

Parish Report March 2023

Councillor

Richard Kemp

Tresco
New Road
Long Melford
Suffolk
CO10 9JY
01787 378149
richard.kemp@suffolk.gov.uk



Information Updates

For information on local support during the Cost-of-Living Crisis, visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/CostOfLiving

For information on supporting Ukrainian refugees in Suffolk, email: refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk or ukrainesupport@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk

Homes for Ukraine: One Year Anniversary of War

The 24th February marked the one-year anniversary since Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine. Suffolk continues to do its part through the Homes for Ukraine programme – hosting refugees fleeing the war.

In total, 1256 Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Suffolk through the programme. Currently, we have around 330 host families, supporting 750 Ukrainians – with others in private accommodation.

Suffolk is in need of new hosts, to continue to offer a safe haven for Ukrainian refugees who are not yet ready to enter private accommodation. Based on numbers, Suffolk needs 50 new hosts in the coming months.

If you think you can help, please visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/Ukraine.

Hosts are entitled to £350 per month, which increases to £500 after 12 months.

Household Support Fund: Extension Granted by Government

The Government has agreed to extend the Household Support Fund, meaning local authorities will continue to receive funding to help residents through the current cost-of-living crisis. The grant is distributed through small payments to support vulnerable households meet daily needs such as food, clothing, and utilities.

To apply for help, visit Suffolk's Cost-of-Living support leaflet at: <https://suffolk.pagetiger.com/cost-of-living-support/scc1>

SCC Financial Budget

At the beginning of February, the Council's budget for 2023/24 was voted in. The Conservative budget will now increase tax by 3.99% - broken down into a 2% rise in the Social Care Precept and a 1.99% increase in general tax.

Council services have faced a gruelling year of demand and additional cost pressures. In addition, the Council is not on track to achieve Net Zero by 2030, as they have promised to do so. Therefore, we proposed an additional 0.89% increase (19p weekly increase) to ensure vital services were protected from cutting support to residents, and that more direct action is taken to reduce carbon emissions.

Our Group proposed to invest in a Carbon Budget Officer, to help develop a stronger pathway towards Net Zero. In addition, we proposed to facilitate a review into Suffolk's speed limits, in the hope to provide residents with a clearer path to more appropriate travel in their communities.

We proposed using £1m to actively recruit, retain and reward frontline staff in adult social care, as well as providing more for Suffolk Libraries to help maintain services through the cost-of-living crisis. In addition, we wanted to invest £1m in providing wider capacity of community transport to be used to help achieve Net Zero through EV vehicle usage.

The **Conservatives** voted against our budget amendments, saying our proposals were ill thought-out and not appropriate.

Labour did not submit a budget response, nor did they vote in the budget meeting. They stated that they couldn't make a difference to any result.

SCC Cabinet Meeting

The Cabinet met in February to discuss the forecasts for the Council's current budget. The latest forecasts show that SCC is having to use more Reserves than anticipated to cover additional costs in running its services. Our Group are concerned with the long-term effects of the Council's financial strategy, especially when the Conservatives voted against our amendments to create extra revenue and additional income generation.

In addition, the Cabinet agreed to move the West Suffolk Archives in Bury St Edmunds to a new location in the town on Western Way. Our Group were concerned about the lack of sufficient public transport access to the new location – being far from the train station with an irregular bus service.

Finally, the Cabinet discussed the Fire & Rescue Service's new risk management plan. The plan outlines all foreseeable risks in Suffolk and indicates the service's priorities and proposals to improve the service. Currently, the service suffers from low recruitment, poor retainment of officers, unmet response targets, and an increase in demand through extreme heatwaves caused by climate change. Our Group support the plan, hoping more investment can now be provided to the essential and increasingly ever-needed service.

New Highways Services: Contract Agreed

Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, has been awarded SCC's new highways services contract. The contract, worth between £800m-£1bn, will begin 1st October 2023 and will last up to 20 years. The service will provide maintenance of roads, pavement, Rights of Way, drainage, hedges, construction of new roads, and snow clearing – this is not an exhaustive list.

Our Group campaigned last year for Suffolk Highways maintenance to be brought back in-house. This was due to the extortionate prices the previous provider, Kier, gave for simple jobs such as tree cutting and speed bump designs (i.e., £5,000 for a pair of dropped kerbs, £7,500 to cut down a single tree, £10,000 to design four humps in a road).

Our Group has been given reassurance from Suffolk Highways that the same mistakes will not repeat, and that the contract is more robust to deal with the inflated quotes previously received. However, our Group will closely monitor to ensure this is the case.

In-person Citizenship Ceremonies return in Suffolk

Following an almost three year break due to the Covid pandemic, Citizenship Ceremonies are now once again being held in person at Register Offices across the county. During the pandemic, like many other services, Citizenship Ceremonies moved to being conducted online. 563 new citizens were welcomed in virtual ceremonies in 2022.

In-person Ceremonies have once again been taking place since 18 January 2023 and take place every month at the Ipswich Register Office and on alternating months at the Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft offices.

The most recent ceremony took place on Monday 13 February. For the thirty-four participants at the ceremony, this was the last step on their journey to British citizenship:

Judith, a secondary school teacher from Felixstowe, said “I came to Britain from Zimbabwe as a teen. It feels great to be a British citizen now and to be part of the British culture and share in British values”.

Natalia moved to Suffolk from Greece. Having made Sudbury her home, she says she’s excited to become a British citizen now. She said: “I’ve been here for eight years now. It just made sense to apply for citizenship and become a part of Britain.”

Citizenship Ceremonies can only be booked once an application has been approved by the Home Office, and an official invitation has been sent. Please call our Ipswich Office on **0345 607 2050** to book or email citizenship@suffolk.gov.uk.

For more information, please visit [the Citizenship Ceremony page on our website](#).

West Suffolk Archives Branch to move to Western Way in Bury St Edmunds

Suffolk County Council has approved plans to move the West Suffolk Archives branch in Bury St Edmunds into the new Western Way development, due to open in 2025.

The new development will improve accessibility, enabling more people to use the service. Its purpose-built strongroom will create accrual space for the West Suffolk Collections for the next 30 years. The move will also unlock new opportunities to work with the health and leisure partners on site to develop community-based projects to support health and well-being.

As part of long-term planning for the Suffolk Archives service, the county council’s cabinet was presented with options for either remaining at its current location in Raingate Street or moving to the planned new Western Way community hub being developed by West Suffolk Council.

Recent investigations have shown that if the service were to remain at Raingate Street, alterations requiring significant investment would be needed for the long-term future sustainability of the building. Suffolk County Council approved the proposals to move the service to the new Western Way Development at a meeting of the council’s Cabinet on Tuesday 21 February.

The first phase of the new development at Western Way is anticipated to open to the public in Autumn 2025, with the new West Suffolk Branch of Suffolk Archives located on the ground floor. Phase one will also include sports and leisure facilities, health services and a pre-school. Until then, the West Suffolk Archive Service will continue to operate from its current location in Raingate Street in Bury St Edmunds.

Follow us on:

Twitter - [Suffolk Green, Lib Dem & Independent Group \(@SuffolkGLI\) / Twitter](#)

Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/suffolkgli_group/

Facebook - Search ‘Suffolk GLI - Green, Liberal Democrat & Independent Group’

Website - [Suffolk Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group – The GLI Group at Suffolk County Council \(suffolkgli.wordpress.com\)](#)