

TOP-TEN REPORT FOR BUNGAY AND THE VILLAGES (FEBRUARY 2024)
East Suffolk Councillors Toby Hammond and Anthony Specia

1. Central Government's failure to allocate funding for the completion of the Lowestoft Tidal Barrier is worrying news. Without this vital piece of infrastructure, parts of Lowestoft and indeed the Waveney Valley will be more vulnerable to tidal surges. Already this winter, parts of many parishes have been flooded for months. ESC is closely engaged with continued efforts to try and secure the £124m shortfall for the flood barrier project.
2. The budgetary cuts at Suffolk County Council are also worrying news. The underprovision for SEND pupils, and the (now reversed) cuts to arts funding are only some of the emerging issues. While ESC has no jurisdiction or funding to assume County-level responsibilities, we remain alert to potential impacts on District-level services.
3. ESC's budget for 2024-25 was unanimously approved on 21st February, which secures the stability of our operations and services in an environment of heavy funding cuts to local government. Our budget also includes a new Resilience Fund, which will enable ESC to respond rapidly to support residents affected by severe weather events in future.
4. Anthony's Model District Council simulation on 9th February was a tremendous success, with 52 pupils taking part, including from Bungay High and Castle EAST. The participating 'councillors' unanimously voted for a permanent East Suffolk Youth Council to represent the youth voice to ESC. Anthony looks forward to getting to work on this idea as a Chair's priority.
5. Speed surveys for Bridge St and Flixton Rd in Bungay were carried out by SCC in mid January. The data, shared by Cllr Cloke, showed that on average 39% of vehicles on Bridge St exceeded the 20mph limit, and 77% of westbound traffic on Flixton Rd exceeded the 30mph limit. Toby and Anthony support calls by resident groups in both locations for traffic-calming measures, but unfortunately these calls are not currently being heeded by Suffolk Highways.
6. The longstanding derelict building on Priory Lane in Bungay continues to cause nuisance for neighbouring residents, with mounting concern about antisocial behaviour and potential internal dangers. Efforts are continuing at ESC to resolve this issue together with the absentee owner. Similar issues with the building site at the King's Head have also been brought to our attention, and whilst building work continues we should all keep our eyes peeled for problems.
7. Anthony and Toby attended a public meeting called by the Fisher Youth Theatre Group (FYTG) to discuss a budgetary shortfall at the Fisher Theatre. The Fisher is one of the oldest theatres in the UK, and a significant community asset. We were happy to contribute a grant from our Enabling Communities funds to help close the immediate gap a bit. We now encourage residents to lend support via the Fisher Theatre Lottery funding scheme, and the new 'Friends of FYTG' group.
8. Parking and street cleansing issues continue to be reported on Outney Road, where residents suffer parking pressure from Earsham Street businesses and perhaps also Clays printworks. We have been liaising with the Clays senior management about this issue, and Toby has ensured that it's one of the top priorities for the Bungay Parking Review, which has now commenced.
9. Toby participated in the breaking ground ceremony for The Nexus, an East Suffolk development of new commercial units aimed at the growing renewable energy sector in Lowestoft. He also chaired a meeting of all Lowestoft district councillors to ensure that the £25m regeneration programme underway in the town continues to have the support of the local Conservative and Labour groups.
10. As Chair of Council, Anthony was delighted to attend the launch of Cancer Support Suffolk in Ipswich, as well as a planned visit of HRH Princess Anne to Suffolk Punch Trust in Hollesley. Sadly, the Princess Royal's helicopter suffered mechanical problems, and HRH wasn't able to attend. Anthony looks forward to welcoming HRH to our area on a future occasion.