



# District Councillors Report to Bredfield Parish Council Meeting

**For March 2024**

**Carlford and Fynn Valley Ward.**

**Rushmere Village, Great Bealings, Little Bealings, Playford, Bredfield, Grundisburgh & Culpho, Witnesham and Swilland, Westerfield, Hasketon, Clopton, Charsfield, Dallinghoo, Tuddenham, Boulge, Burgh, Debach, Otley.**

**From District Councillor**

**Cllr Colin Hedgley**

**[Colin.Hedgley@eastsoffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Colin.Hedgley@eastsoffolk.gov.uk)**

## **Budget Agreed**

At the February meeting of the full Council financial Plans for the next year were presented and debated. As I stated in my last report the Increase in Council Tax was set at 3%. Although some of the reports may seem dry to many, the following were proposed and agreed. The Housing Revenue Account, The Capital Programme, The Capital Strategy, and the Treasury Statement. All were passed with a unanimous vote. All the reports are available on the East Suffolk Council website. There are 245 pages so put plenty of time by should you wish to read them.

## **East Suffolk Council announces spending plans for 2024-25**

East Suffolk Council will spend nearly £100million in 2024/25 delivering critical services for its communities, and projects to improve the district, as part of an ambitious four-year plan. At a Full Council meeting 21<sup>st</sup> February, the Council confirmed a balanced budget for the year and committed to a net spend of £46 million for services such as planning and coastal management, environmental services, leisure, waste collection and parking.

In addition, a further £50 million will be invested in assets, services, housing and infrastructure in 2024/25 as part of the General Fund and Housing Capital Programmes.

Having formed a new Administration in May 2023, the Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group (GLI) led by Cllr Caroline Topping, developed 'Our Direction 2028' – a four-year plan which presents the Council's key ambitions. It is driven by four main priorities (Environmental Impact, Sustainable Housing, Tackling Inequalities & Thriving Economy) and Cllr Topping believes this budget shows that the Council is making important funding decisions based on these clear principles.

She said: "The GLI administration at East Suffolk Council has a clear and bold plan to promote a bright, green, open, free, and fair future for all - and our budget for 2024/25 reflects that. We know that many people are facing difficulties, and our services can make a real difference.



“Improved housing is also a key priority and, along with the Housing Revenue Account, our budget commits to supporting safe, suitable and sustainable homes, delivering affordable and sustainable housing as opportunities arise.

"Naturally, we are committed to delivering positive climate, nature and environmental impacts – which will also benefit and enhance our long-term financial stability. This includes a commitment to fund a range of different initiatives such as our Cycling and Walking Strategy and ongoing financial support for the delivery of the Council’s commitment to net zero by 2030. “This budget also looks to ensure that our economic development and regeneration activity enables residents of East Suffolk to benefit from and contribute to a thriving economy but with a sustainable approach at its heart.”

Around 40% of East Suffolk’s critical services are funded by Council Tax and the total amount paid specifically to East Suffolk by each household will increase by 2.98%. However the Council only receives around 8.8% of each Council Tax bill, with the remainder going to Suffolk County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk and Town & Parish Councils.

## **Grow for it! Residents encouraged to grow their own**

**East Suffolk residents are being encouraged to grow their own food this spring with the return of a successful programme offering free growing kits.**

Following the success of East Suffolk Council’s Field to Fork programme last year when 1,500 growing kits were distributed to primary schools across the district, the scheme is now returning for 2024. Field to Fork aims to encourage people to try to grow their own food and improve their health and wellbeing in the process.

This year, 1,900 kits will be made available, each one containing compost pellets, seeds and free access to Groundwork East’s online GROW Programme.

Those interested in a kit can apply online and kits can then be collected from locations across East Suffolk, including libraries, community hubs and churches over the next four weeks. Priority will be given to those on the existing

Field to Fork distribution list and then the kits will be made available to all from Monday 18 March.

To apply for a kit, please visit <https://eastsuffolk.co/f2f> (from 18 March).

Anyone in need of help completing the application form can contact our Customer Services team on 03330 162000. Each growing kit is packed in Melton by Realise Futures.

Next month, a small grants scheme will open to support community farms, allotments and gardens to help people get involved with growing their own food. The Field to Fork grant scheme will provide grants of up to £2,000 to help engage local people with 'grow and eat' projects that will feed communities and help people stay active and connected.



## **Tourism industry plan for next three years**

East Suffolk Council (ESC) has renewed its support for the work of an industry-led organisation dedicated to boosting the local visitor economy.

ESC's Cabinet approved funding to support delivery of The Suffolk Coast DMO's (Destination Management Organisation) plan for continued, sustainable growth of the district's visitor economy over the next three years. Since jointly establishing the DMO with the local tourism industry in 2012, ESC has agreed rolling three-year funding to support the delivery of its business plan, which has contributed significantly to sustainably growing the visitor economy in East Suffolk.

Total funding of £182,000 has been approved for 2024-27 to support the DMO's new plan to promote East Suffolk as a visitor destination, increasing tourism in the 'shoulder seasons' to ensure sustainable tourism growth, as well as increasing the economic viability of our towns and encouraging further investment in the industry – worth £680million and accountable for 14% of total employment in the district.

The DMO will also have a key role in mitigating the impacts on the visitor economy, while maximising the benefits of investment, from the major energy projects being developed on the East Suffolk coast.

Partly funded through additional revenue from membership fees and advertising, the DMO has steadily built up its membership base to 250 tourism businesses across the district, led by a board of professional business leaders, including representatives from Adnams, Snape Maltings/Britten Pears Arts, The Hotel Folk, ESC, The Yeo Group, Attain Solutions Ltd and Suffolk and Essex Coast & Heaths National Landscapes.

## **East Suffolk Council hosts first-ever 'Model District Council' for schools**

More than 50 young delegates from seven East Suffolk schools took over the Council Chamber as youth 'councillors' for the day.

Pupils from schools from across the district were invited to take their seats for a first-ever simulation of East Suffolk Council, and to debate a motion on intergenerational political equality in East Suffolk.

The Chair of Council, Cllr Dr Anthony Specca, developed and oversaw the 'Model District Council' event as a centrepiece of his Chairship.

A total of 52 pupils from Benjamin Britten Academy, Bungay High School, Castle EAST School, East Coast College, Pakefield High School, The Ashley School and Thomas Mills High School took part in the Model District Council, which was an all-day educational event.

Pupils were each assigned a ward and political party, and they were offered an experience that mirrored the real Council as closely as possible.



Supported by officers from Democratic Services and Communities teams, they first met in their political groups to consider the issue of how best to ensure that the youth voice is heard in East Suffolk. They then came together for a formal 'Full Council' meeting, with the Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent (GLI) group proposing a substantive motion, just like in the real Council.

Following robust debate and well-considered amendments from pupils in all the political groups, the youth 'councillors' then unanimously approved a motion to establish a permanent East Suffolk Youth Council.

## Funding opportunities

Funding opportunities have recently been announced by the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership; in addition the local National Landscape Grants are currently open too.

**Domestic Loft Insulation Offer** Help with loft insulation is now available to help Suffolk residents make their homes warmer and save money on their energy bills. The Suffolk Climate Change Partnership has teamed up with Travis Perkins to offer support for Suffolk residents through a significant reduction on buying loft insulation.

Residents will receive a 50% discount off their purchase (up to £200), with free delivery. The offer is open to anyone living in Suffolk and will close once the allocated funding has been spent. We have the equivalent of 18.5 football pitches of loft insulation available as part of this deal; once it's gone it's gone!

Simply fill out the order form online [Suffolk Loft Insulation Offer Order Form \(office.com\)](#) and Travis Perkins will be in touch to arrange payment and delivery. To find out more visit [Funding and Support for Homeowners and Renters – Green Suffolk](#)

## Climate Community Matchfunder

The SCCP have recently relaunched this popular Matchfunder which was first launched last year.

This fund is designed to assist charities, community interest companies, parish councils, voluntary groups and other not for profit organisations who wish to deliver community-based carbon reduction projects that contribute to Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan and our vision for Suffolk to become carbon neutral by 2030. The fund will support up to 50% of costs (up to a maximum of £10,000) for applications.

Eligible projects can include those that:

- Promote walking and cycling
- Promote the use of sustainable/recycled materials
- Raise awareness of climate change through events and campaigns
- Energy projects
- Bike to school buses

Find out more at [Suffolk Climate Action Community Match Funder – Green Suffolk](#) If you are developing an idea and need some advice please contact David Walton: [david.walton@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:david.walton@suffolk.gov.uk).



## Funding gap forces Council to halt Flood Barrier scheme

Following the emergence of a budget gap totalling more than £100 million, and with no immediate prospect of additional funding being secured, the decision has been taken to halt work on the project to construct a tidal flood barrier in Lowestoft. This scheme forms part of the wider Lowestoft Flood Protection programme, which has already seen the completion of 1.5km of tidal flood walls in October 2023, to help mitigate the impacts of weather events.

However, during the design phase for the tidal barrier, and as a result of crippling cost increases relating to materials, labour, design changes and inflation, a £124m funding gap emerged. The project team has engaged with both the Government and the Environment Agency (EA) to seek the necessary additional funding needed to complete the project.

£15 million has been spent on the project to date, and this sum is accounted for with funds that have already been pledged. However, the project is scheduled to spend an additional £20 million from January to July 2024 and this amount cannot be covered by pledged funds, creating a £20 million risk for the Council. Although discussions have been ongoing for more than a year, it is clear that a decision by the Government and EA will not be made before this additional spending must be committed to. Therefore, despite making them aware of the urgency, East Suffolk Council has been left with no alternative but to halt work on the tidal barrier element of the scheme.

## Winners revealed in 'East Suffolk Through the Lens' photo competition

A stunning selection of images have triumphed in a competition inviting photographers to showcase East Suffolk 'Through the Lens'.

Organised by East Suffolk Council, the competition gave photographers of all ages and experience the chance to exhibit their talents by capturing their favourite sights and scenes from across the district.

More than 350 entries were submitted during the seven-week competition between 11 December and 28 January – with one amazing photo eventually chosen by a panel of judges as overall winner, along with three runners-up and an under-16 winner.

Tim Bennett's winning photograph, entitled 'Early morning swim at Southwold Beach', impressed judges with its striking colour, light, and sense of tranquillity.

Highly commended runners-up included Peter Stokes' ghostly image of Felixstowe Ferry on the River Deben, Darren Kirby's imposing impression of a misty Lowestoft beach scene, and Jordan Shaddick's breathtaking shot of a hare bounding across Boyton and Hollesley Marshes.

Meanwhile, Bruno Leon's beautiful depiction of a vole eating a blade of grass at RSPB Minsmere was a worthy winner in the under-16 category of the competition.



Entrants were encouraged to submit photographs that captured the essence of East Suffolk – from its people and wildlife to its historic buildings and beautiful landscapes.

Tim Bennett's winning photo is set to grace the cover of East Suffolk Magazine when delivered to every household in the district next spring.

High street retail vouchers are also on their way to the overall winner, under-16 winner and three runners-up.

To see all the photos chosen by judges, visit the [East Suffolk Through the Lens](#) webpage.

### **Planning Applications**

I will give a verbal update on the evening should there be any.