

## **March into April 2024 Parish Report**

**Cllr Julia Ewart**

### **East Suffolk Council GLI Group – Councillor Update**

#### ***Community Partnership Event – Friday 22 March 2024***

Well attended event bringing all the Community Partnership groups together, from all of the wards for an inspirational speech from the leader, Caroline Topping and mixture of guests casing charities, CICs and outreach groups that work in the community.

This same group at a local level hope to work with the youth groups to take young people to the First Light Festival.

#### ***Community Enabling Grant***

All grant payments are on now secured for those villages benefiting to have a project supported. Please be aware this process starts again shortly and will close at the end of February 2025. Each parish may request a value for a scheme that may benefit the village.

#### ***Planning Issues***

The large project with associated permissions in Yoxford at Cockfield Hall is now likely to come to the planning committee from June onwards and not May as was first thought.

The Yoxford round about for Sizewell C is starting to be a concern, and the relaying of the road on the B1122 had proved a challenge for many residents. Work from the Deed of Obligation is on going and particular attention is going to be made to ensuring contractors work within the enforced code of Considerate Practice. The works tracker is to be found on [www.szcworkstracker.co.uk](http://www.szcworkstracker.co.uk)

#### ***East Suffolk Services Ltd – for villages in contract***

Whilst the roads have been swept by now the timing of the service being delivered isn't easy to decipher. The new company has been asked to be more timely for road sweeping etc.

#### ***Scrutiny Question On Behalf Of The Villages***

Having asked to speak at the Suffolk County Council Scrutiny meeting that was discussing emergency planning and floods, the question of local concerns was raised, in that any future flood may bring the same tricky and somewhat disorganised outcome. It was suggested that a new way should be sought, by asking residents of the Kelsale & Yoxford ward for their lived experience. Responses to the question are still forthcoming with those involved in drainage discussing the bigger picture. The work carried out on the water course to the side of the A12 in Yoxford is truly splendid.

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

### *Outcome from minutes of Full Council meeting held late February 2024.*

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 today, 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.

"We are focusing on the inequalities that people face in East Suffolk, with a range of services dedicated to providing support for those most in need. We are raising funding for Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations, providing more money for Citizens Advice East Suffolk, and to Community Hubs which offer practical advice and support for a range of vulnerable residents.

"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.

Cllr Topping continued: "If we are to set a balanced budget, while delivering such a wide range of vital services which benefit all our communities and businesses, Council Tax is a critically important element. It funds a large proportion of our net budget requirements, and with rising costs, set against a limited funding provision from central government, a rise is unavoidable.

"However, the proportion of total Council Tax which we receive for the services we deliver remains very small. For a Band D property, the proposed increase equates to an increase of just £5.40 per household for the entire year – and yet, it will help generate a fraction under half a million pounds of additional income for East Suffolk, which will be invested into the services that matter most to our communities."

### ***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'. 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.

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.

GLI Cllr Caroline Topping, East Suffolk Council Leader and judging panel member, said:

"We were so impressed with the range and quality of photographs submitted for 'East Suffolk Through the Lens'. Viewing them was a real treat and confirmed the beauty and diversity of landscape in our district.

"Some were inspiring, others were humorous or cleverly composed, and all were worthy of praise for representing something special about East Suffolk to the photographer. Thanks to everyone who submitted an entry and congratulations to our winners."

Tim Bennett's winning photo is set 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: [www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/news/east-suffolk-through-the-lens-photo-competition-winners/](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/news/east-suffolk-through-the-lens-photo-competition-winners/)

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

East Suffolk residents are being encouraged to grow their own 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.

GLI Councillor Sarah Whitelock, East Suffolk's cabinet member for Communities, Leisure and Tourism said: "We want to help people feel more confident with growing their own fruit and vegetables, which can help save money and help people make healthier food choices. The growing kits were well received last year and we are looking forward to seeing everyone's produce as the weather warms up."

Apply for a growing kit here: [my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/Field\\_to\\_fork](http://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/Field_to_fork)

Anyone in need of help completing the application form can contact our Customer Services team: 0333 016 2000

*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.*

### ***Ease the Squeeze on cost of living***

Are you, or someone you know, worried about the increasing cost of living?

We understand the pressures faced by many people today and we are working closely with key partners to ensure support is available to help ease the squeeze for households in East Suffolk.

To make it as easy as possible for you to access the services and support available, locally and nationally, we have gathered information about them in one place:

**[www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/squeeze/](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/squeeze/)**

For the most up to date information regarding East Suffolk Council, please visit:

**[www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk)**