**Brome & Oakley Parish Council**

Cllr Jessica Fleming, Hartismere Division, Suffolk

Jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07714-597980 Twitter: @jesstfleming

Looking back to May 2021, the new administration under Leader Matthew Hicks announced its priorities as: supporting vulnerable residents, strengthening Suffolk’s economy, the environment, and value for the taxpayer. Since that time much has happened, most notably we are emerging from the worst of the pandemic and are also profoundly affected by the war in Ukraine.

In addition to Central Government grants, Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) has invested almost £10m to support Covid-19 through Suffolk’s Strategic Recovery Plan, including:

* **The Local Economy** - £2.05m towards Suffolk’s businesses recovery and the potential Haughley Junction rail upgrade
* **Communities** - £2.6m towards housing projects, improve literacy levels, and families and young people in need of support
* **Engagement** – £0.139m towards Youth Healthwatch projects and community engagement
* **Climate Change**- £1.5m to implement the Suffolk’s Climate Emergency Plan

Other strategic investments committed over the year include:

* **Highways Flooding and Footpaths** - £10m to improve highways flooding and £10m to upgrade pavements and footpaths.
* **Waste Recycling Centres** - £14.5m in upgrades and a new Ipswich waste recycling centre.
* **New Special Educational Needs & Disabilities School Places** - Continue investing £45m in building or extending facilities to offer 800 new SEND school places

**Warm Homes Programme –** The Warm Homes Suffolk Fund was established in January to help residents on low incomes living in energy inefficient homes cut energy use and costs. Suffolk residents who may qualify for funding and free advice should refer to [www.warmhomessuffolk.org](https://www.warmhomessuffolk.org/).

**Suffolk’s Highways contract** with Kier is due to end in September 2023, and the council has started the two-year process of tendering for a new Highways Services partner. The approach is to use one contract for the majority of highways functions with separate contracts for streetlighting and traffic signals. Following a rigorous tendering process, the council plans to award the new contract in early 2023 with the new service provider beginning in October 2023.    The council’s scrutiny committee has reviewed the tendering approach and will be involved later in 2022 as well.

The council appointed a **new Chief Fire Officer** and Executive Director for Fire and Public Safety in August 2021. Jon Lacey now leads the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service and is also responsible for SCC’s Trading Standards and emergency planning services. Jon comes from the West Sussex Fire Service and has a 24 year career with fire and rescue.

On the same theme, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service acquired **three new state-of-the-art response vehicles** in 2021 equipped with the latest technology, to support firefighters at complex emergency incidents. The new vehicles will typically be used as a hub and where field coordination is required.

Commencing last June, the council commissioned an external review of its **Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services** by Lincolnshire County Council. The findings are now available and an action plan is in place. You can [read the report and action plan here.](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/send-and-the-local-offer/independent-send-review-september-2021/) Currently there are approx. 6,000 children with a care plan and a further 12,000 pupils have special educational needs not needing a care plan. The Council has formed a SEND Accountability Board which is providing oversight for implementation of the Action Plan.

**Infrastructure Required to support Government’s 2050 Net Zero Target** – In October the Offshore Electricity Grid Task Force (OffSET) was set up to respond to the Government’s Offshore Network Transmission Review (OTNR) and to deliver 40GW of Offshore Wind by 2030. The group includes regional MPs and councillors chaired by Sir Bernard Jenkin MP and is responsible for ensuring that related Planning is effectively scrutinised in East Anglia. New transmission infrastructure includes added capacity linking Bramford to Twinstead, and Anglia Green.

**National Grid’s East Anglia GREEN** is a 400 Kv new power transmission project, the preferred route runs just west of the Thornhams and east of Gislingham then up through Burgate and Palgrave to Norfolk.  Public consultation started as of 21st April and runs until 16th June There is a public session in Palgrave Community Centre on 14th May 10.00 – 4.00 pm, or Needham market on 27th May 1.00 – 7.00 pm.  This is a very substantial project which will affect communities along the route. Further information is available on the website [www.nationalgrid.com/east-anglia-green](http://www.nationalgrid.com/east-anglia-green)

**Other Infrastructure under Consultation** include the proposed Sunnica Solar farm (a 2,792-acre500-MW scheme on the Cambridgeshire border) and numerous smaller (non NSIP) solar projects. Drax/Progress Power gas fired peaking plant, for renewables back-up, commenced development near Eye in 2021. There is also Anglian Water’s new pipeline project (Bury to Colchester).

**Budget for 2022/23 -** The council approved a budget for 2022-23 which includes a 4.5% increase (from £598.2 to £625.4m), generated by a 2.99% increase in Council Tax, and an increase in grants received from the Government. The proposals were approved at full council in February.

**Platinum Jubilee Events** - To mark the celebration of Her Majesty the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee, celebrations are planned over the four-day Bank Holiday weekend, between 2 and 5 June 2022. Sunday 5 June 2022 is referred to nationally as the ‘Big Jubilee Lunch. The following website has been set up for events organisers: [https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roadworks/apply-for-a-queens-platinum-jubilee-street-party-or-other-public-event/).

**Ukraine and Refugees** – The council has responded promptly to the Government’s ’s policy on hosting Ukrainian refugees, and many have already arrived in Suffolk. Please refer to the webpage. <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/community-and-safety/communities/community-engagement/supporting-afghan-ukrainian-refugees/policy>