

Parish Report – January 2021

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It has been a busy month for my group, but we have had some big successes. I want to wish you all a merry Christmas and happy new year in these strange times!

Biodiversity strategy adopted

At Full Council on the 3rd December, Suffolk County Council unanimously passed a motion that will see Suffolk County Council developing a biodiversity strategy and embracing biodiverse land management practices. The motion was proposed by the LDGI Group and supported by all other groups. The motion will ensure:

- Delivery of a biodiversity strategy that will set out how we could increase Suffolk's biodiversity, halt the loss of habitats and species, and reintroduce declining species in suitable locations.
- Assessment of how the council can lead organisations across the county in efforts to improve biodiversity.
- Adoption of biodiverse land management options on council land.
- A letter to the Secretary of State asking what further support can be made available to local authorities to enhance bio diversity within their areas.

Cllr Elfrede Brambley-Crawshaw, Leader of the Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group and proposer of the motion, made the following statement:

"I'm really pleased that this motion has been met with such overwhelming support from the council and thank Cllr Richard Rout for his support. Our efforts can feel like a drop in the ocean, but by working together and listening to each other we can make a difference. Suffolk County Council has today taken another step on the path to making that difference. By working together, across political party lines, we can have a real impact."

"Good biodiversity supports healthy ecosystems which protects our food security, cleans our air and water and enhances our lives in many ways. I would encourage everyone to do their part to support our native species, and I am thrilled that the County Council will now be doing the same thing."

Resisting the decision to reclaim local highways budgets

The Suffolk County Council cabinet will be reclaiming unspent Local Highways Budgets from councillors on the 31st of December. Local highways budgets can be spent by councillors in their divisions, on projects like new yellow lines, resident parking areas or zebra crossings. The LDGI Group has fought against this decision, arguing that the pandemic has increased delays to work which was already difficult to complete due to cumbersome processes and excessive red tape. Lockdown meant that officers weren't allowed to go out and look at sites, and teams were overwhelmed by the amount of work caused by the pandemic. Some larger projects will not be ready to receive payment by the 31st. This reclaiming of the budget would not have become absolutely necessary until March, when the financial year ends.

The LDGI Group has been fighting against this decision, taking it to Cabinet and senior officers, as well as the press. Cllr Elfrede Brambley-Crawshaw, Leader of LDGI Group, commented that the decision means that dozens of projects will now remain unfinished and local communities will not benefit from the money.

Preparing budget amendments for 2021-22 budget

SCC is currently preparing its budget for 2021-22 and the LDGI Group has been preparing its amendments. My Group has chosen three key priorities for our budget amendment: Warm homes, Supporting community groups and charities through the pandemic, and Income generation & the climate emergency. We will be proposing multiple projects and policy decisions around these three key themes.

Consultation on the Suffolk Climate Change Action Plan

SCC is currently running a consultation on its proposed Streets Guide, which will assist with the design of new residential developments showing how best to create sustainable transport layouts that promote walking and cycling. A new Street Guide has been commissioned to update guidance for residential streets. Comments on the draft guide are welcomed and there is a survey to complete. The consultation closes at 5pm on 10th February 2021.

Link: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/planning-and-development-advice/suffolk-design-streets-guide/>

Consultation on the Suffolk Climate Change Action Plan

SCC is currently running a consultation on the Suffolk Climate Action Plan. The consultation is running until January the 4th and you are invited to comment on the following areas:

- Sustainable Buildings
- Large Industrial & Commercial Energy Users
- Transport & Air Quality
- Small Industrial & Commercial Energy Users
- Energy & Planning
- Community Action & Schemes

Link and further information here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/initiatives/pledge-to-climate-emergency-declaration/>