

Parish Report – April 2022

Councillor: Andy Mellen

Division: Thedwastre North

County Councillor contact details

Mobile: 07790 992619

Email: andy.mellen@suffolk.gov.uk

COVID-19

Latest SCC information is available here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Latest Government advice is available here: www.gov.uk/coronavirushave

Sunnica Solar Farm

This large project, stretching across West Suffolk and into Cambridgeshire, has featured in the news recently. The SCC Cabinet voted not to support the current plans by Sunnica to build the country's largest solar farm. Suffolk County Council have asked the Government to reject the plans in their current form, arguing the application fails to properly mitigate the impacts of such a large project.

At the same meeting, the Cabinet voted to support the National Grid's project to improve its energy infrastructure from Bramford to Twinstead, as part of the Government's Net-Zero plan to increase low-carbon energy in the UK.

Full Council 24th March – unanimous support for Ukraine

This Council meeting presented a rare opportunity of solidarity between Councillors, as our Group and the Conservatives shared a single motion in support of Ukraine. The motion condemned the actions of the Russian government, as well as stating our commitment to supporting and welcoming refugees as they become a part of our Suffolk communities. Councillors from all parties supported the motion and together we showed how politics can be put aside during difficult times.

SCC is also preparing to play its part in the "Homes for Ukraine" scheme, where households can register with the government to host refugees from Ukraine. At present, hosts have to form a direct contact with a potential guest, and complete the visa application together. This triggers a notification from the home office for SCC to order a home inspection (usually carried out by the District Council) and also a DBS check on the hosts. Currently visa applications are taking around 3 weeks to be processed, though the government has pledged to reduce this to 48 hrs.

Cabinet 29th March

The Cabinet voted to establish 'Freeport East'. This is part of a national strategy to create freeports across the country, in an attempt to generate economic activity through tax incentives. Felixstowe Port, Harwich Port, and Stowmarket's 'Gateway 14' Business Park are set to become part of Freeport East. Our opposition group is concerned that this project will prioritise foreign direct investment over local businesses, many of which will not be able to compete with the foreign businesses receiving tax relief. The project poses many other issues, Freeports such as this have a reputation for increasing corruption and money laundering. There is also a lack of clear strategy towards net-zero, and a risk of high-skilled jobs being imported, excluding the Suffolk workforce.

The Cabinet also voted on the Enhanced Partnership between SCC and bus operators, in line with the new Bus Back Better strategy, aimed at improving services across Suffolk. The improvement plan was voted for in October 2021, and this partnership outlines how the various stakeholders will interact with one another during the implementation of the improvement plan.

***Update Monday 4th April: SCC's bid for £77m of "Bus back better" funding was turned down.**

Highways, potholes etc.

I am regularly contacted by residents regarding highways issues of various kinds. This past month it has been fallen trees onto fences and footpaths, flooding from ditches onto the highway, and potholes in various locations. All have been reported and will hopefully be repaired or dealt with in due course. I am continuing to pursue several long-term highways issues, including:

- The provision of a safe pedestrian road crossing on the A1088 at Norton
- Lorry movements down unsuitable roads in Woolpit and Great Ashfield
- Flooding in Finningham – (some progress made).
- Bridge repairs and potholes on the A1088 at Stowlangtoft

Unfortunately, with the Highways department short of funds it can be very difficult to make the progress that communities expect. Luckily, we have not had a very wet winter like last year – and many problem areas have not produced disruption as a result. Please do make use of the highways reporting tool, [Suffolk County Council - ReportIT](#) which covers a wide range of faults – and contact me if you feel the response is inadequate.

Website - [Suffolk Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group – The GLI Group at Suffolk County Council \(suffolkgli.wordpress.com\)](#)