C26
/107 **ONE Haverhill Partnership**
Report from Clerk

The Deputy Clerk provided an update on the ONE Haverhill Board meeting, which was read out by Mayor L Miller-Jones (appendix iii)

Members requested that a report from the new Town Centre Manager, Saffron Carter, be brought to Council. The Town Clerk confirmed that the Town Centre Manager's report will come through the Leisure and Community Committee, and that Saffron would also be invited to attend Town Council meetings. She explained that her few weeks had been extremely busy, with meetings taking place with High Street businesses, businesses on the industrial estate and representatives at the Epicentre and other key stakeholders. Work was also underway to launch a dedicated website.

Councillor J Mason suggested that a Task and Finish group could be established. The Town Clerk explained that discussions had focused on adopting a town team approach, which would provide opportunities for a number of councillors to be involved. He reiterated that Saffron's role was to act as the voice of the business community to the Council, with the Town Centre Management function primarily focused on supporting and developing the retail sector.

Suffolk County Councillors Paul Littman and Luke O'Brien left the meeting

C26
/108 **Financial Matters**

a) **Authorisation of payments:**

It was proposed by Councillor J Burns, seconded by Councillor P Hanlon that the listed payments totalling £96,457.32 was authorised.

RESOLVED

b) **Grant Applications**

Haverhill Music Academy grant was deferred to the next meeting.

The Town Clerk joined the meeting

C26
/109 **Review of Public Assets in Haverhill (appendix iv)**

Members thanked the Town Clerk for the report, members discussed the recommendations in detail, considering the issues raised and the proposed actions.

Following debate, members agreed to adopt the recommendations.

a) **Asset and service mapping**

That the Council begins a mapping exercise of public assets and services in Haverhill, identifying who currently operates them, available cost information, operational requirements, liabilities, and potential implications of transfer.

b) **Capacity and resilience review**

That the Council considers its financial resilience, staffing structure, office accommodation, systems, insurance position and governance capacity in the event that it is asked to take on additional assets or services.

c) **Public engagement**

That the Council begins a public conversation about which local public services residents value most, the potential choices facing the town, and the possible financial and governance implications of protecting those services locally.

d) **Further report**

That officers bring back a further report setting out the findings of the

mapping exercise, options for collaboration or service agreements, and any recommended preparatory actions for the design stage.

It was proposed by Councillor L Miller-Jones, seconded by Councillor A Stinchcombe that the Council carry out the recommendations and undertake the necessary actions.

RESOLVED

Town Clerk

C26 Adoption of Committee Reports

/110 a) Planning Committee

It was proposed by Councillor M Martin, seconded by Councillor J Teixeira that the Minutes of the meeting held 7th July 2026 and any recommendations contained therein, be agreed as a true record.

RESOLVED

C26 Actions taken under delegated powers

/111 None

C26 Date of Next Meeting

/112 The meeting noted that the next meeting will be held on Monday, 28 September 2026.

C26 Closure

/113 The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.25pm

Signed Date.....
Chairman

Appendix i) - County Councillors' reports

Appendix ii) – Town Councillors' reports

Appendix iii) - ONE Haverhill Board report

Appendix iv) – Review of Public Assets

Appendix i)

County and District Councillor Report, July 2026

Cllr Joe Mason

July has been a busy month, with meetings of Suffolk County Council's Cabinet and Full Council, West Suffolk Council's Cabinet and Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, alongside Suffolk County Council's Development and Regulation Committee, meetings with residents, developers, police, voluntary organisations and council officers.

This report separates official council announcements from my own local work and comments. It focuses on issues most relevant to Haverhill and does not attempt to list every item of confidential casework being undertaken.

In this report

1. Suffolk County Council News and Council Activity
2. West Suffolk Council News and Council Activity
3. Highways, Active Travel and Public Realm
4. Community Safety - Haverhill Old Railway Line
5. Persimmon and Boyton Hall Development
6. Environmental, Utility and Waste Issues
7. Blue Lights Hub and Community First Responders
8. Community and Town Projects
9. Other Meetings, Priorities and Contact Details

1. Suffolk County Council News and Council Activity

(For full details of Suffolk County Council news stories please visit

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news>)

Climate and Environmental Spending

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/council-rescinds-climate-emergency-declaration-and-launches-review>

On 16 July, Suffolk County Council voted to rescind the climate emergency declaration adopted in 2019 and commission a review of climate, net zero and environmental programmes. The review will consider environmental outcomes, operational effectiveness, statutory requirements and value for money before reporting recommendations to Cabinet.

Comment

I supported a necessary amended version of the motion. Environmental projects should be judged on measurable outcomes, practicality and value for money. However, value for money should not become an excuse to abandon sensible projects that reduce energy use, protect the environment or save taxpayers' money over the longer term.

Bus Services and Franchising Study

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/suffolk-awarded-564000-for-major-bus-franchising-study>

Suffolk County Council has secured £564,000 from the Department for Transport to undertake a feasibility study into bus franchising. The study will consider a countywide franchise, joint working with Norfolk, arrangements aligned with possible future council boundaries, smaller targeted franchises and hybrid approaches. This is funding for a study and does not mean franchising has already been agreed.

Comment

At Full Council I proposed and spoke in support of a Conservative amendment calling for an evidence-led and properly costed Minimum Universal Bus Service. For Haverhill, the important test is whether future arrangements improve links to Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds and surrounding villages rather than concentrating resources on the largest urban centres.

£18.889 Million SEND Capital Programme

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/suffolk-county-council-plans-18.9-million-investment-to-expand-send-support-across-the-county>

Cabinet agreed the allocation of £18.889 million of government High Needs Capital Funding to expand specialist SEND provision between 2026 and 2030. This is Department for Education capital funding rather than money raised through Suffolk council tax or the County Council's ordinary revenue budget.

The programme includes 168 specialist places in mainstream secondary schools, 80 places through satellite provision linked to special schools, £2 million for mainstream inclusion, £2 million for adaptations and improvements, and £1 million for specialist post-16 provision. The number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans increased by 17% between April 2025 and April 2026.

Comment

The funding is welcome, but the key questions are where the places will be created, when they will open and whether Haverhill families will benefit from suitable provision closer to home.

Consultation on Children's Health Services

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/residents-invited-to-have-their-say-on-future-of-childrens-health-services>

A public consultation is taking place on proposed changes to Suffolk's Healthy Child Programme, covering health visiting, school nursing, the Family Nurse Partnership and the Young Parents Pathway. The consultation closes on 18 September 2026.

Comment

Any revised model must properly consider access for families in Haverhill and rural communities, particularly where travel to centralised services is difficult.

County Farms

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/council-commits-to-securing-the-future-of-suffolk-county-farms>

The County Council has announced a strengthened commitment to retaining its county farms estate and opposing future sales of prime agricultural land. The estate extends to more than 12,000 acres and supports 88 agricultural tenants.

Comment

Having previously held responsibility for property and county farms, I welcome the commitment. Retention must be accompanied by a sustainable investment plan for buildings, infrastructure and new tenant opportunities.

Forest City Rejected from New Towns Programme

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/suffolk-county-council-welcomes-rejection-of-forest-city-proposal>

On 21 July, Suffolk County Council welcomed confirmation that the proposed Forest City development, involving up to 400,000 homes across parts of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, would not be taken forward through the Government's New Towns Programme and that no development corporation would be established.

Comment

This is welcome, but it should not be assumed that the idea can never return through another planning or strategic route. I remain opposed because of the scale of the threat to water, wastewater, transport, agricultural land, village identity and democratic local planning.

2. West Suffolk Council News and Council Activity

(For full details of West Suffolk Council news stories please visit

<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/news/>)

£1.693 Million Haverhill High Street Investment

<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/news/pr20260722ws01.cfm>

West Suffolk Cabinet approved plans on 21 July to invest £1.693 million in Haverhill town centre. The total consists of £693,000 previously allocated for town-centre improvements and an additional £1 million agreed earlier this year.

The programme includes refurbishment of the former HSBC building, improvements to Market Square, new lighting, improved signage and wayfinding, and one additional public-realm location to be selected after detailed design and cost work. The proposals were developed through the Haverhill High Street Enhancement Steering Group

Comment

I welcomed the investment at Cabinet, but stressed that residents have waited a long time to see delivery. I asked that every effort be made to complete the principal works before summer 2027. I also sought clear baseline measures and published results covering footfall, dwell time, vacancy rates, business confidence, perceptions of safety and the evening economy. Spending the money is not, by itself, evidence of success.

First Hour Free Parking

<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/news/pr20260612ws01.cfm>

The two-year first-hour-free parking trial is now operating at Lower Downs Slade, the Arts Centre and Jubilee Walk car parks. The aim is to make short visits easier, increase footfall and support town-centre businesses.

Comment

My observation is that the participating car parks appear busier, which has been reinforced by early figures reported by Cllr David Taylor citing an increase of over 2200 extra visits compared like with like from the same period last year. At Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee I pressed for Haverhill-specific monitoring. I have also raised a reported case involving difficulty accessing the free period on a later visit, because unclear rules or unexpected charges could undermine the purpose of the trial.

Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee

<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/news/pr20260706ws03.cfm>

I attended the committee on 23 July. My questions focused on how the parking pilot will be measured separately in Haverhill, whether the High Street programme has clear milestones and outcomes, whether local government reorganisation is being treated as a sufficiently significant organisational risk, how infrastructure is being assessed against housing growth, and whether favourable financial results reflect genuine efficiencies or delayed spending, vacancies and higher investment income.

Comment

Scrutiny should not merely record that money has been spent or that a project is described as being on track. It should test whether residents are receiving the promised outcomes.

West Suffolk Local Plan 2045

West Suffolk Council is preparing a new Local Plan to 2045. The first-stage consultation asks residents and organisations to identify the issues the plan should address, including housing, employment, infrastructure and the environment. The consultation closes at 5pm on 28 July 2026.

Comment

The Government's assessed housing need for West Suffolk has risen from around 765 to approximately 1,200 homes a year. Haverhill must not be treated simply as a location for additional housing without roads, schools, healthcare, utilities, employment and community facilities being planned alongside growth.

RAF Barnham

At an Extraordinary Council meeting on 1 July, West Suffolk councillors unanimously agreed that RAF Barnham is the wrong place to accommodate asylum seekers and that the Council should urgently represent local concerns to the Home Office. I supported the motion. The Council has subsequently argued that legally binding habitat constraints should prevent the proposed use of the site.

The latest news is that the Home Office has submitted an urgent application to turn a military base into accommodation for asylum seekers.

<https://www.suffolknews.co.uk/bury-st-edmunds/news/home-office-submits-urgent-application-to-use-military-base-9475662/>

<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/news/pr20260701ws01.cfm>

<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/news/pr20260713ws04.cfm>

Comment

The objections should remain evidence-led and focused on the suitability of the site, infrastructure, public services, environmental constraints and the lack of proper local decision-making. Those concerns can be expressed firmly without inflammatory language about individuals who may be housed there.

Thriving Communities Fund

Applications have opened for more than £260,000 of funding for community projects in 2027/28. Grants of £2,000 to £8,000 are available for smaller local projects and grants of £8,001 to £20,000 for work supporting a town or larger part of West Suffolk. Applications close at midday on 25 September 2026.

<https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/news/pr20260715ws01.cfm>

Comment

I will continue encouraging suitable Haverhill organisations to consider this fund or councillor locality funding where projects have clear governance, realistic costs and demonstrable community benefit.

3. Highways, Active Travel and Public Realm**A1307 Surface Dressing at Withersfield**

Residents raised understandable concerns after advance warning signs showed only 23 July, although the closure had been planned for 22 and 23 July. Suffolk Highways confirmed that this was an administrative error and apologised. The surface dressing was completed on 22 July, so no closure was required on 23 July.

Comment

The work itself was welcome, but accurate advance signage is essential because residents and businesses plan journeys around the information displayed at the roadside.

EV Charging Installations

Please refer to last month's report. No further updates this month.

Bus Improvement Scheme & Bus Shelters

Please refer to last month's report. No further updates this month.

High Street – Block Paving

No further updates. Awaiting schedule of works.

County Wide TRO

No further updates other than to report officers are still finalising with District Councils.

Wratting Road Toucan Crossing

The proposed crossing on Wratting Road is scheduled for August. This is an important part of improving pedestrian links between the north-west Haverhill development and existing residential areas and the rest of the town. I will monitor delivery and the associated traffic management.

Comment

This is something I have been reporting on for over four years and is long overdue. In particular it will improve safety for students going to Samuel Ward Academy. The crossing will initially be installed as a pelican crossing for pedestrians. It will help improve links between the north-west Haverhill development, existing residential areas and the rest of the town. Most importantly, it should provide a safer crossing point for students travelling to and from Samuel Ward Academy.

The longer-term ambition is for this to become a toucan crossing, which could also be used by cyclists. However, that depends on suitable cycleway improvements being funded along Ann Suckling Road. This is something I am continuing to pursue.

There will inevitably be some disruption while the work is carried out, including traffic-management arrangements on Wratting Road. I will monitor both the delivery of the crossing

and the associated traffic management, and provide further updates should anything change.

It has taken far too long to reach this point, but I am pleased that this important road-safety improvement is finally moving towards delivery.

Railway Walk Crossings

Design work has progressed on the crossing at Suffolk Regiment Way and the raised-table crossing at Howe Road. Both schemes are part of the wider work to improve pedestrian safety and connectivity along the Railway Walk. I continue to seek firm construction dates. I am exploring whether I can support with a grant application.

Ann Suckling Way

The raised-table crossing remains an important priority. I have continued discussions with Persimmon and Suffolk Highways about the crossing, speeding, pedestrian safety and the effects of continuing development. A road closure will be required and residents should receive adequate notice once the construction date is confirmed.

Hill Crescent

I have continued representations about the condition of Hill Crescent and the case for future resurfacing. Suffolk Highways has provided an initial response, but I will continue pressing for the road to be properly considered through the maintenance prioritisation process.

Kerb Weeds and Street Cleaning

The first scheduled programme of highway weed treatment has taken place across Haverhill. I have continued raising missed areas, substantial regrowth and the need for better coordination between Suffolk County Council's weed treatment and West Suffolk Council's street-cleaning responsibilities. Treating weeds without removing the dead material can still leave streets looking neglected.

4. Community Safety - Haverhill Old Railway Line

Correspondence with Owen Smith of Suffolk Police confirms that Operation Brightway has now been formally launched in response to issues on the Haverhill Old Railway Line footpath. Police are progressing work in the area and considering measures that may include the use of Section 59 powers under the Police Reform Act 2002 where motor vehicles are being used antisocially.

Partnership discussions involve Suffolk Police, Haverhill Town Council, West Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Highways. A community clean-up event is being planned for August, with police cadets and local organisations expected to participate. I have offered support and indicated that grant funding may be available for suitable practical initiatives.

Comment

Enforcement alone is unlikely to solve every problem. Visible policing, resident reporting, environmental improvements, community involvement and proportionate physical measures will need to work together.

5. Persimmon and Boyton Hall Development

A substantial part of my casework has continued to concern outstanding issues on the Persimmon and Boyton Hall development. I undertook a detailed site visit with West Suffolk planning officers and have continued seeking action from Persimmon, planning officers, Suffolk Highways and other relevant organisations.

Street Lighting

Residents remain concerned about inadequate lighting on parts of Phase 6. Persimmon has proposed bollard-style lighting, Suffolk Highways has not agreed to adopt the proposed arrangements, and conventional lighting is affected by environmental constraints associated with a bat corridor. Residents should not be left between the developer, planning authority and highways authority while responsibility remains unresolved. I have sought further discussions involving the relevant parties.

Allotments

The promised allotments remain undelivered and continue to be a significant source of frustration. I have raised this repeatedly with Persimmon and planning officers. A firm

timetable is needed, together with clarity about access, ownership, management and the point at which plots will be available to residents.

Street Signs and Navigation

Residents have reported inadequate street-name signs where Ann Suckling Road becomes Ann Suckling Lane. This creates problems for deliveries and visitors and could affect emergency-service access. I have raised the need for clear and correctly positioned signs.

Play Areas, Landscaping and Open Space

Concerns include litter, scattered planting guards, damaged young hedges, long grass, insufficient bins, limited shade and uncertainty about future maintenance responsibilities. New facilities should not simply be installed and then allowed to deteriorate. I am seeking clarity about the responsibilities of Persimmon, any management company and the councils involved.

Sewage and Drainage

I have continued to raise concerns following repeated sewage flooding affecting residents on the north-west development. Repeated incidents require the underlying cause to be identified and resolved, not merely cleaned up each time. I have pressed for better communication, appropriate decontamination and reinstatement, and clarity about the responsibilities of the developer, water company and other organisations.

Other Outstanding Infrastructure

I have also continued to raise construction traffic, traffic management, speeding, the proposed local centre and the delivery of other community infrastructure. New homes are welcome, but residents should not be left waiting indefinitely for facilities and commitments that formed part of the planned development.

6. Environmental, Utility and Waste Issues

Wrattling Road Water Leak

I have been assisting residents affected by the continuing water leak on Wrattling Road, which they report has persisted for many months. Concerns include reduced water pressure, substantial water loss, potential highway and footway damage, uncertainty over responsibility and the time being taken to secure a repair.

I have escalated the matter to relevant West Suffolk Council Cabinet members and Nick Timothy MP, seeking support to clarify responsibilities and secure a resolution. Although the repair is principally a matter for the water company and relevant landowners, unacceptable delay should be challenged where residents are affected and treated water is being wasted.

Waste Collection and Vulnerable Residents

I have raised waste-collection problems including reports that communal food-waste bins serving flats on Ann Suckling Lane had not been emptied properly. The issue was referred to West Suffolk Council's Waste Collection Team.

I have also continued confidential casework for vulnerable residents who need assisted collections or other reasonable adjustments. These arrangements need to be reliable and should not depend on residents repeatedly reporting the same failure.

Alderton Close & Hales Barn Rd Play Areas

Residents raised concerns about limited information on the nature and duration of the redevelopment works, construction noise, contractor vehicles and site security. I sought an update from West Suffolk Council on the project scope, timetable, communication with neighbours and measures to prevent unauthorised access to the works area.

7. Blue Lights Hub and Community First Responders

Haverhill Blue Lights Hub

Work continues on the ambition to develop a shared Blue Lights Hub for Haverhill. Discussions have involved West Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the East of England Ambulance Service and Nick Timothy MP. Different delivery and funding options, including possible interim arrangements, continue to be explored.

Comment

The project is complex because it involves land, property, operational needs and long-term

funding, but modern and sustainable facilities for Haverhill's emergency services remain an important objective.

Community First Responders

I have held discussions concerning Community First Responders serving Haverhill and surrounding villages and am exploring whether grant support may be available for suitable equipment or initiatives. Any request will need clear governance, a defined need and arrangements for the equipment to be maintained and used appropriately.

8. Community and Town Projects

The Link Haverhill and the Salvation Army

I have continued discussions about community litter-picking equipment and a possible digital-inclusion project for vulnerable residents who lack suitable access to mobile phones or online services. Digital exclusion can prevent people accessing banking, housing, benefits, healthcare and other essential services. Any scheme will need appropriate safeguards around eligibility, data protection and ongoing costs.

The Befriending Scheme

I visited The Befriending Scheme at the former Chalkstone Community Centre to learn more about its work supporting adults with additional needs, discuss the role of local councillors and consider possible grant opportunities. The organisation plays an important role in reducing loneliness, increasing independence and helping people participate in the community.

Haverhill Corn Exchange

No further updates

9. Other Meetings, Priorities and Contact Details

During the month I also attended or participated in Suffolk County Council Cabinet and Full Council, West Suffolk Council Cabinet, Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, Suffolk County Council Development and Regulation Committee, meetings with council officers and developers, resident meetings and discussions with community and voluntary organisations.

Priorities for the Coming Month

- Support Operation Brightway and the planned Railway Line community event.
- Seek progress on the Wratting Road water leak.
- Monitor the Wratting Road, Railway Walk and Ann Suckling Way crossing schemes.
- Press for firm delivery milestones for the Haverhill High Street programme.
- Ensure the first-hour-free parking trial is evaluated using Haverhill-specific evidence.
- Follow up outstanding Persimmon infrastructure, landscaping and drainage issues.
- Continue work on the Blue Lights Hub, Community First Responders and community grant opportunities.
- Pursue resident casework across Haverhill North, West and Withersfield.

Please note that this report does not include all of the casework I am undertaking or every project in which I am involved. Where matters are confidential, residents are not identified. Members are always welcome to contact me if they require information or assistance relating to Suffolk County Council or West Suffolk Council matters.

For Reference

At Suffolk County Council I sit on the Development and Regulation Committee, Scrutiny Committee and Education Transport Appeals Committee, and I am a substitute member of the Police and Crime Panel.

At West Suffolk Council I sit on the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.

At Haverhill Town Council I do not currently sit formally on a committee, but I attend where my County or District Council role is relevant, including work connected with the High Street Enhancement Group and other town projects.

Cllr Joe Mason

Suffolk County Councillor - Haverhill North, West and Withersfield

West Suffolk District Councillor - Haverhill North

Appendix (ii)
Town Councillor Report - John Burns

- **Great Wilsey Park:** Work continues alongside Chalkstone Way on the Barratt development as well as the Redrow phases near to Gurteen Avenue & English Way. There has been some additional tree felling behind Green Road by the owners in preparation for the next phase. I understand this is being reported to WSC by others in case anything untoward.
- **Police Matters:** Crime stats for May 2026 were distributed on 10th July. No other publicly available news.
- **SCC Highways:** Still no sign of the final signs being installed in town centre.
- **Combined Authority:** Nothing to report.
- **Greater Cambridge Partnership:** No further updates.

Parking: Still no obvious increase in town centre enforcement with CPE staff seen mostly in car parks and roads away from the town centre.

Markets: Nothing further to report.

Sturmer Arches: Nothing to report.

Fox PH (Wratting Road): Nothing to report.

Vixen PH (Millfields Way): Nothing further to report.

Strasbourg Square: Nothing further to report.

Other work (in no particular order):

- Splashpad: Have been checking and cleaning (with wardens) at regular intervals including just last Thursday. We took the opportunity to remove the drain covers & clean underneath. There is some surface damage appearing again for which I am waiting the maintenance company to come back to me with suggestions. I found some young people using water balloons in the pad last week (as did the wardens) and advised them not to as they can block the drains & filters.
- Provided usual weekly financial income stats from the till system for the various sites to HTC management plus attending various HTC meetings.
- Have been (with wardens) moving the vehicle activated signs (VAS) around town once a week and then analysing the data/sending to the police. There is nothing overly untoward at the moment with both now being in Wratting Road for coming week before moving to Coupals Road. I am working on a new plugin for the TC website which will allow easy bulk upload of results as well as a possible method to allow other files (e.g. committee agenda/minutes) to be uploaded/simply displayed more efficiently. Not quite ready but will advise when done.
- Helped out at SWA prom in the town centre including delivering/collecting barriers.
- Raised the USA flag with Cllr Brown for 250th anniversary of the declaration of Independence.
- Finished with staff from Stourview Wellbeing Centre a new website and made it live.
- Working with Town Centre Manager on new website for Love Haverhill. Much more work needed before it goes live.
- Attended One Haverhill Board meeting.
- Reported to WSC development corner of Hollands Road already started erecting 8' high fence despite not having planning permission.
- Setup new bar system database for HitP and purchased new server to facilitate on site before being used in HAC. More work needed once decided what systems will be needed by management.
- Digisign had failed due to a street power supply. After replacing the RCD and isolator the system is working however there is now an internal network connectivity problem which needs to be investigated when staff available.

Appendix (iii)

ONE Haverhill Board 16th July 2026

The Board received a presentation from the Police and Crime Commissioner, Tim Passmore, covering policing priorities, local government reorganisation, partnership working, and the importance of investing in prevention, particularly for young people. Members also discussed policing resources in Haverhill, town centre safety, illegal off-road bikes and proposals for a future Blue Light Hub.

Alex Wilson provided an update on Local Government Reorganisation, outlining the timetable towards the new unitary authorities in 2028 and emphasising continued partnership working and future engagement with town and parish councils.

The Board welcomed an update from the Town Centre Manager, Saffron Carter, who outlined her early engagement with local businesses, the development of the 'Love Haverhill' initiative and plans to strengthen business networking and promote the town.

Updates were also received from the Board's task groups, including Community Safety, Kindess, the ICB, the Science Festival, Education, Skills and Enterprise, and Cradle to Career.

Henry Wilson was re-elected as Chair of the ONE Haverhill Board. The Board also agreed to review its representation to improve diversity, strengthen business involvement, and explore reinstating an annual public meeting.

Appendix (iv)

Review of public assets in Haverhill

My undergraduate dissertation considered the impact of asset and service transfers in the wake of the creation of unitary authorities in the period 2018-2023. It was a time of particularly financial stress in local authorities. As a result, those newly-created unitaries (Cornwall, Somerset, Wiltshire) undertook a significant divestment of non-statutory services in the space of just 9-12 months. It was described by one clerk as a fire sale, often under threat that if town councils didn't take on assets and services, they would close. Whilst the new Suffolk plan for three unitary authorities is described as financially viable, that claim has been disputed by proponents of a single Suffolk unitary. To some extent that shadow of previous iterations inevitably looms large, but it is also true that in the current round of LGR, local authorities have the benefit of learning from the previous round.

Whilst we don't know how everything will pan out this time, the reflections of town clerks who went through those transfers at a rapid rate have given town councils lessons to learn and potentially we have 18-36 months to prepare for transfers, whilst they had no time.

We know that the district and county are very open right now to discussions about transfers. What should Haverhill Town Council do now, to prepare for potential transfers and strengthen our resilience? What lessons can guide us how we spend that time made available to us? This is what my research uncovered, for transfers made during a crisis:

1. Many Clerks told me that there was little by way of knowledge transfer ahead of taking on assets or services. Some principal council officers who held that knowledge were resentful of their fiefdom being broken up and were in no mood to share. Some Clerks said they had to submit FOI requests in order to get the info they needed. The message here is that in a crisis all bets are off. Presently, principal council officers are all in post and can answer questions. They are willing to work with us to transfer services and there may be scope to secure tapered funding

as part of any transfer. It might even be worth taking some things on now rather than waiting, because we might get them on far better financial terms than during a financial crisis. **Lesson 1 - What we can do now is map the potential assets and services we may have to take on, and begin to learn about them, and if we have the capacity, think about taking them on early.**

2. Capacity was a big theme in responses to my research. That is capacity in terms of senior staff having time to do the legwork involved in transfers, and corporate capacity to deliver new services/look after new assets on an ongoing basis. If we are going to move from 60 to 200 staff (as Bridgwater did, overnight on 31st March 2025) we will need a bigger backroom team to administer it all. But we are already maxed-out on office space and additional back-office employees will trigger moving to new council offices. Redesigning our structure and relocating are not things to do at a rush. **Lesson 2 – Planning how we can grow the capacity for managing growth is itself a necessary activity.**
3. Capacity also means having the physical resource to take on additional activity. Haverhill council's expertise is in venues and events. We are not a burial authority, and we don't manage parks. A burial authority council has diggers, mowers, trained grounds staff. Taking on additional green space is less of a challenge if you already do something similar, but for us would be a huge deal - what are the implications? But conversely, what would happen to the level of maintenance for places like East Town Park or the cemetery if we didn't take them on and the new unitary was struggling financially?
4. What about the level of our financial reserves to provide resilience if we grew in size? Our million-pound reserve might seem relatively healthy now, for us as a £2m 'super council' (NALC's definition, not mine), but it would seem rather weedy for a £7m super-duper council (my definition, not NALC). **Do we need to start building our financial reserves and does that mean pushing precept increases up to do so?**
5. Capacity also means making sure we have the political will and democratic mandate to take over operating assets and services in Haverhill. Councillors will need training to understand these new services, as well as the officers who will oversee them. It is our councillors that will make the decision to take on the services. But the public need to be on board as they will be paying for the continuation of these services and maintenance of assets. Last time around, the precept in some town councils doubled, tripled or even ended up 500% higher in a matter of months. What assets and services matter most to our residents? We will need public support, particularly as many will feel they pay for the upkeep already, and may wonder loudly why they are being asked to pay again. **Lesson 3 - Make sure we have capacity to cope with any asset and service transfer and run our organisation afterwards, and the necessary public support in doing so.**
6. Clerks reported that getting costings out of principal councils was hard work and often full of holes. This is because disaggregating services reveals the economies of scale that hide the true costs of services. Fragmenting services amongst parish and town councils loses that economy of scale.
7. We don't have to take services on by ourselves. There may be better options, such as parish councils working together to commission or deliver services. Or contract through service agreements to pay for those services to be run to our specification by the principal councils. These things need proper consideration, consultation and co-

ordination with others, therefore take time to put together and of course are harder to achieve in a storm.

8. One town council took on so many services in the space of 12 months, their council finances were unrecognizable. Unrecognizable in such a way that when they did their budget they had no point of reference to sense-check it. The numbers were unrecognizable and so was the mistake in just one cell on a massive spreadsheet. Luckily, they had reserves to cover the £420,000 resulting shortfall, but it illustrates the risk of taking on so much so quickly. **So lesson 4 – take time to fully understand potential costs for each new service.**
9. **Checking with our insurers early in the process** as to whether they will entertain us providing that service.

So, to conclude, the challenge of transfers of assets and services comes down to whether we are going to be bystanders watching how the creation of unitary councils goes and react only if it goes badly, or whether we are going to use the lessons learned from our colleagues wisely, take the opportunity afforded to us between now and the new authority's vesting day to review our capacity, engage with the public and create a strategy for implementation if and when it is needed.

The district council describes their own process of creating a unitary authority as covering three stages, discovery, design and implementation. For us, we are at the beginning of the discovery stage and the recommendations reflect that.

Discovery stage recommendations:

- e) **Asset and service mapping**
That the Council begins a mapping exercise of public assets and services in Haverhill, identifying who currently operates them, available cost information, operational requirements, liabilities, and potential implications of transfer.
- f) **Capacity and resilience review**
That the Council considers its financial resilience, staffing structure, office accommodation, systems, insurance position and governance capacity in the event that it is asked to take on additional assets or services.
- g) **Public engagement**
That the Council begins a public conversation about which local public services residents value most, the potential choices facing the town, and the possible financial and governance implications of protecting those services locally.
- h) **Further report**
That officers bring back a further report setting out the findings of the mapping exercise, options for collaboration or service agreements, and any recommended preparatory actions for the design stage.

This work would be carried out by Sara Marsh with support from me and councillors.

Colin Poole
Town Clerk