

TOP-TEN REPORT FOR BUNGAY AND THE VILLAGES (NOVEMBER 2024)
East Suffolk Councillors Toby Hammond and Anthony Specia

1. Anthony was delighted to 'swear in' the first cohort of East Suffolk Youth Councillors at their recent Induction Day. There are currently 32 elected Youth Councillors representing schools right across East Suffolk, including Bungay High and Castle EAST, as well as the homeschooled. East Suffolk Youth Council will meet for the first time on 9th December, when they intend to bring forward a motion on youth support and youth safety in our communities.
2. The deliberately addictive nature of smartphones and social media is of increasing concern to parents in our ward. Toby met the founders of Smartphone Free Childhood, a national grassroots campaign based in Suffolk, and he's encouraged Adrian Ramsay MP to support a cross-party bill to try and address this issue. More information at <https://smartphonefreechildhood.co.uk/>.
3. Anthony and Toby met with specialist carbon consultants assisting East Suffolk to hold VC Cooke to the highest environmental standards in operating their proposed incinerator at Ellough, if indeed it's ever built. Their technical expertise will strengthen ESC's negotiations with VC Cooke.
4. A government white paper on devolution is expected in December, which seems likely to have a major impact on the shape of our local government in Suffolk. It appears ministers may be considering creating unitary authorities and scrapping the two-tier (district and county) system. There may be positives but, as always, the devil will be in the detail. Our priority is to ensure that residents are represented as well as possible whatever the changes.
5. ESC Leader Caroline Topping was nominated for Council Leader of the Year by the national Local Government Information Unit. The LGIU commended her for her ability to work with all political groups to provide effective leadership for East Suffolk, significantly benefitting both residents and the Council. Her nomination cited her *"ability to bring people together to achieve results, making sure she uses the talent and skills available to her, always with respect and good humour"*.
6. The Bungay Stakeholder Group, which Anthony chairs and ESC supports, has continued to meet regularly to discuss matters of interest to the Bungay community as a whole. Two recent meetings involving representatives from the primary and secondary schools in Bungay has led to increased cooperation between the schools and other Bungay institutions. We plan further meetings involving other stakeholders, such as the emergency services.
7. Winter can be particularly challenging for those worried about high energy costs. A range of local and national services exist which are aimed at helping families who are struggling. ESC has centralised information on all these schemes at www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/squeeze/.
8. Toby and Anthony now have seats on the Flixton Quarry Liaison Group, which normally meets twice per year to discuss issues arising from operations at the Breedon Group quarry in Flixton parish. Suffolk County Council gave Breedon permission to expand their quarry on condition that the Liaison Group included the ward district councillors. We recognise that many Flixton residents objected to Breedon's expansion proposals at the planning stage, and we'll do our best to represent local interests and concerns at Liaison Group meetings.
9. In a win for East Suffolk communities, the energy regulator Ofgem has moved a subsea electrical interconnector project known as Nautilus to Kent. This means that a large and highly controversial electrical station won't be built on our coast, and the electricity will be delivered closer to London where it's needed. This victory comes after concerted lobbying from many parties including our own Cllr Tom Daly, Cabinet Member for Energy and Climate Change.
10. As Council Chair, Anthony was pleased to attend many civic events this month, including the Bungay Remembrance Service, Bungay Girl Guides Parliament Week event, Bungay Town Trust Dinner, Lowestoft Remembrance Service, ESC Quality of Place Awards, Britten as a Boy Statue launch event, and Norfolk and Waveney Ecumenical Covenant Service. He was also honoured to greet HRH Princess Anne on her visit formally to open the Gull Wing Bridge in Lowestoft.