

Annual Report for 2021/22

Redgrave Parish Council

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Looking back to May 2021, the new administration under Leader Matthew Hicks announced its priorities as: supporting vulnerable residents, strengthening Suffolk's economy, the environment, and providing value for the taxpayer. Since that time much has happened, most notably we have emerged from the worst of the pandemic with most restrictions now lifted. The County Council has worked closely with its NHS partners in matters of public health and continues to play a leading role in supporting economic recovery post pandemic as businesses build back and lives return to normal.

In addition to Central Government grants, Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) has invested almost £10m to support Covid-19 through Suffolk's Strategic Recovery Plan, including:

- **The Local Economy** - £2.05m towards Suffolk's businesses recovery and the potential Haughley Junction rail upgrade
- **Communities** - £2.6m towards housing projects, improve literacy levels, and families and young people in need of support
- **Engagement** – £0.139m towards Youth Healthwatch projects and community engagement
- **Climate Change** - £1.5m to implement the Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan

Other strategic investments committed over the year include:

- **Highways Flooding and Footpaths** - £10m to improve highways flooding and £10m to upgrade pavements and footpaths.
- **Waste Recycling Centres** - £14.5m in upgrades and a new Ipswich waste recycling centre.
- **New Special Educational Needs & Disabilities School Places** - Continue investing £45m in building or extending facilities to offer 800 new SEND school places

Warm Homes Programme – The Warm Homes Suffolk Fund was established in January to help residents on low incomes living in energy inefficient homes cut energy use and costs. Suffolk residents who may qualify for funding and free advice should refer to www.warmhomessuffolk.org.

Suffolk's Highways contract with Kier is due to end in September 2023, and the council has started the process of tendering for a new Highways Services partner. The approach is to use one contract for the majority of highways functions with separate contracts for streetlighting and traffic signals. This process takes two years. Following a rigorous tendering process, the council plans to award the new contract in early 2023 with the new service provider beginning in October 2023. The council's scrutiny committee has reviewed the tendering approach and will be involved later in 2022 as well.

The council appointed a **new Chief Fire Officer** and Executive Director for Fire and Public Safety in August 2021. Jon Lacey now leads the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service and is also responsible for SCC's Trading Standards and emergency planning services. Jon comes from the West Sussex Fire Service and has a 24 year career with fire and rescue.

On the same theme, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service acquired **three new state-of-the-art response vehicles** in 2021 equipped with the latest technology, to support firefighters at complex emergency incidents. The new vehicles will typically be used as a hub and where field coordination is required.

Commencing in June, the council commissioned an external review of its **Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services** by Lincolnshire County Council. The work focussed on the processes, communication protocols and family-facing elements of SEND services. The findings are now available and an action plan is in place. You can [read the report and action plan here](#). Currently there are approx. 6,000 children with a care plan and a further 12,000 pupils have special educational needs not needing a care plan. The Council has formed a SEND Accountability Board which is providing oversight for implementation of the Action Plan.

Infrastructure Required to support Government's Net Zero by 2050 target – In October the Offshore Electricity Grid Task Force (OffSET) was set up to respond to the Government's Offshore Network Transmission Review (OTNR) and to deliver 40GW of Offshore Wind by 2030. The group includes regional MPs and councillors, it is chaired by Sir Bernard Jenkin MP. It is tasked to ensure that Nationally Significant Infrastructure Planning is effectively scrutinised in East Anglia. The new infrastructure includes new transmission lines, connectors and substations in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex which will have significant impacts on the area's environment and communities.

Examples under consultation include the Bramford to Twinstead new infrastructure and power lines, Anglia Green (new 400 KV overhead transmission line from Norwich to London via Bramford), and additional offshore wind proposals; also there is Anglian Water's pipeline project (Bury to Colchester) and the proposed Sunnica Solar farm (a 2,792-acre 500-MW scheme on the Cambridgeshire border). Numerous smaller (non NSIP) solar projects are coming in as well. Concerns have been raised by the Scrutiny Committee about resource capacity in order to review and respond properly to these projects and to assess cumulative impacts. Drax/Progress Power gas fired peaking plant, for renewables back-up, commenced development near Eye in 2021.

Budget for 2022/23 - The council approved a budget for 2022-23 which includes a 4.5% increase (from £598.2 to £625.4m), generated by a 2.99% increase in Council Tax, and an increase in grants received from the Government. The proposals were approved at full council in February.

Platinum Jubilee Events - To mark the celebration of Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, celebrations are planned over the four-day Bank Holiday weekend, between 2 and 5 June 2022. Sunday 5 June 2022 is referred to nationally as the 'Big Jubilee Lunch', SCC will not charge its normal fee for road closures. The following website has been set up for events organisers:
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent>.

Ukraine and Refugees – The council has responded promptly to the Government's policy on hosting Ukrainian refugees. Please refer to the webpage. <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/community-and-safety/communities/community-engagement/supporting-afghan-ukrainian-refugees/policy>