

Parish Report –March 2024

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Council Budget for 2024-25

At Council on 15 February, Suffolk councillors met to discuss and vote on the administration's budget proposals. The council is borrowing heavily from its reserves to meet the growing demand for social care for adults and children, and council tax is due to rise by £74 annually for Band D properties from April this year. There will also be cuts to Family Hubs (children's centres) and Housing Related Support, which supports vulnerable people like care leavers to find accommodation. Funding for arts and museums will be maintained for 2024-25 but not from SCC core funding, and subject to a bidding process for grants from April 2025. The Bury St Edmunds local archives will be moved to The Hold in Ipswich, which like the arts funding cuts has been controversial locally.

My group were concerned about the lack of core funding from Suffolk County Council to arts and museums, we proposed an amendment and suggested that some of the council's remaining Covid funding from the government be used to support young people not in education, employment or training, as this cohort had suffered a lot of upheaval in their final years of schooling and exams.

FLOODING; yet again Beyton/Thurston road was severely hit by yet another storm and heavy rain. I attended a meeting in Gt Finborough where parishes got together , it was obvious that the main problem is the various authorities don,t work together to get things sorted out. I notice there is still water onto the road at the Rattlesden Rd, Gedding road area

HIGHWAYS; at the meeting with Drinkstone we got a commitment from national highways to recompense SCC highways for the damage to local roads due to the A14 work.

WEST SUFFOLK LOCAL PLAN; at a briefing on this I asked that consideration MUST be made on the impact of Beyton and Thurston of new developments if they are agreed in the east of West Suffolk and you should be consulted. These could impact on the local roads

NEW DEAL FOR SUFFOLK. As part of the governments devolution plans Suffolk will be consulting on this from March 18th for 10 weeks. This is NOT A referendum. Only the results will be fed into the current county council for approval If it goes ahead there will an election for a "mayor" type leader in 2025 alongside the elections for county councillors. That person however cannot be a county councillor. The new government has promised new money for various issues.

Ofsted/CQC SEND Inspection Report

As you may have read in the local press, Ofsted and CQC published their joint report into SEND services in Suffolk at the beginning of the month. The report was scathing. My group was disappointed and concerned that the services are yet to get to grips with this and offered our assistance to the Local Area Partnership (Suffolk County Council and NHS teams) in preparing the Priority Action Plan they now need to submit to Ofsted and CQC by 7 March.

The poor report led to the resignation of the Cabinet members for SEND, Education and Children's Services and prompted a reshuffle of the political leadership at the council.

Suffolk Devolution in Sight

Devolution is something there has been a lot of talk about in Suffolk in recent years, and it looks like it may be happening from 2025. The deal the government is offering Suffolk is the same as the one for Norfolk and would give the county more freedom on decisions and funding for transport, skills and adult education, regenerating brownfield sites and retrofitting homes to make them more energy-efficient. If the deal is approved, the leader of Suffolk County Council would **be directly elected by the people of Suffolk** - every four years, **residents will be given two votes, to elect their local county councillor AND the leader of the county council. The first election would take place in May 2025.** The council will be consulting on the deal soon and residents will be able to give their opinions on the changes proposed. For more information, see <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/devolution>

Changes to Local Archives

Following the recent controversial proposal in the county council's budget to move local records from Bury St Edmunds to The Hold in Ipswich, the council have announced that that they will be inviting community representatives from both Lowestoft and Bury St Edmund's to form two new Working Parties to consider local access to historical material. This could allow relevant collections to remain in the local area, but any proposals would need to be funded locally rather than by Suffolk County Council. This is not a reversal of the council's decision, and the majority of the records are still planned to move to The Hold, with the North-East and West Suffolk branches of the archive service to close.

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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>