

# Parish Report August 2024

## Councillor

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## Information Updates

### Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

### Benefits advice and support:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>

### Flood preparation advice:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safety-advice-in-the-community/preparing-for-flooding>

### Flood recovery advice and support:

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

## Extra Investment agreed for Special Educational Needs

At Cabinet on Tuesday 25 July, the proposal to invest a further £9.1 million in Suffolk's SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) service was agreed. This is to fund extra staff and capacity to make sure the council can achieve its targets for assessing children and production of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The investment will be funded through the council's reserves, and will be £2.6 million extra for the rest of this financial year, £3 million in 2025/26, and £3.5 million in 2026/27, although the extra money in the coming two years will be subject to ongoing review. This comes at a time when the outcome of the 2023-24 budget was also presented, showing a nearly £15 million drop in the council's useable reserves – their 'savings' for a rainy day. My group also expressed concern that the council's target for EHCPs was to complete 50% within the legal 20 week timeframe, rather than the required 100%.

## Youth Justice Plan

At Council on Thursday 11 July, we reviewed the new Youth Justice Plan for 2024-2025 which outlined the ways the council plans to support young people who become involved in the criminal justice system. The plan outlines the ambitions of the council to reduce the number of girls, children in care and minority ethnic children currently over-represented in the Suffolk system, and support children involved in the criminal justice system or at risk of re-offending to engage with education, training or employment. My group are concerned that the Ministry of Justice funding for the Turnaround programme is due to end in March 2025, as this early intervention programme was doing good work to prevent young people from entering the criminal justice system in the first place, and suggested that the council should ask the county's new MPs should lobby for the continuance of this program in Westminster.

## **Scrutinising the State of Suffolk Roads**

On Tuesday 23 July, the council's scrutiny committee met to discuss the state of the roads in the county, how much was spent annually and how works were prioritised. Officers from Highways explained how roads are categorised from Green to Red (poor condition), that the optimal resurfacing programme would require around £50m per year in funding, whereas the current amount available for resurfacing works was more like £17m per year. My group are pressing for a review of the county's Highway Maintenance Operational Plan (HMOP) which sets out the parameters on what defects Highways respond to and the timeframe for response. We also believe the reporting systems for defects is not working correctly. All of the committee agreed that better communication with residents and timely fixes for road defects would be beneficial to the public perception of Suffolk's roads – as overall the condition of roads rated Red (in poor condition) has dropped since 2012, and the number of roads rated Green (in good condition) has risen.

## **Suffolk Youth Climate Conference**

On 3 July, 250 local schoolchildren pledged to write to their local Member of Parliament about climate change after an inspiring address by Chris Packham, renowned UK naturalist, at this year's Suffolk Youth Climate Conference. The event was held at Suffolk One Sixth Form College and organised by the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership. The partnership is engaging with schools, charities, and community groups to bring about positive change for the environment and also the health and wellbeing of Suffolk residents. A range of workshops were held on topics such as electric vehicles, nature-based solutions, the global food system, coastal adaptation, plastic pollution, flood and water management, sustainable fashion and climate anxiety. Students also had the opportunity to engage with 30 charities and organisations working to improve the natural environment in Suffolk.

## **Developer funding and highway works**

My group brought a motion to the council meeting on Thursday 11 July to propose that the council review and streamline processes to use housing developer funding for local improvement work. It was acknowledged that often, infrastructure works needed following additional housing were delayed for years, whether this was due to designing, programming or undertaking the works to a decent standard. Often these works are scheduled and provided by SCC, but sometimes the developer will be responsible for them which can also lead to delays and make local communities frustrated and ultimately resentful of new development. The motion was passed by councillors and the hope is that this will speed up the process for new junctions, footpaths, cycle paths and road improvements near new housing developments.

## **Local Businesses attend Carbon Charter Event**

On 11 July, Suffolk County Council's annual Carbon Charter event was held to honour businesses from Suffolk and Norfolk for their achievements in environmental sustainability. More than 100 delegates from a range of local businesses shared their experiences of reducing their environmental impact. Since they were established in 2010, over 500 businesses have received Carbon Charter awards for taking climate action, by reducing their carbon emissions, supporting their local community and developing green spaces. Carbon Charter Gold Awards were presented to leading print company, Denny Bros, from Bury St Edmunds, and to Seckford Hall for their exceptional environmental contributions.

## **Council bringing more community EV charging points to Suffolk**

Over 60 new community venues across Suffolk will have new electric vehicle (EV) chargepoints, as Suffolk County Council's 'Plug In Suffolk' project continues to grow. Fast charging facilities will be installed at 63 new sites, including community centres, village halls, scout huts and other community hubs, plus 25 existing chargepoints from an early iteration of Plug In Suffolk, will be adopted under a new contract.

The county council has successfully bid for £7.3 million from the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund, which supports local authorities to plan and deliver charging infrastructure for residents without off-street parking. £1.4 million of the LEVI funding will go towards the community charging infrastructure, with a further £5.9 million allocated for on-street charging, which will be developed later this year.

Connected Kerb is an award-winning electric vehicle charging company, which has been awarded the contract to install the new community chargepoints, and adopt the existing ones. All costs associated with the chargepoints will be covered by Connected Kerb, including the cost of the electricity used to power them and any maintenance and repair required over the lifetime of the contract. Host venues will receive a net profit share of every kilowatt sold, from activation until their contract term ends.

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