

Parish Report – December 2022

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Division: Thedwastre North

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For information on local support during the Cost-of-Living Crisis, visit:
www.suffolk.gov.uk/CostOfLiving

Full Council Dec 1st – Motions on refugees / public transport / support for carers

Council met on the 1st December and amongst other business considered three motions: The administration had a motion thanking Suffolk households who are hosting Ukrainian refugees, and calling for more hosts to come forward – this received cross-party support. Our opposition group submitted a motion calling for an improved Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), including prioritising Demand-Responsive & Community Transport for Suffolk rural communities. The motion was debated but voted down. The Labour group put forward a motion on providing further support to carers, proposed by former Ipswich MP Sandy Martin – this issue was featured widely on TV and in the press, but again was not voted through.

Council leader Matthew Hicks also made a statement regarding the proposed devolution “county deal” for Suffolk, under which further resources would be allocated to Suffolk’s local authorities. The price of this is that there will have to be a **directly-elected council leader** (but not a mayor) who would lead and choose the cabinet for the County Council. Apparently this would not result in an extra tier of bureaucracy but at present it is not clear how this would be achieved.

Cabinet 8th November

The Cabinet met to discuss the second quarter forecasts for the Council’s budget (June to Sept). Currently, there is a worry as they have reported a £12.2m budget gap – largely due to inflation and energy prices. The Council will use Reserves to cover this cost. However, this cannot be a long-term solution. There is concern that the Council will not be fully funded by this Government to deliver the same services to residents.

The Cabinet also met to agree a new road enforcement scheme, and to apply for new Government powers to penalise drivers who commit offences affecting buses. The trial for the scheme has selected four sites in Ipswich for a cost of over £200,000. Our Group believes this money could’ve been spent more appropriately on bus priority measures, new bus lanes, and maintaining rural services.

By-election result

There was a by election in Beccles on the 17th November to replace Green Councillor Peggy McGregor who stood down. The result was that the Green Party candidate Ash Lever retained

the seat with a huge majority. This leaves the overall political situation on the County Council unchanged: Conservative 55 councillors; opposition GLI group 15 and Labour 5.

SEND Services – Update on Lincolnshire Report

Last year, Suffolk CC's SEND services were criticised in a review conducted by Lincolnshire Council. We recently received an update outlining the progress our SEND services have made to implement the report's recommendations.

We were told 22 of the 32 recommendations have been actioned, and the remaining 10 will be completed by the end of 2022. The delivery of 1317 new specialist school places by 2026 has been agreed and 826 of these places are now open. The number of Education Health Care Plans (EHP) has increased to 6847 in September 2022, from 5849 in September 2020.

Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan – Update

The Suffolk Public Sector Leaders Group met to update leaders on the progress of the county's action plan to achieve net zero by 2030. A new Suffolk Climate Emergency Dashboard has been set up to display the latest data and performance measures, as well as other action such as a successful communications campaign, additional match funding, homeowner support services, and a Net-Zero knowledge hub to educate businesses.

Next steps include investments in EV charging infrastructure and developing a community energy sector. The Leaders Group agreed to release £923,458 of previously allocated funding to further implement actions. The next review will be in Spring 2023.

Suffolk looks for more hosts

New hosts coming forward to help accommodate guests from Ukraine that are already in Suffolk can sign up via the Suffolk County Council website, by [completing our online form](#) or emailing refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk.

Accommodation must be available to guests for a minimum of 6 months. Hosts will be eligible to receive the £350 thank you payment for up to 6 months or more, depending on the date your guests arrived in the UK (12 months starting from the date your guests first arrived in the UK).

If you know anyone that might be interested, please encourage them to visit [Ukraine: Could you help a family in need? | Suffolk County Council](#)

Buses in our community

I attended a meeting in Woolpit on the 30th November where representatives from several parishes met to discuss what could be done to provide a local bus service in some form to serve our communities. Various options were discussed, there are several logistical and legal hurdles to be overcome but the group has asked the district council to help with surveys of the need.