

In March 24 it was announced Suffolk County Council would spend £3.6 million of Government funding from the Department for Transport's Bus Service Improvement Fund Phase 2 (BSIP 2, renamed from BSIP+) to deliver improvements to public transport in Suffolk over the following two years on strengthening and expanding Suffolk's bus network. I understand the Government has been specific about where the money was to be spent. New bus services have been created and some existing ones have seen increased journeys, but none of these is within this division.

I attended a Scrutiny Committee meeting recently where the bus provision was reviewed. Sadly the funding did not include Community Transport (this was a Westminster directive) but the next tranche can include enhancement of bus stops and I have already requested stops along the A144 to be identified properly. I asked the team to feed back to Westminster how disappointed we are they chose not to address the issue of Community Transport, on which in this area we rely so heavily. They told me they had done so already, but would add our voices to their complaint.

Suffolk County Council has secured millions of pounds of funding to help develop electric vehicle (EV) charging across the county. In my view the first iteration of Plug in Suffolk was a disaster; I made my feelings well known at SCC and the EV points at the Community Centre have been switched off for more than a year. I hope the new contract holders will be better, but it is taking a long time to sort this out.

Following a rather poor Ofsted report, SCC has invested a further £9.1 million in SEND provision. This investment is in addition to the £11.2 million over three years agreed by Cabinet in February 2024, which is being used to grow the SEND team by 15% (around 60 members of staff). In total, the council is proposing to commit more than £20 million over the next three years to bolster SEND services.

In November HRH The Princess Royal opened the Gull Wing bridge in Lowestoft, I've not been over it but it is quite the engineering achievement and very elegant- besides crucial in easing traffic congestion in Lowestoft town centre.

Of concern has been the recent decision by the Civil Aviation Authority to close its Airfield Advisory team, who had such an input into the planning application, decision and eventual appeal for the Biodigester at Ellough. Without this team, it is anticipated that there will be no robust and effective advice to support the design and delivery of new infrastructure projects, and that this will compromise scrutiny of their design and delivery.

In March Cabinet ratified the very difficult decision to bring the Library service back in house. I was as surprised as anyone as I expected Suffolk Libraries to be a shoo in but looking at the facts on the table, it was the correct decision and will safeguard the future of the Library service in Suffolk. Looking to the future, Suffolk County Council envisions libraries becoming even more integrated into the wider community, serving as convenient access points for a range of essential council services. This includes providing information and support around Adult Social Care, offering health and social care services, facilitating Family Hub activities, and promoting digital inclusion. The aim

is to make it easier for residents to access vital services and support, all within the welcoming, familiar setting of their local library.

At the end of April , I toured the new Fire Service control centre in Ipswich. Until now we have shared this service with Cambridgeshire but the system upgrade was taking too long so Suffolk Fire service took the difficult decision to go it alone. The system is not yet live, the new and some re employed staff are undergoing extensive training and practice.

Of interest to everyone as well is the Government's offer to SCC of Devolution and Local Government Review. There is a lot to discuss . Richard Rout has been appointed Cabinet Member with responsibility for oversight of this and he has set up a steering group which he has asked me to join. He has already visited Bungay Town Council for a meeting and questions and is happy to come to other parishes in the future, or back to Bungay. I know many of you have concerns over how this will affect you and your roles as parish councillors and I am sure Richard can set your minds at rest.

My Highways budget has been spent during the year on a proper raised bus stop in Barsham, assorted traffic surveys, some traffic calming measures and replacement signposts.

I have to be honest and say we are not given enough to undertake all of the small projects which parishes want, especially in a rural division. Councillors in Ipswich , for example struggle to spend their budgets, but £6k per annum when a TRO costs upwards of £9k is a difficult balancing act, with so many asking for money.

My locality budget has supported many local projects, such as Bungay Folk festival, the Friends of Bungay Library, Bungay Guides, Bungay Life magazine, a bench in St James' Community Orchard, and a contribution towards a SID for Ilketshall St Andrew.

In conclusion – I have enjoyed attending parish council meetings throughout the year , you are all so welcoming and it is a pleasure to work with you and hopefully resolve issues which you have.

JC 6/5/25