

Parish Report – July 2023

Councillor
Annette Dunning

Division: Halesworth

Suffolk County Council Details

Mobile: 07955 434408

Email:

Annette.Dunning@suffolk.go.uk

Concern over SCC budget position

At Cabinet on 13 June, our GIL group (Green, Lib Dem and Independents) raised concerns about the significant extra expenditure announced by the Conservative administration since the 2023-24 budget was set in February.

Cabinet were reviewing the 2022-23 finances against the budget that was set, including an overspend of £27.7m and a significant £57.2m taken out of Council reserves – the council's 'safety net' funds to be used when needed.

On 16 May 2023 the Cabinet announced that an extra unbudgeted £720k would be found to cover the £60k monthly shortfall for Suffolk Libraries for a year, and at the council AGM on 25 May the Leader of the Council, Cllr Matthew Hicks, announced a further unbudgeted additional £10m for road surfacing in the next 20 months. Given that neither of these items were budgeted for only a few months ago when the current budget was set, my group raised concerns in the meeting whether the administration's budget setting procedures were sufficiently robust.

North Falls Offshore Wind Farm

On 13 June, Cabinet reviewed the consultation response for the extension of the North Falls wind farm. The wind farm is situated just off the Essex coast, so Suffolk County Council is a consultee rather than a decision maker.

Several issues were discussed which will be included in the consultation response, for example the impact on A12 traffic, the views from Suffolk coastal Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the need to consult with communities on the Suffolk coast. The developers will also be asked to time construction, so it does not clash with the tourism season.

National Grid Reinforcement Works between Bramford and Twinstead

The Cabinet also reviewed and approved a response to the Planning Inspectorate on upgrading the power lines between the villages of Twinstead in Essex and Bramford in Mid Suffolk.

There were concerns about the impact of the works to the local countryside, particularly the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where the National Grid have agreed to lay cables underground.

The government's aspiration is for 50GW of offshore wind power by 2033, and in East Anglia this means that our throughput must increase from 4.1GW currently to 24.5GW. The existing power line between Bramford and Twinstead is at full capacity and it was acknowledged that the works were necessary to facilitate the increases to wind farm development.

Waste Transfer

People are being reminded of the importance of disposing of waste batteries properly following a fire at a Suffolk waste transfer station. Operations were briefly disrupted at Haverhill waste transfer station in Homefield Road after fire broke out amongst 50 tonnes of rubbish on June 16. The waste transfer station takes refuse material collected locally and bulks it for onward reprocessing. The precise cause of the fire has not been determined but FCC Environment, which manages the 11 recycling centres and four transfer stations around the county on behalf of Suffolk County Council, said that when a fire starts in piles of waste it is usually caused by a battery that has managed to spark. This can happen if there is friction, such as when a waste pile is moved or crushed. In June 2022 a fire at the Materials Recycling Facility in Great Blakenham, near Ipswich, which recycles waste from across Suffolk, is suspected to have been started by a battery dumped with household recycling. Lithium batteries are a particular problem, but standard household batteries are also culprits, as well as vapes and small electricals plus items that do not look like they have a battery such as Christmas jumpers and light toys.

All batteries should be disposed of either at recycling centres or in collection points at most large stores where they are sold.

Fire and Rescue Services attend around 300 significant fires at waste sites per year in the UK. There are many other smaller fires that are dealt with before they become significant.

More information on hidden batteries can be found at the [Suffolk Recycling website](https://suffolkrecycling.org.uk/news/suffolk-waste-partnership-backs-campaign-about-safe-battery-disposal) <https://suffolkrecycling.org.uk/news/suffolk-waste-partnership-backs-campaign-about-safe-battery-disposal>

Details on how to find your nearest electrical recycling point can also be found at the [Suffolk Recycling website](https://www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk/where-to-recycle/recycling-bring-banks) <https://www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk/where-to-recycle/recycling-bring-banks>

Missing Child Reports in Suffolk

The recent reports in the press that nearly 3000 missing child reports were received by Suffolk Constabulary between April 2022 and March 2023 deeply shocked our group. The reports involved 719 children across the county with some going missing several times during the period. The majority of the children reported missing are in care settings such as children's homes and foster care.

We asked the administration at Suffolk County Council to do more to support children in care, who are among the most vulnerable in Suffolk.

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Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and support:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>