

Report for the end of October for the Bungay and Wainfod villages Division from County Councillor Judy Cloke

My apologies for not issuing a report at the end of September.

I have no specific Parish reports for the two months just passed. There are several on going issues regarding Highways and footpaths in some villages ; as each of these is resolved I will report back .

Bungay :

I was approached during the summer by a resident of Ditchingham Dam regarding the pavement resurfacing taking place there. The reason for the work stopping where it did is that the County boundary is several metres north of the bridge (where the signs are) and Norfolk Highways , despite submitting a plan to a joint portal indicating the resurfacing would continue to the corner of Falcon Lane , failed to liaise with Suffolk Highways about joint funding, which Suffolk would have been only to happy to endorse.

I have also attended the meeting with the PCC and a parking review meeting. Again I have been approached regarding some footpath issues in the town and these I have raised with Highways.

Cabinet:

I continue to learn from my role with the flooding team and took part in a really eye opening visit to St Germans' pumping station and Denver sluice on the Great Ouse in September, on which I have reported verbally to some parishes. A great deal of money needs to be spent before long on either refurbishment or replacement of the 150 year old sluice downstream to preserve the farming land and settlements of the Fens and potentially the cities of Ely and Cambridge.

The team continues to work hard on reports from Storm Babet and flood mitigation recommendations, including public consultations for the areas affected. It is a huge task.

Watercourses:

There is a common misconception that the Environment Agency or the local authority has a duty to maintain watercourses, this is not the case. The Environment Agency does have the powers to undertake maintenance for designated main rivers on private land. However, this work is prioritised in locations where it will deliver the greatest flood risk benefit and is limited by the available national budget. Local councils have limited powers to undertake maintenance work on ordinary watercourses, to remove obstructions in extreme circumstances but many have no or limited budget for this discretionary power .

In my role as Deputy Cabinet member for flooding I attended a recent Scrutiny Committee meeting , at which recommendations were made for more public engagement & to better manage people' s expectations.

Another piece of information which I had not realised is that Local Authorities have responsibility for the maintenance of 80% roads, but only receive 20% of funding, the rest is spent on National Highways.

News generally :

Gull Wing:

The new multi-million-pound bridge, which opened to pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles in September, represents a significant step forward for Lowestoft and is already benefitting the town according to local businesses and residents.

Built on behalf of Suffolk County Council by leading civil engineering contractor Farrans, The Gull Wing Bridge has provided a long-awaited third crossing over Lake Lothing, which has significantly

eased traffic congestion in the town centre, shortened journey times, and improved journey reliability

By streamlining logistics and transportation in the town, the bridge is also expected to act as a catalyst for economic growth, attracting new investment and positioning Lowestoft as a dynamic and forward-looking commercial centre and community.

National Budget:

Suffolk County Council urged the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt. Hon Rachel Reeves MP, to address critical funding issues affecting Suffolk residents and businesses prior to the Autumn Budget.

In a letter to the Chancellor, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Cllr Richard Smith MVO, highlights that public funding is not keeping pace with the demand for public services, particularly in areas like children's and adult care which now account for 77 pence of every £1 Suffolk County Council spends.

Cllr Smith notes that, despite significant savings achieved by the council over the last five years, the budget gap has grown unsustainably and calls on the Chancellor to address the funding crisis and spare residents from the need for steep council tax increases.

Highways personnel:

You will be aware Wayne has moved on from his role as our local Highways Engineer, these are his parting words :

It is important that any issue that is deemed to be dangerous to either private property, the highway or any of its users is telephoned through on 0345 606 6171 so that they can be immediately assessed, and action taken quickly.

Any report logged via our reporting tool will generate a site visit from one of our Highways Assessment Officers. Although they do triage incoming reports, anything logged with them out of hours will not be picked up until the next working day – which as you will appreciate will lead to a delay in attendance.

Could I also please ask that you encourage residents to supply any photographs they may have – particularly in cases of drainage or flooding problems – as in many cases, the flood water will have subsided by the time our Teams attend.

Please let me assure you that all reports are assessed, and the sites visited – but it is vital that they are logged in the correct way so that we can respond in a timely manner – and so that these are assigned to the most appropriate team within Suffolk Highways:

- <http://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk> 'routine' issues such as potholes, non-urgent blocked drains, general maintenance issues etc.
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Please do not report a [highways emergency](#) (a highways problem that poses an immediate danger to the public) online - call [0345 606 6171](tel:03456066171).

County Budget:

Suffolk County Council is seeking feedback from residents, businesses and community organisations as it prepares its budget for the next financial year.

The council has launched an online consultation to explain its current financial position and give Suffolk residents an opportunity to share their views on proposed Council Tax changes and spending priorities.

The consultation offers an opportunity to understand how the council manages its finances, the cost-saving measures already in place, and how the council might generate more money to support essential services.

The council can increase its budget in two main ways: by receiving more funding from the government or by increasing Council Tax.

The consultation asks residents for feedback on which council services they have used recently, whether they support increasing Council Tax contributions, and which areas they would like to see prioritised in the council's budget-setting process.

Responses to the consultation will be considered alongside feedback from businesses, public sector partners and elected members, as well as advice from council officers, as it prepares next year's budget.

The consultation is open now and closes on Monday 16th December 2024. To participate, visit www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/2025_26_budget

The results of the consultation will be included in a final report when the budget is set in February 2025.

Warmer Homes:

Suffolk County Council is offering interest-free loans to help make residents' homes warmer, safer and cheaper to run.

Energy efficiency upgrades such as insulation, solar panels, batteries, glazing, or heat pumps are possible with loans from £2,000 to £15,000 to be repaid over a maximum of seven years – at 0% interest.

The £3 million project fully opened to homeowners across Suffolk on 1 November 2024, and applications can now be made at <https://www.lendology.org.uk/warm-home-suffolk-loan>

Making homes more energy-efficient helps retain their heat and use less energy, meaning homeowners can save on their energy bills and reduce their carbon emissions. A warm home also has a positive impact on health and well-being.

Judy Cloke

4 November 2024