

Parish Report – April 2022

Councillor: Andrew Stringer

Upper Gipping Division

Suffolk County Council

Mobile: 07774199061

andrew.stringer@suffolk.gov.uk

COVID-19

Latest SCC information is available here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Latest Government advice is available here: www.gov.uk/coronavirus

International Women’s Month, and Day 2022 – #BreaktheBias

In March, we celebrated International Women’s Month 2022. This is a time to acknowledge and celebrate the amazing achievements of women and push further for equality around the world. This year’s theme revolved around breaking the bias, focussing on a world free of bias, stereotypes and discrimination.

Our group was immensely supportive of this celebration. Suffolk GLI’s Spokesperson for Women, Cllr Caroline Page, called for the flag for Women’s History Month to be flown high next year at Endeavour House. Suffolk County Council agreed this was an important step forward.

Cabinet 1st March

The Cabinet met to vote on the disapproval of the current plans by Sunnica to build the country’s largest solar farm in Suffolk and East Cambridgeshire. Suffolk County Council have asked the Government to reject the plans in its current form, arguing the application fails to properly mitigate the impacts of such a large project.

In addition, the Cabinet voted on approving the National Grid’s project to scale up its energy infrastructure from Bramford to Twinstead, as part of the Government’s Net-Zero plan to increase low-carbon energy in the UK. Our Group, while we approve of the increased capacity for low-carbon energy, argue that this rush into large projects is a result of decades of inaction from Government. This means it is now a lot harder to develop a coordinated plan with regards to energy supply, disruption, and sufficient mitigation.

Both were voted for by the Cabinet unanimously.

Full Council 24th March

Full Council presented a rare opportunity of solidarity between Councillors, as our Group and the Conservatives shared a single motion in support of Ukraine. Our Group recommended a motion condemning the actions of the Russian government, as well as commitment to supporting and welcoming refugees as they become a part of our Suffolk communities. The Conservatives supported our idea and together we showed how politics can be put aside through difficult times.

Cabinet 29th March

The Cabinet met to vote on a plan to establish 'Freeport East'. This is part of a national strategy to create freeports across the country, in an attempt to generate economic activity through tax incentives. Felixstowe Port, Harwich Port, and Stowmarket's 'Gateway 14' Business Park are set to become part of Freeport East. Our Group is severely concerned with this project, as foreign direct investment is being prioritised over local businesses, many of which will find it difficult to compete with the overseas businesses receiving Business Rates, VAT and National Insurance Tax relief. The project poses many other challenges, such as potential increase in money laundering etc, a lack of clear strategy towards net-zero, and a risk of high-skilled jobs being imported, excluding the Suffolk workforce.

The Cabinet also voted on the Enhanced Partnership between SCC and bus operators, in line with the new Bus Back Better strategy, aimed at improving services across Suffolk. The improvement plan was voted for in October 2021, and this partnership outlines how the various stakeholders will interact with one another during the implementation of the improvement plan. Our Group have concerns on the Government's promise of funding, as the pot was cut in half in an announcement last month, This week it has been confirmed by the Department for Transport that Suffolk will not get any funding from this initiative, while Norfolk will get circa £49,000,000.00 .

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