

February 2024 Parish Report East Suffolk Council GLI Group – Councillor Update

Melton

On Saturday last Cllr Rachel and Cllr Sally with the help of about 8 local residents planted 4 trees on Flagship land at Hall Farm Road and liberated 2 trees from strangling restrainers and sewed 2 wildflower strips. The trees were FS choice not ours! We now wait to see how they do, usually the first year isn't the most successful with these things. One local has offered to water the trees – however Rachel is requesting people don't over-water as it encourages shallow roots and the trees etc. should not require this for a while due to all the recent rain and flooding.

Rachel attended the recent Melton School open day – thanks to Pip for the heads up. She had a fruitful chat with the Head Mrs Richardson and it is hoped the children will visit East Suffolk House in the early summer to undertake a 'citizen science' survey of the wildlife on the wildflower verges at the front. This is really important so we know going forward what's working and perhaps what isn't, informing future plans for biodiversity.

Relatedly at last ESC Full Council Biodiversity, the motion Rachel proposed – the Biodiversity and Ecology motion – passed unanimously and the motion is attached FYI as is the letter of support from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

Rachel has objected to the Woods Lane/Valley Road land planning application and thanks Melton PC for theirs.

As per usual this is not exhaustive – lots of other things bubbling away in the background – will be reported on as and when they come to fruition.

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 Speca, developed and oversaw the 'Model District Council' event as a centrepiece of his Chairship. He was joined on the day by Vice-Chair Cllr John Fisher, Leader of the Council Cllr Caroline Topping, and Leader of the Labour Group Cllr Peter Byatt.

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.

The Model District Council also included a keynote speech by Rhammel Afflick BEM, Head of Advocacy and Communications for the British Youth Council, public-speaking tips from Beth Derks, founder of the 'Future Leaders' programme at the University of East Anglia, a 'marketplace' event featuring information about careers and apprenticeships with East Suffolk Council, and an 'Any Questions?'-style Q&A session with Group Leaders Cllrs Topping and Byatt.

Local Council Leaders warn of 'catastrophic effect' of Suffolk County Council Budget plans

The Leaders of Suffolk's district and borough councils have warned of "a catastrophic effect on hundreds of Suffolk's most vulnerable residents" should proposals contained within Suffolk County Council's Budget for 2024/25 be agreed.

Cllr John Ward (Babergh), Cllr Caroline Topping (East Suffolk), Cllr Neil MacDonald (Ipswich), Cllr Andrew Mellen (Mid Suffolk) and Cllr Cliff Waterman (West Suffolk) have written to the County Council, expressing their grave concern with the proposed changes to Housing Related Support (HRS); a temporary housing scheme which assists people in the care of Suffolk's Social and Children's Services. HRS is a model which helps individuals learn the skills needed to live independently prior to rehousing by district and borough councils, and it is a vital part of the pathway to prevent or relieve homelessness. However, Suffolk County Council now intends to remove all funding, and decommission the scheme by March 2025, having signed a five-year contract with support providers only just over a year ago.

In the letter sent to Suffolk County Council, the Leaders have urged the authority to work with district and boroughs, and to reverse this decision, which they believe does not consider the longer-term impacts - not just on the county's most vulnerable people, but on the budgets that this approach will supposedly relieve. They wrote:

"The Housing Related Support service provides over 700 accommodation places, delivered through multiple specialist providers. These specialist providers, many of whom are charities, provide support to tenants to help them live independently. This service is not available via any other route, and we understand that there is a waiting list of around 400 people.

"The client groups for Housing Related Support are amongst the most vulnerable in Suffolk. They include 16- and 17-year-olds who have no family with whom to live, 18-year-old care-leavers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. They also include young people who are also parents. Without your supported accommodation, many of these

children and young people will add further pressure to your Children and Young People Services budget.

“Clients also include adults with mental health conditions or learning disabilities, a history of drug or alcohol dependency, or those being released from prison. It’s likely that the lack of supported housing for these individuals will place additional pressure on your other Adult and Community Services budgets.

“If people who previously qualified for Housing Related Support, are left without accommodation then rough sleeping will increase. We know that this will impact on these vulnerable people’s health, that they are more likely to begin or continue substance misuse, and to suffer from mental health issues. The impact of this will increase demand on other County Council services which are already stretched.

“We recognise that times are tough and that difficult decisions need to be made. But we believe that a decision to end Housing Related Support is short-sighted and will haunt Suffolk County Council in years to come as the implications come to fruition.”

Statement on proposals for Suffolk arts and heritage funding

A statement from Cllr Sarah Whitelock and Cllr Katie Graham; East Suffolk's cabinet member and deputy cabinet member for Communities, Leisure and Tourism, regarding Suffolk County Council's proposals for arts and heritage funding in the county.

“At East Suffolk Council, we remain alarmed by the regressive proposals for arts and heritage funding at Suffolk County Council, affecting much-loved arts organisations and residents in our district.

“Following a public and media outcry over a proposed total cut to the arts and heritage sector, providing a savings of only 0.58% to the council’s finances, a further announcement of additional government funding led to suggestions that the council could now make a U-turn. On closer inspection, however, there is no U-turn but a renewed commitment from the council to remove core funding of arts and heritage from its budget. A smaller pot of money, as yet for 2025-2026 only, has now been allocated to the sector for which organisations need to compete against each other for individual projects that ‘meet the council’s priorities.’

“Art and culture play a vital role in our communities, especially when times are hard. We believe it is the responsibility of any government to uphold their value not just in words but actions. We appeal to the county council to consider not only the practical harm brought about by this removal of core funding, but the broader and longer-term damage that such a lack of commitment communicates to our residents.”

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/

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

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk