

Date: 1st November 2023
Email: simon.harley@suffolk.gov.uk

Supporting Suffolk Farmers

The council meeting on Thursday 19 October saw councillors vote to approve a motion supporting local farmers and food producers by ensuring that local meat and dairy, as well as plant-based produce, is served at council events. The council's facilities and catering arm, Vertas, has 68% of its spend with Suffolk suppliers and 86% with regional suppliers. In order to tackle the county's environmental priorities and boost the local economy, the council also pledged to encourage Suffolk residents to buy local produce and shop locally wherever possible.

I spoke at the meeting and pointed out that the Council were missing an opportunity to promote policies to reduce meat and dairy consumption, in line with the Government's Committee on Climate Change's recommendations, in order to reduce our carbon footprints. We can still do this and support our local farmers!

Our group also tried to put a motion to encourage solar panels to be installed on all new buildings and industrial buildings (ideally, rather than productive farmland) but this was unsuccessful.

Walking and Bridleway Access

At Cabinet on Tuesday 10 October, members of the Suffolk Local Access Forum joined the meeting to provide their annual report, which included the work they are doing to improve and maintain footways and access around the county, particularly with Network Rail and National Highways to make sure that new developments take foot traffic and walkers into account. They are keen for the council to promote the East Anglian sections of the newly named King Charles III England Coast Path. The forum expressed concern about the significant large-scale energy infrastructure projects planned for the county and could impact on Suffolk residents' enjoyment of the green access network and impact on the county's natural environment.

Suffolk Libraries Consultation

Suffolk County Council's contract with Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) Limited, the independent charity that runs the library service, comes to an end on 31 May 2025, with a new contract set to begin in June 2025.

The 13-week consultation period is launched today, and will be followed by a competitive Tender Process, before the new contract is awarded in November 2024.

To inform the consultation, the council has undertaken engagement with over 30 organisations including Suffolk's Libraries IPS Limited staff, key service users, schools and partner organisations. A key focus of the consultation is the council's Library outreach services, which include three mobile library vehicles, serving more than 500 stops across rural parts of the county each month, for the pickup and exchange of books.

The mobile library vehicles are coming to the end of their life and the council therefore needs to consider the best way to deliver these services to people in rural areas of the county going forward. Library Outreach services also include Pop-up Libraries and a home library service, run by local volunteers, is also available for Suffolk residents that find it difficult to access a library building or mobile library.

The council is keen to hear from people, to better understand the needs across the county. This feedback will help to inform the requirements for the future contract.

Residents can have their say by visiting www.suffolk.gov.uk/LibraryConsultation

Budget Consultation

Suffolk County Council is keen to hear from Suffolk residents, businesses and local communities as it decides how it will spend money next year and has launched an online consultation to give Suffolk residents a say in budget setting for the financial year 2024-25. There will also be a number of focus groups to explain the council's current financial situation, along with the chance for Suffolk residents and businesses to have a say on Council Tax proposals.

There are three key questions, the first is on which services people have recently used, the second asks for thoughts on seeking a greater contribution to Council Tax to help fund public services, and the third on which service area you would like to see more money spent. The online survey can be found at the link below – please give us your views! http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Budget24_25/

Storm Babet Flooding

Suffolk County Council and my group would like to extend their thanks to those of you around the county who helped other residents whose homes and travel were affected by the rains and flooding that struck Suffolk on Friday 20 October. If you have been affected by the Storm Babet and the recent flooding, please use link below for SCC support and advice: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

Bus service improvement plan

A consultation exercise and bids from Parish Councils are now welcome (I have emailed all Parish Clerks about this very recently):

SCC has £1.8million to spend each year in 2023/24 and 2024/25 on enhancements to the current passenger transport network. Some of this will be going to the bus companies in order to support existing services, and some will be going into design work on Bus Priority schemes to get them ready for delivery when we are able to secure capital funding. With the remainder of the grant we want to support new or improved services at a local level where demand can be proven.

We are now asking Parish Councils, Bus Companies and other groups to submit ideas and suggestions for these improvements. Our preferred method for this is via an online application form which can be found here: [Suffolk on Board - News / Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus: Where should the money be spent?](#) Additionally, there is a standing invitation to all parishes to attend meetings of the Enhanced Bus Partnership Passenger Group. The next meeting of this will be on 14th November.

Follow us on:

Twitter - [Suffolk Green, Lib Dem & Independent Group \(@SuffolkGLI\) / Twitter](#)

Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/suffolkqli_group/

Facebook - [Suffolk GLI - Green, Liberal Democrat & Independent Group | Facebook](#)

Website - [Suffolk Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group – The GLI Group at Suffolk County Council \(suffolkqli.wordpress.com\)](#)

Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and support:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>

Simon Harley Suffolk County Councillor for Peninsula Division