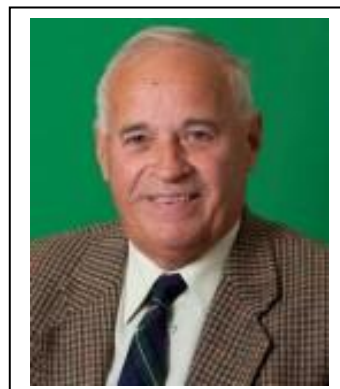


# Parish Report December 2024

## Councillor

Richard Kemp

Tresco  
New Road  
Long Melford  
Suffolk  
CO10 9JY  
01787 378149  
[richard.kemp@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:richard.kemp@suffolk.gov.uk)



### 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>

### Personal message from Richard

Here we are again, my final report of the year as we come to the end of the year and into the Festive Season. 2024 has been a year of many challenges as we strive to manage budgets effectively in the recession and work with changes within a new government.

As always I am completely amazed by the fantastic support of volunteers within our community who work vigorously, silently and with support and encouragement for those they support. As we enter into the winter season of shorter days and longer nights, I ask that together we look out for our neighbours, check in with those who are elderly, infirm or live alone, for this is a time of year when they can feel very isolated once the curtains are drawn. Your help is truly appreciated by all those you work with and for.

Many people will be struggling with hardships, financial, health, emotional, personal and businesses, I applaud you all for your tenacity, determination and courage as you manage these daily struggles. You are not alone, there are 'warm spaces' within the community, there are support groups and listening ears to help you. Please contact me if you need further information on any such support group.

It is such a privilege to serve our community and I am so proud of how everyone comes together to help each other, particularly in times of strife. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all good health, a peaceful and happy Christmas and a Joyful New Year.

### Council Budget Consultation

Suffolk County Council has launched a public consultation prior to decisions on the budget for the next financial year, 2025-26, which are due to be made in the next few months. This is an opportunity for residents and businesses to share their views on proposed Council Tax changes and spending priorities, as well as giving information on how the council manages its finances, the cost-saving measures already in place, and how the council might generate more money to support essential services. The council can increase its budget in two main ways: by receiving more funding from the government or by increasing Council Tax. The survey asks residents which council services they use and to indicate which council services they consider most important to them. The consultation will close on Monday 16 December, and if you want to participate, visit [www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/2025\\_26\\_budget](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/2025_26_budget).

The results of the consultation will be included in a final report when the council sets its budget is set in February 2025.

## Flooding Investigations and Prevention

At Cabinet on Tuesday 5 November, a decision was made by the council that it would allocate £1.5m from its reserves to deal with the recommendations which have come out of the flood investigation (Section 19) reports following Storm Babet last October. The money will mostly be used for highways flood mitigation and drainage work but some will be put aside to develop longer-term schemes and accessing funding for further flood protection for the county. The money will not fix all problems with flooding in the county and the £1.5m relates only to the recommendations from the reports published so far (10 reports out of the 48 commissioned). The works funded via this decision will be carried out between now and March 2026, and additional funding is required because the council would ordinarily only carry out three or four investigations a year – Storm Babet means that nearly 50 will be needed. Flood investigations are prioritised in locations where five or more properties have been flooded, or flooding to major infrastructure for 10 hours or more.

This page on the SCC website gives information on the locations that will be subject to flood investigations as a result of Storm Babet: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/storm-babet>  
This page contains links to all of the flood investigation reports published so far by the council (not just for Storm Babet reports from 2024, reports from previous years are also included): <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/flood-management-in-suffolk/flood-investigation-reports>  
Please see links at the bottom of this report on how to protect your property from flooding and advice on how to deal with the aftermath of flooding.

## Loft Insulation Offer for Suffolk Residents

For the second year running, Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders are providing funding to help Suffolk residents make their homes warmer and save money on their energy bills by providing discounted loft insulation - an uninsulated home can lose up to a quarter of its heat through its roof. The Suffolk Loft Insulation Offer enables homeowners in Suffolk to receive a 50% discount (up to £200) and free delivery on orders of 200mm or 370mm wide eco-friendly thermal insulation rolls from High Loft, the UK's leading eco loft insulation brand.

Last year, the project enabled the insulation of over 5,000m<sup>2</sup> of roofs in Suffolk, and this year the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership wants to double that figure. The offer is open to anyone in Suffolk and will only close once the allocated funding has been spent. Visit <https://highloft.co.uk/pages/suffolk-council-200-loft-insulation-contribution> and fill in the form to receive your discount code.

## More Home Energy Efficiency Schemes

The council's new £3m fund for interest-free loans to residents wishing to undertake home energy efficiency upgrades that was mentioned in last month's parish report is now active, and applications can now be made at <https://www.lendology.org.uk/warm-home-suffolk-loan>. Energy efficiency upgrades such as insulation, solar panels, batteries, glazing, or heat pumps are possible with loans from £2,000 to £15,000 to be repaid over a maximum of seven years at 0% interest.

A Suffolk Retrofit Assessment Voucher Scheme is also launching, funded by Suffolk Public Sector Leaders, whereby homeowners in Suffolk will be able to apply for a voucher that covers the cost of a professional retrofit assessment on their home property. These assessments are the first step towards making their home more energy-efficient, lowering their bills and reducing their carbon footprint. Residents who own a home with an EPC band of below C can take up the offer of a voucher to claim an assessment from a PAS 2035 Retrofit Assessor who will identify the best measures for their home, for example insulation, draft proofing, ventilation repairs, low carbon heating or solar panels. The assessment report will also incorporate analysis of the cost vs benefit of implementing the suggested improvements. The assessment is free for those with properties smaller than 98m<sup>2</sup>, with a maximum additional charge of £30 for larger properties bigger.

Homeowners can check to see if their property has an existing Energy Certificate with an EPC band and record of their property size at [gov.uk/find-energy-certificate](https://gov.uk/find-energy-certificate). They can apply for the vouchers by visiting [suffolkenergyassessment.co.uk](https://suffolkenergyassessment.co.uk). Applications are open now, and vouchers will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis.

## Thousands of Suffolk Residents offered Health Checks

Thousands of Suffolk residents are being offered a free NHS health check by Suffolk GP Federation. Health Checks can help spot the early signs of problems that could raise the risk of heart disease, stroke, dementia and other serious health conditions.

In many cases these conditions do not display any symptoms meaning people may be completely unaware they have them. By spotting issues early, residents can make positive changes to their lifestyles to keep fit and well. Residents who do not have any pre-existing conditions such as heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, high cholesterol or an irregular heartbeat, are eligible. The check only takes 20 to 30 minutes.

Everybody attending a check will be told about their risk of getting illnesses and will receive personalised advice to help them keep fit and well.

To find out more visit [www.suffolkfed.org.uk/healthcare-services/nhs-health-checks/](http://www.suffolkfed.org.uk/healthcare-services/nhs-health-checks/)

## Beware Black Friday and Cyber Monday online scammers, Trading Standards warns

Bargain hunters are urged to keep their wits about them when buying online in the big sales. Suffolk Trading Standards is urging shoppers to take care when hunting for online bargains as the countdown starts for Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

This year the two big discount days which herald the start of the Christmas shopping period take place on Friday November 29 and Monday December 2. However, it is also a time when online scammers will be looking to prey on unsuspecting shoppers hoping to bag a bargain. Last Christmas people in the UK were scammed out of more than £11.5m, figures show, almost £1m more than in the same period in 2022. Fake clothing or high-end tech listings on social media were among the ploys used to dupe people.

Suffolk Trading Standards has now issued guidelines for shoppers:

**Buy from traders you know and trust** - When it comes to shopping online, it's always safest to stick to familiar shops and brands that you know you can trust

**Do some digging** - There are some stores online that aren't mainstream brands but are still trustworthy places to shop. If you must shop with an unknown trader, make sure you research them first. Usually, the best thing to do is look for reviews of the website and a reliable way to contact the site owner that isn't just email in the event your delivery goes wrong. The most obvious things to look out for that signal a scam website are website quality and copy/editorial quality

**Pay securely** - Always use a secure form of payment. This means opt for a credit card, a debit card, or even PayPal over any direct money transfers. Credit card is probably the most secure option in terms of shopper rights as you can dispute charges made if your item never arrives or dispute any suspicious charges generally

**Don't click on strange links** - Whether you're on your laptop, your phone, or whether the link appears in your email inbox or pops up on your Facebook News Feed, don't click any strange or unfamiliar ad links. Last year in the UK £85.9 million was lost to purchase fraud cases. However, the actual figure is believed to be considerably higher, as many purchase frauds go unreported by their victims.

More than 16,000 reports of online shopping fraud were recorded between November 2023 and January 2024, with each victim losing £695 on average.

Black Friday originally started in America but has grown in popularity in the UK in recent years.

It began as a single day of discounts, but with promotions in stores and online now running for several weeks it has become the biggest shopping event of the year during which billions of pounds are spent.

Cyber Monday also began in America, originally offering better deals on tech goods online than in stores, and is always the first Monday after Black Friday.

## **Epic new strategy positions Suffolk at cutting edge of UK economy**

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet is set to review ambitious new plans which will position Suffolk as a national leader in sustainable growth and innovation. Suffolk's Economic Strategy, also known as a Local Growth Plan, has been developed by the Suffolk Business Board in collaboration with businesses, partners and stakeholders across the county.

It seeks to harness Suffolk's unique strengths, including its thriving renewable energy sector and innovative, collaborative business environment, to transform the region into a hub for clean technology, long-term economic prosperity and competitiveness.

By 2045, the strategy sets out to achieve:

- An additional £14billion contribution to the economy, surpassing the average growth rate in England
- 45,000 more people qualified to Level 3 or higher
- 35,000 more people participating in the workforce
- A significant increase in average wages across the region.

At its core is EPIC Suffolk, a framework to guide investments and funding priorities built on four key pillars: Economic wellbeing, Productivity, Inclusivity, and Clean growth.

The strategy identifies several key areas for economic growth:

- High Growth sectors: Suffolk is already a national leader in clean energy, with offshore wind and nuclear projects at the forefront. The county's agri-food and drink sector is set to grow through sustainable practices and agri-tech innovation, while the county's ports and logistics sector is a critical gateway for UK trade.
- Emerging and Value Growth sectors: Suffolk's technology sector also shows strong potential for growth, in areas such as ICT, digital creative industries, life sciences and financial services. Elsewhere, there are opportunities to further improve productivity and job quality in advanced manufacturing, construction, health and social care, and the visitor economy.
- Tech Convergence: Suffolk has the potential to become a leader in Tech Convergence, where technologies such as digital, AI, clean tech, robotics and satellite applications intersect and integrate with existing industries, creating an environment ripe for innovation and growth.

To support Suffolk's continued growth, the strategy places a strong emphasis on workforce development and infrastructure. Investments in skills, housing, digital connectivity, and road and rail networks will be critical to meeting the demands of a growing economy and ensuring that the region remains competitive in the global marketplace.

The strategy is underpinned by a comprehensive investment plan which aims to attract £4 of private investment for every £1 of public funding, including a multimillion-pound pipeline of projects to boost productivity, create jobs and attract new companies to Suffolk.

The Suffolk Business Board was mobilised in May 2024, following the government guidance that the work of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership should be brought to a close. The Business Board comprises 17 members representing business, education, voluntary sector and local government and is responsible for the economic strategy for Suffolk and steering of former LEP-led functions.

The Economic Strategy will be discussed at the meeting of Suffolk County Council's Cabinet on Tuesday 3 December 2024. Papers for the meeting can be viewed at <https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk>

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