



Councillor Bobby Bennett
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Suffolk County Council Report for Clare Division Annual Summary 2024

We spend 77p of every £1 we receive supporting those that need it most. This includes older people, children and those who are the most vulnerable in Suffolk and we provide these important public services for 365 days of the year.

The remaining 23p in every pound pays for other vital services including Suffolk Fire and Rescue, Road Maintenance, Footpaths, Public Transport, Waste Services, Libraries, Culture, Leisure, trading standards, Community Safety, Biodiversity and tackling climate change.

Devolution

We currently have a 10-week public consultation on the proposed devolution deal with the Government which started on 18th March and runs through until 26th May. The consultation is in two main parts – an open survey, hosted by Suffolk County Council, that any residents can complete and a sample survey of 1000 Suffolk residents conducted independently by Ipsos Mori. The consultation will be available through our website www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution and social media. There will also be media coverage highlighting the consultation.

This is a summary of Suffolk County Council news from May 2023 to March 2024:

Education:

- 99% of pupils received their preferred primary school place in May 2023.
- The council is investing in SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) services by recruiting additional staff and reforming delivery methods.

Infrastructure:

- A new £100 million investment is bringing better broadband to rural Suffolk.
- The council is opposing National Grid's pylon and offshore energy connection proposals due to environmental concerns.
- £800 million contract awarded for highway projects and improvements across Suffolk for the next 20 years.
- Government funding received for upgrades to railway junctions and road maintenance.
- £3.6 million allocated to strengthen and expand Suffolk's bus network.
- £7.3 million secured to develop electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

Environment:

- The council is working on a strategy to improve air quality.

- £1 million received to promote cycling and walking.
- Funding allocated to reduce digital exclusion.
- £10 million extra approved for repairing and resurfacing local roads.
- The council is committed to reducing herbicide use on highways.

Other news:

- Suffolk County Council received a "Good" rating for adult social care services.
- The council is creating a new funding pot for arts and heritage organizations.
- A public consultation on a devolution deal with the government is ongoing.
- A campaign launched to encourage drivers to switch off engines when parked to reduce pollution.

Clare Division

Within the Division I attend as many meetings as I am able to and please do ask if you need me to attend to discuss a particular issue.

I have a locality budget which I can award to causes that meet our priorities each year. Last year I supported numerous projects including supporting parishes to enhance their environments such as sign renovation, helping parishes host community events, supporting parishes to purchase Speed Activated signs and I awarded some money to Reach Haverhill to support residents with cost of living challenges and maximising income projects. I have some funding left for 24/25 so please get in touch quickly if you have a project that you would like to be considered.

Highways concerns continue to take up much of the conversation at parish council meetings. Please can all issues be reported on the highways reporting tool and please continue to email me with items that need following up on. I have held a number of positive meetings in parishes with the highways engineer to discuss specific issues and would be happy to arrange a meeting if it would be useful to you.

Cabinet Responsibilities

At the County Council until February I was the Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities and my priorities this year have been the re procurement of our library service and playing our part within the Suffolk system to support residents with the cost of living. My other responsibilities include Arts and Heritage, Citizens' Advice, Community Safety (including Domestic Abuse, PREVENT and Violence Against Women and Girls), Coroner Services, Customer Services, Equality, Gypsy and Traveller Services, Human Resources, Libraries, Registrars, Safer and Stronger Communities and The Voluntary Sector

Since February I have been the cabinet member for Children and Young People's services, which is a role I was honoured to be asked to take on, and while it is not always the easiest I can promise you that I am doing my best to ensure that we are looking after our Children and Young People in Suffolk.

Please get in touch with me via email or telephone if you need my help on a Suffolk County Council Issue.

For up-to-date information:

- Visit the Suffolk County Council website: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/>