

LEADER'S MONTHLY BULLETIN

February and March 2025

Welcome to another edition of my monthly bulletin, which aims to keep councillors, officers and town and parish councils up to date on recent news stories and any emerging issues from the district.

Caroline



BY-ELECTION RESULTS

Due to the by-elections in February, we entered a pre-election period which meant I was unable to bring you the February edition of my bulletin. I hope you enjoy this combined version bringing you the news from East Suffolk since the beginning of 2025.

The by-elections were held in the Rushmere St Andrew and Woodbridge wards on Thursday 27 February, and I would like to welcome two new councillors to East Suffolk.

The Rushmere St Andrew seat was won by Conservative candidate Robert Cawley with 377 votes.

The Woodbridge seat was won by Liberal Democrat candidate Ruth Leach with 1,023 votes.

The political composition of East Suffolk Council remains unchanged, comprising 16 Green councillors, 15 Conservative councillors, 12 Labour councillors, 10 Liberal Democrat councillors and two Independent councillors.

THROUGH THE LENS WINNERS

A stunning selection of images have triumphed in a competition inviting photographers to showcase East Suffolk 'Through the Lens'.

More than 230 entries were submitted during the seven-week competition between 9 December and 30 January – with one amazing photo eventually chosen by a panel of judges as overall winner, along with three runners-up and an under-16 winner.

The overall winner was Jenifer Everett-Day's image of a family on Lowestoft beach (pictured below).

The judges were wowed by the three runners-up, including Daniel Brand's image of Shingle Street, Alison Colmans' image of Aldeburgh beach and Mike Bowden's shot of a motorcross scene.

In the under-16's category, Summer Rose Crowe came out on top with an image of the newly built Gull Wing Bridge, an embodiment of Lowestoft's tradition and progress.

[View all the winning images here.](#)



COUNCIL AGREES BALANCED BUDGET

East Suffolk Council has pledged more than £64million towards delivering quality key services for residents while continuing to invest in projects for the benefit of local communities.

On Wednesday 19 February, East Suffolk Council agreed a balanced Budget which allows for vital day-to-day services to be delivered alongside programmes developed to help improve the quality of people's lives.

The annual Budget is set against the framework of a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to ensure effective management of resources and support delivery of the Council's strategic action plan, Our Direction 2028.

More than £64m has been budgeted within the Council's General Fund to pay for services such as planning and leisure.

The General Fund also allows for projects to help improve the lives of people in East Suffolk, including a new three-year Town Development Programme to build on the successes of the preceding East Suffolk Towns Revitalisation Programme, as well as a three-year extension to the innovative Youth Employment Service (YES), providing routes to employment, education and training for young people aged 16-24.

Funding has also been pledged for the transformation of Lowestoft Town Hall into a multifunctioning, community building, as well as the return of the First Light Festival to the town for the next three years.

The Council is committed to securing a balanced budget, not just through setting council tax, but by utilising opportunities to deliver service efficiencies and generate additional income, while maintaining an appropriate level of balances and reserves in case of significant variations or emergencies.

[Read more on this story.](#)

BULKY WASTE TRIAL SCHEME TO TAKE PLACE

Unwanted items collected through East Suffolk Council's [bulky waste scheme](#) are now being made available for reuse through a local charity.

A trial scheme is now underway in the north of East Suffolk which will enable East Suffolk Services Ltd, who collect bulky items on the Council's behalf, to divert items in good condition to the Benjamin Foundation. Items will then be sold through the charity's furniture and electricals store at Phoenix Enterprise Park in Lowestoft.

If successful, the scheme may be introduced in the south of East Suffolk in future.



COASTAL PARTNERSHIP DISBANDED

On 7 January, East Suffolk Council's Cabinet agreed to proposals which will see the dissolution of the [Coastal Partnership East \(CPE\) programme](#).

CPE was a partnership between East Suffolk Council, North Norfolk District Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council.

At their independent cabinet meetings (held throughout January), each council agreed to dissolve CPE, and more details on this will be made available soon.

When CPE was created in 2016, the initial agreement anticipated peaks and troughs of resource sharing at different times across the three councils.

However, there has been a continual demand on each local authority to manage the effects of climate change. Therefore, it is now considered necessary for each council to manage the individual challenges of their coast effectively.

CONCERNS OVER GOV RESPONSE TO NSIPS

Last month, councillors in East Suffolk expressed frustration with the Government's unwillingness to discuss the cumulative impacts of delivering multiple, national energy projects affecting communities throughout the district and beyond.

In a letter sent to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, I invited him to see the close proximity of a range of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) in the area, or at the very least to begin a dialogue on the matter. I also expressed concerns about an apparent lack of project co-ordination, and the issues this raises.

However, in a three-line response to the letter, we were informed that the Secretary of State was too busy and no discussions would be considered. As you can imagine, this was disappointing.

In the letter, I outlined East Suffolk's critical role in the nation's progress towards Net Zero, with projects already planned or under construction, contributing to an eventual estimated 30% of the country's electricity to be generated in, or pass through, our district.

However, I made it clear that local communities "are straining under the lack of a coherent strategy around these multiple NSIPs.

"I cannot emphasise enough the importance of this matter to our district and similarly affected communities across the country. I am sure we are in agreement that at this historic crossroads of doing things differently and better, a truly green and just transition away from fossil fuels requires a properly planned approach, where the costs to the developers are not borne by our communities and our already threatened environment."

Read the full story [here](#), including details on the 5 projects in East Suffolk currently at various stages of the planning and building process.

FUNDING SUPPORTS LOCAL VOLUNTEERS

Councillors George King and Graham Parker, ward members for Gunton and St Margaret's, have used money from their Enabling Communities Budget's to support ongoing conservation efforts by passionate volunteer group, the Friends of Dip Farm.

The aim of the funding is to assist the group with their regeneration and maintenance work at Dip Farm.

An allocation of £1,818 from each councillor's budget has funded a volunteer hut and secure storage area at the site.

[Read the full story.](#)



FUNDING SUPPORTS YOUTH SPORTS INITIATIVE

Councillor Rosie Smithson, East Suffolk ward member for western Felixstowe, allocated £2,780 from her Enabling Communities Budget to support a [free evening football programme.](#)

The programme was delivered by Catch22 Suffolk Positive Futures, who work with partners to tackle anti-social behaviour and crime amongst young people.

Catch22 worked with East Suffolk Council and Felixstowe Police to deliver the project using the grass area in front of the skatepark on Grange Farm Avenue – an area where Felixstowe Police are regularly called to.



NEXT STEPS WITH THE SOUTHWOLD PROMENADE

Investigation works in preparation for repairs to the sea wall at Southwold began in January, along with routine planned maintenance work further along the promenade.

East Suffolk Council's repairs and maintenance contractor, the Water Management Alliance (WMA), carried out ground investigation works along the length of the promenade north of Southwold Pier, following a partial collapse of the promenade in December.

As a result of this, WMA began the repair works on Monday 24 February.

The WMA have been filling the voids under the promenade and replacing the collapsed slabs and this work is expected to be complete by 14 March, ahead of the planned repairs to the 'toe' of the sea wall.

Erosion damage to the toe, which is usually underneath beach material, had previously been identified and repairs were scheduled for later this year.

However recent erosion in December exposed this area more quickly than expected, which resulted in the partial collapse of the promenade and the repair works have now been brought forward.

Work on the sea wall will begin from Tuesday 22 April and is intended to be complete before the start of the school summer holidays.

A works compound will be sited in the council-owned car park at Southwold Pier, however, both car parks north of Southwold Pier will remain open. There will be no access to the area where the works are taking place.



FUNDING FOR FALL PREVENTION PROGRAMMES

Voluntary organisations, community groups and those delivering physical activities are invited to apply for funding to run activity programmes to help prevent falls in older people.

East Suffolk Council's new [Strength and Balance project](#) promotes 'falls prevention exercise' to encourage people aged 65 and over to stay active, reduce their likelihood of falls and provide opportunities to meet others in the community.

Through the project, a series of 12-week 'Otago' strength and balance programmes will be funded across the south of East Suffolk.

Groups and organisations can apply for a share of £40,000 in funding, which will cover 12 months of group-based Otago exercise delivery. Organisations of all sizes are eligible to apply, provided they can meet the requirements detailed in the standard operating procedure.

[Full details about how to apply.](#)

NEW WILDLIFE WISE GRANT PROJECT

A new small grant scheme has been announced by the Wildlife Wise team which will directly support Wildlife Wise priorities with projects that aim to prevent recreational disturbance and damage to the Suffolk Coast's internationally important wildlife and habitats.

Small grants of up to £5,000 will be awarded to projects supporting priorities within the Suffolk Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy. Organisations can also use Wildlife Wise grants as match funding for a larger project. Examples of projects include implementing new signage or rerouting paths.

Although applications for this round of funding have now closed, there will be further opportunities to apply throughout 2025.

[Further guidance and an application form.](#)

For more information, please contact info@wildlifewise.co.uk

NEW DEVELOPERS CHARTER PRODUCED

A new 'best practice' guide for housing developers has been published, setting out East Suffolk Council's aspirations for high quality and well delivered new housing developments.

The Developers Charter provides guidance to major residential developers on engaging positively and meaningfully with local communities and the Council throughout the planning and construction of new homes.

In taking forward the Charter, the Council will publicly recognise exceptional developments and approaches to engagement that have achieved high standards at the planning permission and/or construction stages of development.



LAST AQMA IN EAST SUFFOLK REMOVED

The last remaining Air Quality Management Area in East Suffolk – located on the A12 within Stratford St Andrew – has been removed following significant improvements in air quality.

To meet national air quality objectives, local authorities must regularly review and assess air quality in their areas. If a location is found where the objectives are not being achieved, the local authority must declare the area an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and develop an Air Quality Action Plan to reduce air pollution.

The AQMA, located at four properties within Stratford St Andrew, was established in 2014 after high levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) were detected. Studies undertaken suggested that southbound traffic accelerating just prior to the end of the 30mph speed limit in Stratford St Andrew – originally located at the end of the Long Row houses – was a cause of increased emissions and a large part of the problem.

FUNDING TOP UP FOR FAMILIES MOST IN NEED

Uniform banks in East Suffolk are invited to apply for additional support through a new funding scheme.

Following previous successful rounds of funding, East Suffolk Council has now allocated further funding to its East Suffolk Uniform Bank grant scheme and applications for 'top up' funding are now open.

Grants of up to £1,000 per application are available and can be put towards vouchers for shoes worth up to £15 per child and/or the purchase of new, branded uniform where supply is limited.

The funding is available for all existing uniform banks in East Suffolk, regardless of whether or not they have previously received funding from the grant scheme.

This is a rolling grant scheme, continuing until all funds are spent or the scheme is reviewed.

[Apply for funding now.](#)

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SCHEME RETURNS

116 wild spaces will be left to grow during the spring and summer as part of East Suffolk Council's 'Nature at Work' scheme, which is being delivered in partnership with environmental charity Groundwork East.

Nature at Work replaces the Council's previous project known as 'Pardon the weeds, we're feeding the bees'.

New signs, costing less than £3,000, have been installed on council-owned land across the district to help identify the wild areas where grass cutting will be limited to twice per year.



HOME GAINS SPECIAL HERITAGE STATUS

The former home of eminent composer Imogen Holst has been granted special protection following an application by East Suffolk Council's Heritage team.

The modernist, single-storey property, in Church Walk, Aldeburgh, has been Grade II listed in recognition of its architectural and historic interest.

Imogen Holst arrived in Aldeburgh as Benjamin Britten's musical assistant, and later went on to become Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival.

Designed by Aldeburgh neighbours Jim and Betty Cadbury-Brown, and built from 1962 to 1964, the property still contains furniture belonging to Imogen and her composer father, Gustav Holst.

Now owned by music education charity Britten Pears Arts, and available as a holiday let, Nine Church Walk can also be visited by the public for Heritage Open Days each year.

OTLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Residents in Otley are invited to comment on their draft Neighbourhood Plan, ahead of its submission for independent examination.

The Neighbourhood Plan establishes planning policies that control the use of land within Otley.

Comments can be emailed to planningpolicy@eastsuffolk.gov.uk or posted to East Suffolk Council, Planning Policy and Delivery Team (Neighbourhood Plans), Riverside, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 0EQ.

All representations should be headed 'Otley Neighbourhood Plan' as the subject matter. Where representations relate to a particular paragraph or policy, please ensure that this is also clearly stated.

Representations must be received no later than 5pm on 9 April 2025. All representations will be made available to view online after the close of the consultation.

DIARY DATES

Monday 24 March 6.30pm	Audit and Governance Committee	Riverside
Tuesday 25 March 2pm	Planning Committee South	East Suffolk House
Tuesday 1 April 6pm	Cabinet	Riverside
Wednesday 2 April 6pm	Melton, Woodbridge and Deben Peninsula Community Partnership	East Suffolk House
Monday 7 April 10.30am	Strategic Planning Committee	Riverside
Monday 7 April 2.30pm	Licensing Sub-Committee	East Suffolk House
Tuesday 8 April 2pm	Planning Committee North	Riverside
Monday 14 April 6.30pm	Licensing Committee	Riverside
Tuesday 22 April 2pm	Planning Committee South	East Suffolk House
Thursday 24 April 6.30pm	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Riverside
Tuesday 29 April 10am	Licensing Sub-Committee	Riverside

