

Parish Report January 2024

Councillor

Richard Kemp

Tresco
New Road
Long Melford
Suffolk
CO10 9JY
01787 378149
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>

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

Flooding in Suffolk

Recent high rainfall has led to many Suffolk residents' homes being flooded, and flooding more generally on roads. At Council on 7 December, a motion was passed for the council to review the frequency of drain and gully clearance in areas at risk of flooding, and to work closely with districts and boroughs, Anglian Water and the Environment Agency to help prevent future flooding. My group had hoped to introduce further measures on regularity of maintenance, but this was not supported by the Conservative administration. The motion that was passed was preceded by an announcement by the council of £1m in extra funding to investigate flooding incidents in the county.

Details of a government-funded scheme from DEFRA whereby Suffolk residents can apply for up to £5,000 to help protect their property from future flooding can be found at this link, with applications from January 2024: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

DEFRA's Property Flood Resilience Grant

As well as the initial £500 grant payment and council tax/business rate discounts, residents whose homes have been flooded may also be eligible for up to £5,000 from the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Grant, which the government requires Suffolk County Council to administer on their behalf. The application process will begin in early 2024 and after initial eligibility checks by SCC, property owners will be responsible for sourcing an independent surveyor and PFR contractor. Payment of up to £5,000 including VAT will be paid retrospectively to the property owner once the Council receives proof of the completed installation and invoicing for the approved measures.

Further information about the grant eligibility, conditions and the forthcoming application process can be found here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/property-flood-resilience-grant>

Getting Children Ready for Education

On Thursday 14 December, the council's Education and Children's Scrutiny Committee met to review the support the council provides to prepare children for school. This includes the county's nurseries and early years providers, health services for 0–5-year-olds and Family Hubs (formerly children's centres). In recent years the council has worked with the National Literacy Hub to try and engage children with reading, after research in 2020 concluded that educational attainment for Suffolk children was much lower than it should be.

The Committee acknowledged the good work that was going on in a challenging area and urged that recruitment of health visitors be prioritised by SCC to fill the current vacancies (21%). There were also plans to improve the council's digital platform - in partnership with parents - so they were able to find information and support more easily.

SCC Carbon Net Zero Ambitions

The council's Scrutiny Committee met on Monday 11 December to review the council's progress towards becoming carbon net zero by 2030. Overall there had been a 10% reduction in emissions in 2022/23, due to reduced energy use for street lighting (a recent upgrade programme) and reduced gas consumption at SCC property and schools.

However, the council is not on target to be carbon neutral by 2030, at least partially due to the third scope of indirect emissions – this includes emissions by suppliers and contractors used by the council which are difficult to measure accurately and control. The supply chain represents 91% of the council's total footprint, and it has updated its contract terms and conditions to include annual reporting on reducing carbon emissions, and also requires suppliers to sign up to its Carbon Charter and Climate Change Commercial Ask.

Sea Link Consultation Response

On Tuesday 12 December, Suffolk County Council Cabinet reviewed their proposed response to the National Grid's proposals to link up Suffolk and Kent with undersea cables and landfall at Aldeburgh and a substation at nearby Friston. Councillors in these areas were particularly concerned about the impact on the natural environment and the Suffolk coastline, with most councillors agreeing that engagement with the community about the proposals had been poor, and the timing of the construction coinciding with Sizewell C to create even more pressure on the county's transport routes and tourism industry.

Cabinet decided that they would not lodge a holding objection at this stage, but their response to the National Grid consultation outlined their concerns and the possibility of objecting in future once more details were known.

Suffolk County Council response to local government finance settlement

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities yesterday announced its funding package to support councils in England to deliver frontline services. Responding to this, Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:

"Yesterday's council funding announcement presents more challenges than we, and many other County Councils, expected. It means next year we will have no choice but to consider changes to some of the services we provide. "The Government is facing considerable financial pressures and requests for funds from all corners of society, not least from councils across the country. We have consistently lobbied for more funding in Suffolk.

"We fully understand this position as we too have increasing demands on our services and rising costs to provide them – but the money we receive is not keeping pace with this need. Despite being a financially well-run council, we have significantly less funding than we need – especially in services like SEND, home to school transport and children in care. In order to prioritise these areas, we will have to make difficult decisions about the services we deliver, how we deliver them and council tax."

More than 1,700 people respond to library consultation

More than 1,700 people have already had their say in Suffolk County Council's consultation to Shape the Future of library services in Suffolk. The consultation, which launched on Monday 30 October has so far had 1,725 responses.

Suffolk County Council's contract with Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) Limited, the independent charity that runs the library service, comes to an end on 31 May 2025, with a new contract set to begin in June 2025. The Council is therefore seeking views from the public about what is important to them, ahead of awarding the new contract.

The consultation is made up of two parts. Part one gives residents an opportunity to tell the council what they value in their library service and what they would like to see more of in the future. Part two seeks views on how Library Outreach services could be run in the future.

The council is keen to hear from both those who currently use library services and those who do not, to better understand the needs across the county. This feedback will help to inform the requirements for the future contract. Residents can have their say by visiting www.suffolk.gov.uk/LibraryConsultation before Friday 26 January 2024. Easy-read and translated versions are available at the above website.

Alternative formats of the consultation are available on request, please email: Libraries.consultation@suffolk.gov.uk Those who cannot access the consultation online can request a printed copy or assistance with completing the survey by calling 0345 603 1842.

Council's Centre of Excellence to go nationwide

Suffolk County Council has received further Government funding to continue the work of its Centre of Excellence, which supports other local authorities with NSIPs.

The council has successfully bid for £99,000 from the Government's Innovation and Capacity Fund, which will be spent on more events and materials to upskill and share good practice with councils around England, with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

Suffolk's Centre of Excellence was established in August 2022 and has already engaged with 16 local authorities across the East of England, with 429 representatives attending webinars and a conference, held at The Apex in Bury St Edmunds. The new funding will now extend these offers across the country.

The council was recognised by the Government last year for its knowledge and expertise when engaging with NSIPs such as Sizewell C, Lowestoft's Gull Wing, National Grid upgrades and offshore wind farms.

The county council has long recognised that town and parish councils, who have limited resources, can easily be overwhelmed by the magnitude of NSIPs - the new funding will enable bespoke guidance to be published in partnership with Suffolk Association of Local Councils.

The funding will also allow previous work to continue, such as updating and creating more accessible guides for local authorities, and progress guidance materials for developers

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 \(suffolkgli.wordpress.com\)](#)