

Date: 1st December 2022
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For information on local support during the Cost-of-Living Crisis: www.suffolk.gov.uk/CostOfLiving
Latest SCC COVID information is available here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Full Council Dec 1st – our Motion on Bus Improvements defeated

We submitted a motion calling for an improved Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) after the failure of the Council to obtain a grant for this from the Government as the Department for Transport stated the bid this year was not ambitious enough.

Our motion suggested an improved and ambitious bid to encourage the change from private car to bus travel, especially into towns. This would help pollution as well as traffic flow, but unfortunately the motion was opposed by the majority group and was voted down.

Cabinet 8th November

The Cabinet met to discuss forecasts for the Council's budget. 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. Our Group are concerned that the Council will have to make cuts in services as a result. Budgets will be set over the next few months and voted on in February.

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 to install ANPR cameras 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.

Suffolk County Deal – Update

As part of the government's Levelling-up Strategy, Suffolk CC are currently negotiating a deal for more devolved powers. It was announced this month in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement that Suffolk will look to install a directly elected Mayor.

Our Group were told by the Conservatives that this wouldn't happen, and it appears that this announcement was also a surprise to them, however it appears to be a part of the deal for more powers to be devolved to county council. There are many potential issues with a new mayoral role, as a Mayor can be elected from outside the majority party and has the power to select a their own Cabinet– which could create a gridlocked political system.

Newly Elected Member of Suffolk GLI!

The Beccles by-election finished with a landslide victory for the Green candidate, Ash Lever. The election was to replace Peggy McGregor who had to stand down. We are excited to begin working with Cllr Lever and we will update all on his involvement with the Group.

SEND Services – Update on Lincolnshire Report

Last year, Suffolk CC's SEND services were criticised in a damning report conducted by Lincolnshire Council. Our Group received an update this month 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 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). Host families were also given a £300 Christmas bonus this year by the County Council.

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

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

I wish you a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year

Simon Harley Suffolk County Councillor for Peninsula Division