

# **A Report for Bures St Mary Parish Council Meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024 From James Finch – County Councillor for the Stour Valley**

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## ➤ **Suffolk County Council (SCC) set on major investment to further protect Suffolk from flooding as it calls on Government to ‘step up’**

- SCC set to agree £1.5 million to deliver first phase of works identified in initial flood investigation reports
- ***SCC calls on Government to recognise ongoing impact of Storm Babet and fund £20 million of further prevention work urgently needed***
- Extensive work already completed since Storm Babet including more than 111,000 drains cleared and significant road repairs

Suffolk County Council has today announced its intention to invest another £1.5 million to carry out important flooding prevention work. The commitment comes as initial flood investigation reports have identified that a further £20 million is needed to complete the work – a figure that the county council can’t afford. The council has therefore written to the Flooding Minister, Emma Hardy MP, and demanded the government step up and plug the funding gap.

## ➤ **Have your say on the Suffolk County Council Budget – 2025-26**

Suffolk County Council is seeking feedback from residents, businesses and community organisations as it prepares its budget for the next financial year. The council has launched an online consultation to explain its current financial position and give Suffolk residents an opportunity to share their views on proposed Council Tax changes and spending priorities.

The consultation offers an opportunity to understand how the council manages its finances, the cost-saving measures already in place, and how the council might generate more money to support essential services.

The council can increase its budget in two main ways: by receiving more funding from the government or by increasing Council Tax. The consultation asks residents for feedback on which council services they have used recently, whether they support increasing Council Tax contributions, and which areas they would like to see prioritised in the council’s budget-setting process.

Responses to the consultation will be considered alongside feedback from businesses, public sector partners and elected members, as well as advice from council officers, as it prepares next year’s budget.

The consultation opens today, Friday 1st November, and closes on Monday 16th December 2024. To participate, visit [www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/2025\\_26\\_budget](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/2025_26_budget)

## ➤ **Suffolk residents encouraged to share views on new Local Transport Plan**

Suffolk’s communities helped shape a new draft of the Suffolk Local Transport Plan by sharing their views back in February of this year and the county council is now seeking feedback on the final proposed document.

The plan which details activity between 2025-2040 sets out a long-term vision for transport in Suffolk and covers themes such as decarbonisation of transport, strengthening the local economy, promoting health, wellbeing and social inclusion, and creating better-connected places that encourage a range of transport choices.

Alongside this county-wide plan, the county council has produced fifteen ‘Area Transport Plans’ and a ‘Suffolk Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan’ which are the funded implementation plans for the wider Suffolk Local Transport Plan. These plans outline how the Local Transport Plan’s vision and objectives will be delivered in key locations across the county.

After engaging with Suffolk’s residents earlier this year about their travel habits, I am delighted to be able present to them an updated Suffolk Local Transport Plan for the next 15 years.

The plan presents the county council’s vision for transport in Suffolk, highlighting the challenges and opportunities we have and the measures available to respond to them – this is why it’s important we consider the views of all before we formally adopt our fourth document and its associated plans.

We value the views of the local community and interested parties, so please share your thoughts, even if you only wish to comment on a small part of the plans.

**The consultation is available via [www.suffolk.gov.uk/LTP](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/LTP) and the consultation will close on Monday 25 November 2024.** The Local Transport Plan and its associated plans will then be presented to Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet in 2025.

➤ **Government's new housing targets must put infrastructure first**

Suffolk County Council (SCC) has raised concerns in its response to the government's proposed reforms for planning policies for England.

In particular, it expresses fears about the lack of clarity around infrastructure, such as schools, transport, waste and community facilities when new housing developments are approved. Last month, the government closed its consultation on plans to change the National Planning Policy Framework and other parts of the planning system.

The proposals include a significant increase in the number of new homes to be built across Suffolk – the government's own figures suggest that East Suffolk alone would see an 87% increase in the number new homes, compared those currently planned.

SCC is already very active in securing developer contributions and delivering infrastructure. It secures Section 106 contributions as well as funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy from district councils - but this is to maintain a baseline level of service rather than make a positive overall improvement to infrastructure.

In its response to government, the council said that the simple question of "who pays" for the infrastructure needs to be answered when permissions are being granted. Local planning authorities should not be allowed to assume that other authorities and agencies will make up any difference.

➤ **Council to offer interest-free loans to make homes more energy efficient**

Suffolk County Council will offer interest-free loans to help make residents' homes warmer, safer and cheaper to run. Energy efficiency upgrades such as insulation, solar panels, batteries, glazing, or heat pumps will all be possible with loans of up to £15,000 to be repaid over a maximum of 7 years at 0% interest.

The £3 million project will be open to homeowners across Suffolk from November, but you can register your interest now at Lendology. Making homes more energy-efficient helps retain their heat and use less energy, meaning homeowners can save on their energy bills and reduce their carbon emissions. A warm home also has a positive impact on health and well-being. For more information and to register your interest in an interest-free loan, visit [Lendology's website](#).

➤ **Fostering can mean everything to those involved – new film**

That is the message of a powerful new fostering film from over 100 councils. **'Everything'** was launched on 17 October 2024. It is the seventh film produced by a growing partnership of councils and children's trusts to promote local authority fostering. The 'Everything' project is the largest collaboration yet, with participants from Cumbria to Devon and Lancashire to Suffolk.

Virtual Fostering and Adoption Sessions for the Stour Valley Fostering is a flexible role with options for short term care from a weekend a month to longer term opportunities, all providing life-changing support for local children. Suffolk will continue with Foster Carer Recruitment Event on the 1st Wednesday of every month, and an Adoption Event is on the 1st Thursday all 7:00pm in the home of the applicant.

Watch the new film here: <https://youtu.be/8fl6EdKHUDg>

Visit: [www.fosterandadopt.suffolk.gov.uk](http://www.fosterandadopt.suffolk.gov.uk) to find out how you can foster and adopt.

**My Priorities**

*Education - Supporting Vulnerable People - Jobs and Growth - Localism and the Stour Valley - Building on Suffolk's Strength all underpinned by strong financial management and fair council tax.*