

SUFFOLK VOLLEYBALL ASSOCIATION

Report from chair 2025-26

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Context

A number of matters requiring urgent handling have led to attention being diverted away from preparing this report ahead of the AGM agenda being published. At this time, some details provided in previous reports are not yet collated.

Matters Arising

Committee Meeting - 24th November 2025

With a significant amount of money remaining from Team Suffolk, we have a rare opportunity to invest as we wish in our sport. The committee met on 24th November to consider this and other matters which had arisen.

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The following items were on the agenda - more detail is in this [Google Doc](#).

Continuation of previously agreed support

Castle Manor Academy

We'd measured-up for a long net and were awaiting placement of the order. Agreed we should continue to set-aside funds for this purchase.

Claydon High

Improvements similar to those at Farlingaye last year should be achievable via external funding. Information had been provided to enable the school or Pearson (its Academy Trust) to apply to three funding providers. A few months after this committee meeting we learnt the school is included in the government's School Rebuilding Programme (SRP). Work to replace the school is planned to be started before the end of 2029.

Balls for schools

There was insufficient support from the committee to proceed with purchasing balls for schools.

Leadership Development Programme

This programme was designed to fit around post-16-studies and provide some part-time employment to participants. I'd been working on a [budget](#) and [advert](#) since February 2025. There was not full support for this from the committee. Concerns regarding overloading students at important times of life and, for some, insufficient maturity were raised. We have not proceeded to develop the plan further since.

Team Suffolk equipment sale

Suffolk New College were unwilling to store this long-term and, with no prospect of Team Suffolk being relaunched imminently it was agreed Nathan would organise sale of most of this equipment to our clubs.

Better structure to year

A plan for the year was identified, but it included more tasks than we were able to complete.

Assistant Coach courses

Amy had organised a course in Sept 2024. Since we were not aware of any courses planned in our region: In January, we explored whether there was demand for another in Suffolk. There was, so we have arranged. The in-person day is 8th Aug at Stowupland.

Bookings timeline:

- 11th March
 - Live for bookings, promoted to Suffolk clubs

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- 14th March - Information regarding funding on top of the 1/3 contribution to the course fee that the Suffolk VA will contribute to candidates recommended by their clubs was disseminated to our clubs.
- 30th March - 8 out of 16 places taken
- 2nd April - Promotion across the Eastern Region commenced
- 9th April - 13 out of 16 places taken; we reached minimum 12 for course to go ahead :-)
- 12th April - Course fully-booked with waitlist in operation

Nine of the sixteen candidates enrolled are from Suffolk clubs.

A course in Chelmsford also went ahead. Two members of Ipswich VC enrolled in that.

Schools Rebuilding Project

Planning applications have been approved for rebuilds of the following schools, including replacing their sports halls.

1. Ormiston Sudbury Academy
2. East Bergholt High
3. Hagleigh High
4. Thurston Community College

We consulted [Keith Nicholls](#) when we realised the plans for East Bergholt did not adhere to Sport England's 2012 recommendation that halls should be 20m rather than 18m wide, as 18m requires "play to the wall" or shortened courts when using half a four-badminton court hall.

Keith's meticulous assessment noted that natural light is incorporated into the design; a feature we know to be problematic at Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre. Keith also observed that no plans for court markings were included.

We found the plans for Hadleigh shortly after, which had similar problems.

Keith and I raised objections to the plans. I engaged with Sport England, Active Suffolk and Babergh District Council.

We learnt about Sudbury after approval had been granted for the main plans. A condition of approval was that the applicant had to submit plans for court markings. The plans do not include volleyball lines. These were also approved prior to the Suffolk VA becoming aware of the project.

Contracts for all four of these projects have been awarded to Bowmer+Kirkland.

Plans for Thurston were identified. It was not clear whether or not the roof lights incorporated in the earlier three would be included here. Again we objected.

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We began engagement with Volleyball England as there is a need to engage with the Department for Education to ensure plans brought forward are as good as possible rather than relying on individual council's planning officers / committees to identify the problems and reject applications when they are under pressure to approve to allow education to continue to be provided in their areas.

To help the volleyball community engage with the planning process in their area, I hosted a briefing on 11th of May. Slides used from this are [here](#). I plan to add speaker notes to allow this to make more sense to those who are interested who would like to work towards better outcomes at schools which are part of the rebuilding programme. Following this, Cairo made contact with the head teacher at Sudbury and the community lettings provider at Thurston.

Volleyball England [published answers](#) to some questions I asked ahead of their 2026 AGM. Search for "Facilities"; they're in the second half of the page. They've also decided to establish a Facilities Working Group to address these structural problems.

In early-July the planning applications for East Bergholt, Hadleigh and Thurston were all approved. Further work is required to determine whether the plans were revised as a result of our objections. It is likely we will need to engage with the schools if we want to have the best chance of volleyball court markings being included.

Additionally, the following are part of the government's Schools Rebuilding Programme (SRP) and affected by Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). They are targeted for rebuild before end of 2029:

- Farlingaye High (Woodbridge)
- Claydon High
- Stowupland High

The following are also in the SRP. Timescales for their rebuilds are less clear. The first two have been subject to consultations to determine whether the rebuilt school should have increased capacity.

- Castle Manor Academy (Haverhill)
- Ormiston Endeavour Academy (Ipswich – Whitton)
- Samuel Ward Academy (Haverhill)

Support for fledgling club in Woodbridge

I have been working with people to explore establishing a club at Farlingaye High which had floor sockets installed in 2025-26.

First aid course

I had expected to be able to provide a venue for a 1-day first aid course. At last year's AGM it was agreed funding to subsidise any loss arising from offering places at £50 each would be set-aside.

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Due to activities listed above, I was unable to organise this. It is unlikely that I will be able to repeat in future.

Eastern Region Championships

I was contacted by Eastern Region Chair, Lewis Fenech re. This opportunity for our top two men's, women's and junior teams. I put them in touch with the relevant clubs.

Regular Activities

Rule-change info disseminated

2025-26 saw rule / implementation changes regarding:

- Serving team rotation
- Screening restrictions
- Double-touch on second pass to teammate
- Stricter enforcement re. catch and throw
- Positional faults judged on ball toss not serve hit

Information regarding these was disseminated to clubs and Steve updated the excellent <https://www.suffolkvolleyball.org.uk/refereeing/rules-made-easy/> page.

Officiating workshop for Bury Bobcats VC

Steve and I run this for Bury Bobcats VC at Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre in September. Attendees were mainly their members. It was not openly advertised.

This followed an open workshop in 2023's edition at Suffolk New College in Ipswich.

Ron Ames Cup

The resolution regarding paying an administrator did not have clear support at last year's AGM. However, the teams who entered supported the proposal.

Due to increased NVL commitments, Newmarket did not enter.

Two teams from Bury Bobcats entered for the first time and participated with Stowmarket and Ipswich Ravens. As in 2025-26, we planned to use results from Cambridgeshire fixtures where teams were playing in both competitions.

Just before the start of the matches we learnt from the Cambridgeshire League:

A proposal was voted for regarding the shortening of matches to ensure a concluded result and as a consequence the league rules have been amended (Rule 1.b).

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Please play matches with four sets first to 21 points, with 2 clear and capped at 25 points. The deciding set will be first to 15 points, with 2 clear capped at 17 points.

Over-running matches had previously been a problem for clubs attempting to squeeze best of five, first to 25 uncapped matches into a two-hour booking.

It was therefore agreed that all matches in the Ron Ames Cup should be played using the Cambridgeshire rules. However, the final was played to 25, uncapped.

Venue difficulties for Bury Bobcats meant a number of fixtures had to be rearranged.

There was some controversy regarding players playing for multiple teams. Our [rules](#) state:

No player can play for more than one team in any SVA Cup/Plate Competition.

This dates back to when the SVA ran distinct League, Cup and Plate competitions. This has not been the case for many years, with the top two teams in the men's "league" contesting the Ron Ames Cup final.

We are aware that Cambridgeshire have no rules about players switching between teams; their focus appears to be on getting fixtures played regardless of who plays for them.

If any club wishes to enter multiple teams for 2026-27, we should agree whether or not players can move between their teams. We should also decide whether to continue to use Cambridgeshire results (and therefore rules) for matches involving teams entered in both Cambridgeshire and Suffolk competitions.

Inter-school events

The following 4v4 events were held:

- Year 8 east / west
- Year 9 east*
- Year 10 east / west + county final
- U19 county-wide

* This was an additional event compared with 2024-25 and has been scheduled again for 2025-26.

Participation:

	Boys	Girls	Total
2025-26 (incl. U14)	202	190	392
2025-26 (excl. U14*)	173	154	327
2024-25	148	153	301
2023-24	154	128	282

* No U14s events were offered in 2024-25. Therefore, for like-for-like comparison, figures with and without U14s are provided.

East Volleyball Development Camps

With fewer coaches / organisers available, a more restricted programme was run in 2025-26. Potential organisers, coaches and assistant coaches eager to get involved could offer via <https://eastvolleyball.co.uk/contact/>.

—Andrew Whitefield, Chair Suffolk Volleyball Association 2025-26