# **Parish Report – JANUARY 2024**

# **Councillor**

#### Penny Otton

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**Flooding in Suffolk**

Recent high rainfall has led to many Suffolk residents’ homes being flooded, and flooding more generally on roads. At Council on 7 December, a motion was passed for the council to review the frequency of drain and gully clearance in areas at risk of flooding, and to work closely with districts and boroughs, Anglian Water and the Environment Agency to hep prevent future flooding. My group had hoped to introduce further measures on regularity of maintenance, but this was not supported by the Conservative administration. The motion that was passed was preceded by an announcement by the council of £1m in extra funding to investigate flooding incidents in the county.

Details of a government-funded scheme from DEFRA whereby Suffolk residents can apply for up to £5,000 to help protect their property from future flooding can be found at this link, with applications from January 2024: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk> **DEFRA’s Property Flood Resilience Grant**

As well as the initial £500 grant payment and council tax/business rate discounts, residents whose homes have been flooded may also be eligible for up to £5,000 from the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Grant, which the government requires Suffolk County Council to administer on their behalf. The application process will begin in early 2024 and after initial eligibility checks by SCC, property owners will be responsible for sourcing an independent surveyor and PFR contractor. Payment of up to £5,000 including VAT will be paid retrospectively to the property owner once the Council receives proof of the completed installation and invoicing for the approved measures.

Further information about the grant eligibility, conditions and the forthcoming application process can be found here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/property-flood-resilience-grant>

**LOCAL FLOODING ;** I know there have been numerous instances and any reported to the highways website will be investigated. As of today 6/1/24 I have not had anything through to me. COMBS FORD and Lower Road to Stowmarket has been a major issue.

**SCC Carbon Net Zero Ambitions**

The council’s Scrutiny Committee met on Monday 11 December to review the council’s progress towards becoming carbon net zero by 2030. Overall there had been a 10% reduction in emissions in 2022/23, due to reduced energy use for street lighting (a recent upgrade programme) and reduced gas consumption at SCC property and schools.

However, the council is not on target to be carbon neutral by 2030, at least partially due to the third scope of indirect emissions – this includes emissions by suppliers and contractors used by the council which are difficult to measure accurately and control. The supply chain represents 91% of the council’s total footprint, and it has updated its contract terms and conditions to include annual reporting on reducing carbon emissions, and also requires suppliers to sign up to its Carbon Charter and Climate Change Commercial Ask.

**Getting Children Ready for Education**

On Thursday 14 December, the council’s Education and Children’s Scrutiny Committee met to review the support the council provides to prepare children for school. This includes the county’s nurseries and early years providers, health services for 0–5-year-olds and Family Hubs (formerly children’s centres).

The Committee acknowledged the good work that was going on in a challenging area and I urged that recruitment of health visitors be prioritised by SCC to fill the current vacancies (21%). However I am concerned that with proposed cuts this will not happen

**BUDGET.** The **council is facing a huge budget deficit and is proposing cuts to childrens services, arts and museums, and councillors locality fund by £2K PLUS increasing council tax . I have asked if the cost of not charging for DIY waste has been included and that this will be on the website. Councillors will scrutinise the proposals on Thursday.**

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