

May 2024 Parish Report East Suffolk Council GLI Group – Councillor Update

From Councillor Dan Clery, representing Carlford and Fynn Valley ward.
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Half a Million Pounds for Communities in New Emergency Response Fund

A new fund has been established to provide immediate, short-term financial support to East Suffolk communities affected by future emergency events.

In February, as part of the 2024-25 Budget setting process, East Suffolk Council created a Resilience Reserve in response to the severe disruption caused by Storm Babet last October. Now, Cabinet members have agreed how this £500,000 pot will be managed, through a newly established Resilience and Emergency Response Fund (RERF).

The RERF is designed to ensure East Suffolk Council can be more flexible and responsive to cover reasonable additional costs incurred by town and parish councils during an emergency event.

In the aftermath of Storm Babet, East Suffolk Council established the East Suffolk Flood Recovery Group, that provided a physical presence in Framlingham and Wickham Market to assist and deal with affected residents enquiries and clean up in the aftermath.

Although longer-term grants were available under central Government's flood recovery framework, a gap was identified to support the immediate and urgent needs of residents and communities; for example, provision of skips through East Suffolk Services to remove damaged household items and costs (food, bedding, clothing) for displaced people using the emergency centre set up in Framlingham's Community Hall.

GLI Cabinet member for Resources and Value for Money, Cllr Vince Langdon-Morris said:

“The severe disruption and flooding caused by Storm Babet last October has had a significant and ongoing impact on the lives and livelihoods of many East Suffolk residents. In our district alone, 320 properties were directly impacted by the storm. Winter storms are predicted to increase in frequency and severity as we come to terms with the effects and impacts of ongoing climate change.

“As much as we cannot sit back and allow climate change to irreversibly worsen, we must try and support communities affected by its ongoing impacts, including flooding from rising sea levels, prolonged rainfall and intense storms.

“This fund can bring significant relief for our residents at a time of need and empower our district council to act quickly. But, importantly, the RERF is a short-term resource and is in no way a replacement for central government support.”

Examples of support that could be provided by the fund include temporary accommodation costs for up to 48 hours, disposal costs for damaged furniture, carpets or flooring, and

support for voluntary groups to assist and co-ordinate recovery activities. In addition to the RERF, a dedicated council officer will be appointed, to build upon our existing emergency response capacity, providing a communication, co-ordinating and enabling role for our town and parish councils, communities and residents before, during and after future emergency events.

East Suffolk's Amazing: Let's Keep It That Way!

East Suffolk Council Leader Caroline Topping is asking local people to take pride in where they live with the launch of a brand new campaign: "East Suffolk's Amazing – Let's Keep It That Way!"

A cross-party working group of councillors is looking at different ways that we can all work together to maintain the beauty of East Suffolk, and this includes encouraging more residents to take active pride in their local area. This includes reducing fly-tipping, recycling properly and even, where possible, looking after the spaces outside residents' own property.

There is already an incredible network of volunteers who help keep our district beautiful, with regular litter-picks, planting, and an all-round effort to keep their local area clean. East Suffolk Council is encouraging more people to get involved and to really do their bit to keep East Suffolk Amazing.

The Council will support local communities and groups by lending out equipment for litter pick events, including hi-viz vests, litter pickers, bags and bag hoops. With this in mind, a range of information about how communities can get involved in schemes, as well as a range of tips and advice, can be now found online.

GLI Cllr Caroline Topping, Green Party Lead and Leader of the Council, said:

"We invest every single penny we can in services to help maintain the beauty and cleanliness of East Suffolk – but sometimes, we have to be honest and admit that it can never necessarily be enough. The pressure on budgets is felt in our homes as a result of the cost-of-living crisis, they are felt by businesses who are doing their very best to stay afloat, and they are also felt by councils such as ours who have seen their funding reduced considerably. If we could, we would employ many more people, through our operational partners East Suffolk Services, to ensure our district remains spotless at all times. But the reality is that this simply isn't possible.

"So, what is possible? For me, and for everyone at East Suffolk, we hope and believe that the incredible local pride we all share can be put to the best possible use. If local people and organisations want to play their part, we would love them to get involved. East Suffolk's Amazing... let's keep it that way!"

GLI Cllr David Beavan, Liberal Democrat Group Lead and Deputy Leader of the Council, said:

"It makes our day to walk out onto a clean street. Our hard working staff need everyone's help to clean up after a selfish minority."

For more information, visit: www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/waste/litter/amazing/

Helping People Access Affordable Food

Community groups, organisations and town and parish councils are invited to apply for funding to help provide affordable food to East Suffolk residents in need.

Supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), the East Suffolk Pantries Grant Scheme is a three-year programme which aims to fund the initial set up of community pantries across the district, helping people in need to access affordable food in their local community.

The pantries provide a welcoming space, similar to a shop, where people can pay a subscription of less than £5 per week and receive food worth at least £15 in return. Pantries can also provide additional support, signposting to other local services and help to reduce social isolation.

Following successful previous rounds of funding, the next round of funding applications is now open. Grants of up to £4,500 are available and applications close on 28 June.

GLI Cllr Sarah Whitelock, East Suffolk Council's cabinet member for Communities, Leisure and Tourism said: "Many people are still struggling with food costs and are finding it difficult to buy essential items. This scheme aims to give users of community pantries some certainty about their weekly budget and supply what they need for a small weekly payment. The pantries also help manage the demand on increasingly busy foodbanks."

Previous recipients of the funding include the Food Hall at Number 28 on Wingfield Street in Bungay, run by Bungay Community Support, and Larder on the Hill at Bloodmoor Community Centre. Both pantries are now supporting local households every week to get access to affordable food. Pantry providers will become part of the East Suffolk Food Network, bringing together organisations providing both affordable food, and food in times of crisis. The network will be used to share best practice, gain support and manage access to surplus food to ensure fairness in distribution.

Applications are welcome from community and voluntary groups, organisations and town and parish councils.

For more details, and to apply, visit: www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/business/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/

Ease the Squeeze on Cost of Living

Are you, or someone you know, worried about the increasing cost of living? We understand the pressures faced by many people today and we are working closely with key partners to ensure support is available to help ease the squeeze for households in East Suffolk.

To make it as easy as possible for you to access the services and support available, locally and nationally, we have gathered information about them in one place:

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/squeeze/

For the most up to date information regarding East Suffolk Council, please visit:

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Cancellation of the 71A bus service

Several villages in Carlford and Fynn Valley ward have been affected by the cancellation of the route 71A bus service. I've spoken with the Suffolk County Council officer in charge of buses and he explained that, following the Covid pandemic, passenger numbers have not recovered to their previous level and many routes are proving uneconomic for bus companies. SCC can subsidise some routes, but their funding is very limited. The 71 route was one such uneconomic service so, rather than lose it altogether, it was decided to close the 71A loop that went through Clopton, Charsfield, Bredfield, and Hasketon and merge 71 with the 70 route to cut costs. But that is little comfort to those villages that have lost their bus service.

So what now? The Katch service, and its sibling Buzzabout that runs north of Lowestoft, are two trials of demand-responsive transport that East Suffolk Council are carrying out to see if we can find a sustainable way to provide a service for rural communities that have no other option. They are limited in duration – Katch runs until 2025 and Buzzabout to 2026 – because they require a lot of subsidy. But if they are successful at attracting passengers and get closer to being self-funding, we will then look at how to roll out a similar service in more areas. We're right now setting up a working group to consider how to carry this forward after the trials end. I'm the chair of that working group as deputy cabinet member for economic development and transport. One unknown is whether the new national government will decide to invest more in rural transport.

In the meantime, the options for village residents are slim. SCC provides a community transport service that can be booked in advance for journeys at a cost similar to bus fares:

[Connecting Communities \(suffolkonboard.com\)](http://suffolkonboard.com)

Another possibility, particularly for regular journeys such as going to work or college, is to set up a car share:

[Car Sharing – The Way To Go Suffolk](#)

I've heard that some villages have set up their own community lift schemes, where volunteers in the village will provide lifts to those in need, such as people with mobility issues needing to get to medical appointments.

I'm happy to talk about all of this with PC members at your next meeting.