



# District Councillors Report to Otley Parish Council

**For January 2025**

**Carlford and Fynn Valley Ward.**

Rushmere Village, Great Bealings, Little Bealings, Playford, Bredfield, Grundisburgh & Culpho, Witnesham and Swilland, Westerfield, Hasketon, Clopton, Charsfield, Dallinghoo, Tuddenham, Boulge, Burgh, Debach, Otley.

**From District Councillor**

**CLlr Colin Hedgley**

([Colin.Hedgley@east Suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Colin.Hedgley@east Suffolk.gov.uk))

I hope you all enjoyed a very happy Christmas and I wish you a successful and prosperous New Year.

## **Funding available for programmes to help reduce falls**

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.

Programmes are already being funded in Leiston, Felixstowe, Saxmundham, and **Woodbridge**, and the scheme would bolster the offer in these areas whilst also expanding to other areas.

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: [www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/strength-and-balance](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/strength-and-balance)

The Otago Exercise Programme was developed in New Zealand and comprises strength and balance exercises which can be performed at home or in a community setting, either individually or in a group. The exercises are shown to reduce the risk of falls in older people.

## **East Suffolk Car Parks**

East Suffolk Council is investing £1 million in car park infrastructure, including new contactless payment terminals, EV chargers, new cycle racks and signage, as well as introducing a suite of new parking tariffs in the district.



As part of an annual review of its fees and charges, the Council has agreed to retain the 30 minutes free parking available in many council-owned car parks and to introduce several new tariffs to reduce congestion at peak times of the year.

To reflect the increased number of visitors coming to the district from further afield during the summer, new seasonal tariffs will be introduced in car parks in popular tourist destinations. Running from 1 March to 31 October in some council-owned car parks in Aldeburgh, Felixstowe, Lowestoft and Southwold, the new seasonal tariff will be higher than off-season and aims to ease the demand on busy car parks during the main tourism season. New tariffs will also be introduced to allow campervans and motorhomes, HGVs and coaches to park in designated car parks in the district, with limitations on the length of stay. The new parking fees, which were agreed at a meeting of East Suffolk Council's Cabinet on Tuesday 7 January, also include an increase to parking costs for the first time since 2020. Despite increased costs for running the parking service, parking costs have remained unchanged in council-owned car parks for four years. A two-hour parking session currently costs £1.50, however from 1 April, it will rise to £2.00, and a 4-hour session will rise from £3.00 to £3.50.

Other changes include the option to park for longer in short-stay car parks and reduced parking prices in car parks out of town centres to encourage people to park further afield and walk into town.

Contactless payment terminals will be introduced to give drivers more choice when paying for parking. This will be in addition to paying through a parking app or with cash.

The Council sets fees and charges for a wide range of services including car park charges, planning application and building control fees, licence fees, land search fees, beach hut rents and cemetery charges. Some fees are fixed by Government and some are discretionary.

## **Devolution. Statement from the Leader of the Council**

In December, we issued the following statement in response to the Government's White Paper on devolution. It is still very early days and there will be further discussions across Suffolk and within East Suffolk as things become clearer. "We will need time to consider the full implications of the Government's White Paper, however our view of devolution and the principles of local government reorganisation remains unchanged. "Any Mayoral Combined Authority or future change needs to come with the financial resources and powers to deliver real change in partnership with Government and must recognise the importance of keeping local government genuinely local and connected to local places. "We must focus on how proposals in the White Paper benefit the residents of East Suffolk, preserve or strengthen real local democratic accountability, and ensure a close link between residents and the councillors who represent them. "Any reorganisation should not simply be about the structures and boundaries of councils, but instead should be part of holistic public service reform including other key services such as health, policing, fire, and employment support which should always be delivered locally. It should also seek to minimise impacts on operations, service delivery,



residents and staff. “We will take the time to consider these factors, work across the Council and with staff, to consider the White Paper alongside other policy changes such as the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Government Settlement.

### **Inaugural meeting of East Suffolk’s new Youth Council**

An innovative new council entirely comprising young people from across East Suffolk has met for the first time, ensuring the ideas and concerns of younger people are heard.

Earlier this autumn, thirty-two young people from up and down East Suffolk were elected to the new East Suffolk Youth Council, an innovative initiative designed to engage young people in politics and enable them to influence decisions affecting their lives and communities.

Following an induction day on Monday 18 November at which the new Youth Councillors were ‘sworn in’, the first Youth Council meeting took place at Riverside in Lowestoft on Monday 9 December.

As their first item of business, the Youth Councillors elected a Chair and Vice-Chair. Both positions were hotly contested, but after multiple nominations, speeches and votes, a Chair was elected from St Felix School in Reydon, and a Vice-Chair from Thomas Mills High School in Framlingham.

The Youth Council then turned to their first motion, in which they called upon East Suffolk Council to devote greater resources and attention to youth safety and well-being. With the newly elected Chair presiding ably over discussions, the Youth Councillors emphasised the impacts of social media and the Covid-19 pandemic upon youth, and the need for improved youth activities, services and support.

The Youth Council carried their motion unanimously, and East Suffolk Council must now consider their views. At their November Full Council meeting, elected Members unanimously agreed that they would discuss any valid motion duly passed by the Youth Council at their next Full Council meeting.

### **Ensuring East Suffolk is a great place to work for everyone**

East Suffolk Council and East Suffolk Services Ltd have both been awarded the highest status within a scheme which ensures organisations are inclusive to people with disabilities.

Both the Council and East Suffolk Services Ltd have been awarded Disability Confident Leader status following a Disability Confident submission, which was validated by Disability Advice North East Suffolk.

The Disability Confident scheme, accredited by the Department for Work and Pensions, helps employers recruit, retain and train great people. Disability Confident organisations play a leading role in changing attitudes about, and increasing understanding of, disability. There are three levels of the scheme, with Leader status being the highest.



Cassandra Clements, Managing Director at East Suffolk Services Ltd said: “East Suffolk Services Ltd are very proud to have attained ‘Leader’ status with Disability Confident. We are passionate about making sure we have an environment which is open and comfortable for everyone to thrive in.”

Both the Council and East Suffolk Services Ltd were able to demonstrate how they strive to be disability-inclusive and ensure that disabled colleagues feel they belong.

Other employers in East Suffolk are encouraged to become Disability Confident to drive positive change. Find out more at [www.gov.uk/guidance/disability-confident-how-to-sign-up-to-the-employer-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/disability-confident-how-to-sign-up-to-the-employer-scheme)

### **Offering a Warm Welcome this winter**

A network of venues offering residents a warm, safe space to socialise over the winter has reopened for the third year.

East Suffolk Council’s Warm Welcomes (formerly Warm Rooms) scheme has reopened for the winter, with more than 20 libraries, churches and community hubs providing a warm space and an opportunity to connect with other members of the local community.

Part-funded by the UK Government’s UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Warm Welcomes provide a safe and welcoming space where members of the community, including people who may be struggling with the cost of heating their homes, can come to meet with others and access information about additional support available in the community.

Earlier this year, community groups interested in joining the Warm Welcomes programme were encouraged to apply for grant funding. Venues must be open for at least 8 hours per week and the funding can be used as a contribution towards energy costs, refreshments, food, activities and the purchase or hire of resources such as craft materials.

Further details, including full addresses and opening times, are available at [www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/warm-welcomes](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/warm-welcomes)

The list of East Suffolk Warm Welcomes includes:

- Woodbridge Library – New Street, Woodbridge
- ROPETH - The Angela Cobbold Hall, Little Bealings
- Kesgrave Library - Kays Close, Kesgrave

### **New guidance for applications for Houses in Multiple Occupation**

A new planning document has been adopted in East Suffolk to help guide proposals for the conversion of properties to Houses in Multiple Occupation.

East Suffolk Council’s Cabinet has adopted a new planning document which provides guidance as to circumstances which could be considered ‘exceptional’ when owners are proposing to convert properties to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the former Waveney area.

### **Nautilus Project**

Victory in East Suffolk as National Grid Ventures’ Nautilus interconnector project set to change direction.



East Suffolk Council has welcomed the news from Ofgem that National Grid Ventures' proposed Nautilus project will no longer be connecting within East Suffolk, favouring a connection at the Isle of Grain, Kent. The news comes after the recent Ofgem Initial Project Assessment (IPA) consultation which sought community and stakeholder feedback on the proposal to relocate the UK's onshore connection for Nautilus within East Suffolk at Friston, as opposed to the recently assessed (and dismissed) Isle of Grain location.

The Nautilus project proposes a 1.4 gigawatt electricity interconnector cable due to connect Belgium with the UK, running under the North Sea. The project is cited as increasing grid connectivity and resilience between the two countries, whilst helping to meet legally binding climate change targets including net zero, also reducing electricity cost to consumers. The announcement demonstrates that Ofgem and the project promoter (National Grid Ventures) do listen to the feedback received, with National Grid Ventures' statement confirming that *"Community and stakeholder feedback has been essential to the evolution of Nautilus. We have always advocated for the Isle of Grain as the best location for Nautilus given it's already a major hub for energy infrastructure and has the potential to offer the shortest offshore cable route to Belgium. This view was reinforced by community and stakeholder feedback. Now that Ofgem has approved Nautilus, we will continue to develop the project at Grain and look forward to engaging the community on our plans during future consultation."*

### **Thermal imaging cameras available to borrow**

Being able to identify where heat escapes from a building can be key to targeting actions to improve the retention of heat. Each winter, the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership runs the project Keep the Heat, making thermal imaging cameras available to community groups and parish councils county wide to carry out free heat loss surveys with members of their local community. This year, in addition to that community support, the Partnership also have some spare cameras dedicated to use by our staff and elected members. At East Suffolk, we have 1 camera compatible with Android, and 1 compatible with iPhone, complete with instructions for using the cameras and a guide to interpretation of the images. [Guide to Thermal Imaging - For internal use.pdf](#)

The cameras are available until the end of March. If you would like to borrow one of the cameras, please contact Daniel Wareing to book it out and arrange to collect it from either ESH or Riverside. Please make sure you specify which you require (Android or iPhone, or either if you happen to have access to both sorts of smartphone) and when you would ideally like to borrow it.

#### ***See the heat, keep the heat!***

This isn't just an opportunity to play with a gadget, as once you know where heat escapes, that information can enable you to target and implement interventions. A concise information pack is available for download via [Info Pack – Suffolk - Green Suffolk](#), which contains information on:

- several easy and cheap quick fixes for making your home warmer



- the loft insulation discount scheme worth up to £200 per household available to all residents of Suffolk [Loft Insulation Offer - Green Suffolk](#)
- the home energy efficiency assessment service by certified assessors [Home | Suffolk Energy Efficiency Assessment](#)
- 0% loan scheme (up to £15,000) for home improvements such as energy efficiency or renewables [Suffolk Warm Homes Loans - Lendology](#)

Trusted sources of further advice and detail include the Energy Saving Trust [A helpful guide to draught-proofing - Energy Saving Trust](#) and the Centre for Sustainable Energy [Energy Advice - Centre for Sustainable Energy](#) More useful links are available via [Thermal imaging next steps for householders & groups - Green Suffolk](#)

Whilst it is envisaged that the cameras we have available for use by our staff and members will mainly be used for home domestic use, if you have an idea to use it for a project with some of your neighbours, or in relation to a built asset of ESC, or another idea, Daniel Wareing would be pleased to hear from you. If you borrow a camera, then just how you choose to use it is up to you, but in return we would welcome feedback from all users to help give us an understanding of the uses to which the cameras are put and what benefits accrue to users of the cameras.

(For more information only on the community-facing project Keep the Heat, visit [Keep the Heat](#) )

**citizens  
advice**

**East  
Suffolk**

# **Help with your energy bills this winter**

**We can help in a number of ways -**

- **Winter fuel payment**  
We recommend you check your eligibility for Pension Credit as soon as possible - we can help you with this
- **Check if you can get a fuel voucher**  
If you can't afford to top up your prepayment meter, you might be able to get a fuel voucher.
- **Check if you can sign up to the Priority Services Register**  
You can get extra help from your gas and electricity supplier by signing up to the Priority Services Register.
- **Help with Energy grants**  
You might be eligible for grants or schemes run by your local council or charitable organisations.
- **Check if you are able to access any other forms of support**  
Other forms of support may be available to help you keep warm or pay your bills

**We're also here for general advice on managing debt and money**

**Get in touch if you need advice or help**

**Call advice line 0808 278 7866 • Email us at [caes.org.uk](mailto:caes.org.uk)**