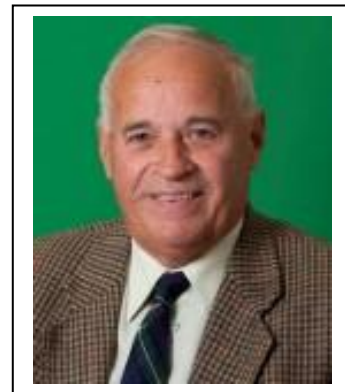


# Parish Report July 2023

## Councillor

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### Information Updates

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

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

### Concern over SCC budget position

At Cabinet on 13 June, our group raised concerns about the significant extra expenditure announced by the Conservative administration since the 2023-24 budget was set in February. Cabinet were reviewing the 2022-23 finances against the budget that was set, including an overspend of £27.7m and a significant £57.2m taken out of Council reserves – the council's 'safety net' funds to be used when needed.

On 16 May 2023 the Cabinet announced that an extra unbudgeted £720k would be found to cover the £60k monthly shortfall for Suffolk Libraries for a year, and at the council AGM on 25 May the Leader of the Council, Cllr Matthew Hicks, announced a further unbudgeted additional £10m for road surfacing in the next 20 months. Given that neither of these items were budgeted for only a few months ago when the current budget was set, my group raised concerns in the meeting whether the administration's budget setting procedures were sufficiently robust.

### Missing Child Reports in Suffolk

The recent reports in the press that nearly 3000 missing child reports were received by Suffolk Constabulary between April 2022 and March 2023 deeply shocked our group. The reports involved 719 children across the county with some going missing several times during the period. The majority of the children reported missing are in care settings such as children's homes and foster care.

We asked the administration at Suffolk County Council to do more to support children in care, who are among the most vulnerable in Suffolk.

### North Falls Offshore Wind Farm

On 13 June, Cabinet reviewed the consultation response for the extension of the North Falls wind farm. The wind farm is situated just off the Essex coast so Suffolk County Council is a consultee rather than a decision maker.

A number of issues were discussed which will be included in the consultation response, for example the impact on A12 traffic, the views from Suffolk coastal Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the need to consult with communities on the Suffolk coast. The developers will also be asked to time construction so it does not clash with the tourism season.

### National Grid Reinforcement Works between Bramford and Twinstead

The Cabinet also reviewed and approved a response to the Planning Inspectorate on upgrading the power lines between the villages of Twinstead in Essex and Bramford in Mid Suffolk.

There were concerns about the impact of the works to the local countryside, particularly the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where the National Grid have agreed to lay cables underground.

The government's aspiration is for 50GW of offshore wind power by 2023, and in East Anglia this means that our throughput must increase from 4.1GW currently to 24.5GW. The existing power line between Bramford and Twinstead is at full capacity and it was acknowledged that the works were necessary to facilitate the increases to wind farm development

### **Suffolk Fire Service to bring control room back to County**

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has announced plans to create a new fire control centre here in Suffolk. Since October 2011, Suffolk has shared a control room with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire and Rescue Service in Huntingdon. The joint project has worked well, saving both fire services money and enabling greater cross border resource sharing.

However, the company behind a project to deliver a new IT system, initiated in 2019, has run into technical and financial problems, causing a significant delay. This, in addition to advancements in technology, has led to the decision to bring fire control back into the county by the end of 2024.

The proposed new control centre will be brought to Suffolk County Council's Cabinet for approval in September 2023

### **Residents urged to walk or cycle a Mile for your Mind, this Clean Air Day**

Suffolk County Council and partners are encouraging people to walk or cycle one mile, to mark national Clean Air Day on Thursday 15 June. This year's theme is 'Clean up our air to look after your mind', which highlights the link between pollution and mental health.

Research, published by Global Action Plan, shows that there is an association between air pollution and conditions including schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, and mood disorders. Air pollution can also lead to a more rapid decline in cognitive function including an increased risk of developing dementia.

For this year's Clean Air Day, Suffolk County Council is inviting people from across Suffolk to take part in a 'Mile for my mind' walk and cycle at 12noon. To take part, residents can set off from anywhere in Suffolk and tag Suffolk County Council (@SuffolkCC) in their photos using the hashtags: #CleanAirDaySuffolk and #AMileForMyMind. For anyone that can't take part at 12noon, the 1 mile can be done anytime on Clean Air Day.

A mile for my mind is supported by organisations and groups across Suffolk including Ipswich Borough, Babergh and Mid Suffolk, East Suffolk and West Suffolk Councils along with the Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board, Suffolk Mind, Talk Club Ipswich, Bury Eco Carriers, Future Female Society.

The Clean Air Day activity marks the start of a programme of air quality engagement work planned for 2023 with officers from Suffolk County Council attending events across the County to speak to people about air pollution and its impact on health, including the Indian Summer Mela on 1 July, Ipswich Music Day on 2 July, Global Rhythms on 8 July and the Multicultural Festival on 23 July.

The council has also just launched its Air Quality Strategy, which has been developed in partnership between Suffolk County Council's Public Health and Communities directorate and the Growth, Highways and Infrastructure directorate, with contributions from district and borough councils, NHS and the University of Suffolk. The strategy sets out actions identified as being important to the improvement of air quality, along with who is the lead authority for the work, timescales, and what will be achieved. The strategy can be viewed at: [www.suffolk.gov.uk/airquality](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/airquality)

### **Help for Suffolk Pre-Payment Meter Customers**

A package of support has been created for pre-payment meter customers in Suffolk who are struggling with their energy bills.

Warm Homes Suffolk is a Suffolk wide Council partnership service, delivering energy efficiency support to low-income households affected by cost of living pressures.

Supported by Suffolk's Collaborative Communities Board and funding from Public Health Suffolk's Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), the service is now able to offer specific help for households struggling to pay their energy bills via a pre-payment meter, in addition to its existing support.

The support covers the whole of Suffolk and is available for all residents, whether they are in social housing, council tenants, owner occupiers or private renters.

The Warm Homes Suffolk Service can check eligibility and support applications for grants to increase household energy efficiency, with measures such as loft and wall insulation to air source heat pumps, draught-proofing and more.

It is estimated that more than 24,000 people in Suffolk are pre-payment meter customers.

The service will work with each individual to understand the pressures on their finances and the impact this is having on their lives. The service can carry out a home visit, as well as providing advice over the phone and by email.

The COMF funding of £180,000 will enable this project to run for 12 months

Pre-payment meter customers who would like support can contact [prepay@eastssuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:prepay@eastssuffolk.gov.uk) to find out more, or call: Prepay West 07769 365796, or Prepay East 07769 366229.

Referrals can be made directly from households, voluntary sector and professionals to find prepay households who can benefit from an independent look at their bills.

Warm Homes Suffolk also offers support and advice for residents who are not pre-payment meter customers. To find out more about the support on offer, visit: <https://www.warmhomessuffolk.org/>

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