

West Suffolk District Councillor
Report
for
Dalham APM-AGM
May 2024



West Suffolk Council May 2023/May 2024

May 2023

Now that the election is over, with the results now known, no single party or group has a majority at West Suffolk council. The previous Conservative administration has lost ten seats, missing the thirty-three required for overall control. The election results are:

Communist Party of Great Britain	0
Independent	10
Labour Party	17
Liberal Democrat	1
Reform UK	0
The Conservative and Unionist Party	26
The Green Party	1
West Suffolk Independents	9
Total seats	64

Note. Subsequent to the above results a new administration was formed by an alliance of Independent, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green Councillors.

July



#WestSuffolk Community Chest fund invests in initiatives that support residents' health and wellbeing has been increased this year to help with the cost of living crisis. Community Chest funding supports voluntary and community groups who make a contribution to improving the quality of life for people in West Suffolk.

Funded activities must help deliver the Families and Communities Approach and Families and Communities Strategy. Eligibility criteria apply. The minimum amount that can be applied for is £2,500. This funding can be for one-off projects or revenue funds for services.

Full application details can be found at www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/community/community-grants.cfm

To discuss your application prior to submission please contact families.communities@westsuffolk.gov.uk or call **01638 719235**

The deadline for applications is 6pm on Friday 29 September 2023



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Locality Budget

Most of the eight villages within the Chedburgh and Chevington Ward made use of my locality budget of £2800.00 per Anum. Requests included: A living nativity, Village Hall Kitchen refurbishment, Community Pantry, Promotional Notice Boards, replacement play area bench and play equipment. £300.00 remained from the 2023/24 allowance and is rolled over to this year's budget

Community and education

In 2006, Suffolk County Council started to look for a cost-effective and sustainable alternative to landfill and replace it with a technology that would put Suffolk's waste to good use.

Following extensive research and a detailed tendering process, the council signed contracts with SUEZ recycling and recovery UK to build and then run an energy-from-waste facility to deal with the county's waste for the next 25 years.

The Suffolk energy-from-waste facility uses the waste left after recycling – from homes and some businesses across Suffolk – to generate electricity. This reduces the amount of waste that goes to landfill and the associated cost to the council taxpayer.

August

Little to report (Holidays)

September

One agenda item will be the Western Way Development (WWD), a major infrastructure project to benefit Bury St Edmunds and the surrounding area. Originally budgeted £140 million which was gradually whittled down following changes to the proposals. The 1st phase costing £65 million, subject to the previously agreed financial tests still being met, had been approved by the then West Suffolk Council (pre-May 2023). The former NHS supply building in Oldings Road has been purchased by West Suffolk Council and planning permission granted. This would form the backbone of the WWD with the intention of retaining the main frame to incorporate a new leisure centre as Phase one with a public service hub to follow as phase 2. The project has cost West Suffolk Council £2.4 million so far, the existing leisure centre in Beetons Way, built in the 1970's, needs major expenditure which would essentially still be a short-term fix.

- After proposals changed, the 1st phase of the hub was budgeted at £75 million, with a new £40 million leisure centre, West Suffolk's branch of Suffolk Archives, and potentially office space and a preschool.
- On Friday September 8th, West Suffolk Council, now led by a coalition, announced that the WWD looks set to be 'paused' to look at alternatives.

October

Leader's statement quoted, reports are online.

<https://democracy.westsuffolk.gov.uk/documents/s49213/COU.WS.23.013%20Leaders%20statement.pdf>

November

I act as the West Suffolk Council representative for the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel. This panel, consisting of Councillors from all Suffolk Councils (Borough, District and County) exists to support and scrutinize the role of the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner, who in turn ensures effective Policing although the Police retain operational freedom. I value you views on Community policing, rural crime and any concerns you may have.

The Police and Crime Commissioner has held four public meetings this year one of which was in Bury St. Edmunds, There is scope for a further meeting, perhaps in Wickhambrook in late November to make access for the south of West Suffolk easier, again I value your thoughts.

Finally, I will be attending the 12th National Conference of Police and Crime Panels and Police, Fire and Crime Panels in Warwickshire on the 8th and 9th of November, hence my absence this evening, for which I apologize. Further West Suffolk Council updates to follow.

- *Note on the Leaders statement; items 6 and 33

The WSCA has cancelled the Western Way development on the basis of uncertainties facing the economy. Several million pounds has been invested in the project to date, I consider this a wasted opportunity (and funds) to create modern facilities to replace the existing aging sports centre in Bury St Edmunds which requires considerable funding in terms of maintenance and will still have to be replaced within 10 years.

The £1million decarbonisation fund to support third-party organisations to reduce their net power consumption has been widely supported and aids West Suffolk Councils carbon neutral target

January 2024

Strategic Priorities and Vision

The draft vision:

Working across West Suffolk, we will support the district to flourish by focusing on the delivery of:

- affordable, available and decent homes
- environmental resilience
- sustainable growth
- thriving communities

March

The main item for discussion was the annual budget setting, a statutory requirement. The administration has forecast a two-year balanced budget which may be difficult to honour given the financial uncertainties that lay ahead. The proposed budget, however, was passed by majority vote with Conservatives abstaining on the grounds of a worst-case scenario budget gap of £9.62 million by 2028.

April

Greene King unveils proposals for a new £40m brewery. This, state of the art facility at Suffolk Park near Moreton Hall is currently at the planning process. Concerns have been raised regarding the future use of Greene Kings existing site in Westgate Street.

May

The election of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk took place on Thursday 2 May 2024.

Ian Gallin, the Chief Executive of West Suffolk Council, was appointed as the Suffolk Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) for the PCC election. He had overall responsibility for co-ordinating and running the election across the whole of the county, although local Returning Officers at District/Borough level have responsibility for overseeing arrangements in their areas.

Tim Passmore was re-elected for a 4th term.

May 14th is West Suffolk Council's AGM. The agenda is below, public attendance is welcome although public speaking does not feature at the AGM.

1. Election of Chair of the Council for 2024 to 2025
2. Chair's announcements
3. Apologies for absence
4. Election of Vice Chair of the Council for 2024 to 2025
5. Appointment of Cabinet members
6. Review of political balance and appointment to committees 2024 to 2025
7. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair of scrutiny committees 2024 to 2025 In accordance with the Constitution, the Council will appoint the Chair and Vice Chair of the:
 - a. Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 - b. Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee
8. Proposed remuneration for co-opted, non-elected, nonvoting independent members of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee
9. Suffolk Police and Crime Panel

At its meeting on 26 January 2024 the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel recommended to the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders Group that a requirement be added at Section 5 b) of its Panel Arrangements that independent co-opted members of the Panel must live or work in Suffolk.
that independent co-opted members of the Panel must live or work in Suffolk, this was approved.

Mike Chester

West Suffolk
Council

District Councillor for the Chedburgh and Chevington Ward