



Cllr Chris Chambers

**Gipping Valley
Division**

**June 2024
Report**



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East of England local authorities collaborate to appeal for more foster families to work with their council

Eleven local authorities across the East of England have joined forces in a bid to collectively recruit more foster carers to look after some of the region's most vulnerable children.

Suffolk is taking part in a new initiative for fostering under the banner Foster East. There is an urgent need for foster carers in the East of England with more than 7,000 vulnerable children already in the care of their local authority, and a further 150 children coming into care every month.

The Foster East initiative which is funded by the Department of Education and launched today Wednesday 29 May 2024, is a new, collaborative approach to foster carer recruitment and support. Councils will work together to provide more comprehensive training, support and best practice. Each applicant will be nurtured through their fostering journey with their local council and via a buddy network. Foster East advisors will help people find out how fostering can become part of their life.

In Suffolk there are more than 900 children and young people ranging from babies to 18-year-olds who need safe, loving and nurturing homes where they can thrive and develop. Every local authority aims to keep children and young people local to their support networks, but a shortage of foster families in our area means this is not always possible.

Fostering is a flexible role with options for short term care from a weekend a month to longer term opportunities, all providing life-changing support for local children.

Foster carers working for independent fostering agencies are also invited to transfer to their local council via Foster East. They will benefit from local training, and a linked foster carers support network which will offer support for foster families needing a short break.

Foster East will give people considering fostering the opportunity to speak to an advisor from 8am to 8pm daily, and the chance to talk to an experienced foster carer to find out more about what the role involves and ask any questions they may have. More information can be found on the [Foster East website](#).

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New cabinet changes announced as Council Leader sets out plans for next year

In the Annual General Meeting, Matthew Hicks, leader of Suffolk County Council, announced changes to his Cabinet at Suffolk County Council with immediate effect.

The new Cabinet and Deputies will now consist of:

- **Richard Smith** – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Economic Development and Skills
- **Beccy Hopfensperger** – Cabinet Member for Adult Care
- **Paul West** – Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding
- **Andrew Reid** – Cabinet Member for Education and SEND
- **Bobby Bennett** – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services
- **Philip Faircloth-Mutton** – Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality
- **Chris Chambers** – Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste
- **Steve Wiles** – Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection
- **Alexander Nicoll** – Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy
- **David Roach** – Deputy Cabinet Member for Fostering and Adoption
- **Nadia Cenci** – Deputy Cabinet Member for Property and County Farms
- **Debbie Richards** – Deputy Cabinet Member for SEND
- **Heike Sowa** – Deputy Cabinet Member for Transformation
- **Richard Rout** – Deputy Cabinet Member for NSIPs
- **Judy Cloke** – Deputy Cabinet Member for Flooding
- **Craig Rivett**, former Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, has resigned his position as county councillor for the Pakefield Division. Richard Rout has also stepped back from his Cabinet position.

As is customary for the Annual General Meeting, Councillor Hicks, who begins his seventh year as Leader of Suffolk County Council, set out his plans for the year.

You can [read the speech](#) from the meeting.

Suffolk Business Board named

A new Suffolk Business Board has been established to represent the local business community, help steer Suffolk’s economic strategy and create a stronger, higher-skilled local economy.

The Business Board takes over the role of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in providing a voice for business in Suffolk. It will start meeting later this month.

Mark Pendlington, local business leader and former High Sheriff of Suffolk, will serve as interim chair for the first year. Cllr Matthew Hicks, leader of Suffolk County Council, will serve as deputy chair.

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Representatives from business, education and local government will join them on the Board and bring experience in key Suffolk sectors including agri-food, retail, technology, ports and logistics, and the visitor economy.

The other board members are:

- Doug Field, East of England Co-Op
- Oliver Paul, Suffolk Food Hall
- Lisa Perkins, Tech East
- Peter Brady, Orbital Global
- Kelly Boosey, Oxford Innovation
- Leanne Gittins, LME Recruitment
- John Dugmore, Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
- Tom Ball, Ipswich Town Football Club
- Hannah Reid, Community Action Suffolk
- Paul Ager, Associated British Ports
- Gurpreet Jagpal, University of Suffolk
- Nikos Savvas, Eastern Education Group
- Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council
- Cllr Andy Mellen, Mid Suffolk District Council
- Cllr Neil MacDonald, Ipswich Borough Council

The Board will be supported by Suffolk County Council's Economic Development team. One of its key objectives in the first six months will be to define a refreshed economic strategy for Suffolk.

The Suffolk Business Board has been established following the government's decision to bring the function of Local Enterprise Partnerships into local authorities from April 2024.

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