

Annual Parish Report – 2022/23

Councillor: Andy Mellen

Division: Thedwastre North

Councillor contact details:

Mobile: 07790 992619

Email: andy.mellen@suffolk.gov.uk

Representing the parishes of: Badwell Ash; Elmswell; Finningham; Great Ashfield; Hunston; Langham; Norton; Stowlangtoft; Tostock; Westhorpe, Wyverstone and Woolpit.

April 2023

I have now been representing these villages as your County Councillor for almost two years. I aim to attend all Parish Council meetings, even if only briefly (there are often two or three parishes meeting on the same evening). I always try to find an answer to residents' queries, and continue to follow up on long-standing issues of concern. Most of my e-mails are related to Highways: potholes, flooding, signage, speed and safety. Whilst making progress in some areas, it is a continuing source of frustration to me and to residents as it often takes far too long to resolve problems. We do now have a new Community Liaison Engineer, Andy Moore, who is vastly experienced in the SCC Highways systems and can often find ways to get work done. There continues to be a shortage of funding for Highways work at this time, which can cause an enormous amount of frustration for communities who want their problem resolved straight away. Later this year will see a change in our highways contractor, Kier will be replaced by Milestone Infrastructure. We are hoping that this new contractor will mean an improvement in service delivery.

Please do contact me if you have an issue where I can help.

SCC Council members

Since the 2021 elections the Conservatives have a large majority on the County Council: 55 of the total 75 Councillors, so they continue to lead the Council. After a by-election in Beccles the Greens retained the seat, so we continue to have 9 Green Councillors who work together with 4 Liberal Democrats and 2 Independent Councillors to form the official opposition group (Green, Liberal Democrat & Independent, GLI). Our role is to scrutinise what the administration is doing, hold them to account and also bring forward ideas and motions of our own. Opposition members also sit on various committees: I am a member of the Scrutiny committee and the Constitutional working group.

Budget Meeting: GLI Amendments Declined

Suffolk County Council voted in their budget for 2023-24 earlier this year. Our Group put forward several amendments but these were defeated. SCC's portion of your council tax was raised by 1.99% plus a further 2% social care precept.

A14 re-surfacing works

The current works on the A14 between Woolpit and Stowmarket to break up and replace the concrete road surface are clearly going to cause a lot of disruption as traffic seeks to find a short-cut through nearby villages. Although the main work is being carried out by National Highways, SCC are liaising with them to ensure that signage is in the right place to direct traffic away from bottlenecks etc.

Scrutiny of the Carbon “Budget”

The administration brought forward a report which was scrutinised in January – although called a Carbon Budget for Suffolk, it was mostly a backward-looking report. The main headline from this is that the council has a long way to go to reduce its own emissions, and by 2030 (when we should be at Net Zero) there will still be a significant gap between where we should be, and what we are likely to achieve.

Devolution: The County Deal

Council leaders have signed an initial agreement with the government for a devolution deal for Suffolk. This will mean more powers and funding, but the most significant change is the creation of the position of a directly elected leader for the county council – this may happen as early as May 2024.