

James Cartlidge, MP for South Suffolk
Patrick Spencer, MP for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich
Nick Timothy, MP for West Suffolk



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON, SW1A 0AA

Councillor Matthew Hicks and
Councillor Richard Rout
Suffolk County Council
Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road,
Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 2BX

13 April 2025

Dear Matthew and Richard

RE: The future of local government in Suffolk

At our recent meeting about the plans for devolution in Suffolk, we said we would write to you with our proposals to ensure local communities have greater control over the challenges and opportunities that affect their towns and villages.

The proposals to change our council structure could — done properly — bring more efficient local government, improve transparency and accountability, and still give local residents more power over life in their local communities. Done badly, however, there is a risk that the change might mean important decisions are taken even further away from residents, and in a way that leaves them with less power than before.

This is why we believe it is vital that any money saved through local government reform must remain in Suffolk. And it is why, as part of the reform, we believe we need clear and binding commitments about the powers and budgets of parish and town councils. In particular, we would like to see such commitments given about:

- Road safety, including decisions on speed limits, enforcement and traffic-calming measures;
- Planning, making sure parish and town councils are fully supported in their development of neighbourhood plans;
- Flood prevention, with responsibility for drain maintenance and clearing ditches, and;
- Community assets, so valued spaces such as village halls, common greens and pubs can stay accessible to residents.

We are aware that not all parish and town councils will want these responsibilities, so we think it is best to offer flexibility, so parish and towns may opt-in to some or all such proposals. We also understand that some decisions — such as speed limits on certain roads — need to be taken with a wider strategic purpose in mind. We also believe that for some decisions — such as the use of the parish or town precept — the council should show it has consulted with residents and not just imposed a decision upon them.

Finally, we also recognise that handing powers to parish and town councils without having a clear understanding of where financial control lies would be a mistake. We therefore ask you to consider how parish and town councils might be adequately funded to take on these responsibilities.

We would be grateful for further conversations, and to work closely with you to ensure that parish and town councils are truly empowered. We must give local residents a greater voice on the issues that matter to them, rather than see that voice diminished through poorly implemented or overly top-down reform of local government.

Yours sincerely

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