

July 2026

Parish Report

Cllr Matt Bentley

Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 2BX

07889036492 – Matt.Bentley@suffolk.gov.uk

Good afternoon, residents and parish councillors of Thedwastre South. I hope this report finds you well and not too fed up due to the extreme heat and drought we are currently experiencing, I know that this weather is having a massive effect on agriculture and many other sectors. With any luck we will finally get some rain in due course, too late for many farms I realise. I would like to take the opportunity to thank each and every one of you who has made me feel so welcome to the role over the past few months, and while the learning curve has been steep, I have enjoyed every minute of it. I will endeavour to serve this division to the best of my ability for the remainder of my term, and I look forward to continuing to work with you to improve our communities.

Climate Emergency Declaration Reversed

At Full Council on 16 July, the Reform UK administration at Suffolk County Council tabled a motion to reverse the Climate Emergency Declaration which the council had made in 2019 and then reaffirmed in 2023. They also proposed a review of environmental schemes at the council to make sure that they were making financial savings and not costing the council money. Councillors from my group argued against the proposal, which came at a time when the county was facing extreme heat, drought and reduced farming yields due to the changing climate. We also pointed out that the council has saved nearly £5m a year due to its carbon reduction programme, money that it badly needed. As Reform UK hold the majority of votes in the chamber, this motion was passed.

My group proposed a motion, co-written by myself & Robert Lindsey of Cosford division, that the council should set out plans for a Universal Minimum Bus Service for all villages in Suffolk to ensure residents can get to their nearest town during commuting hours so they can access employment, education and health services. The county was recently awarded £564,000 to conduct a feasibility study on bus franchising, which would give the council greater control of bus networks, and regularly receives funding from the government to improve bus services which is currently allocated piecemeal to local communities who bid for it. This motion was voted down by the Reform UK administration.

Plans announced for £18.9m of SEND Capital Funding

At Cabinet on Tuesday 14 July, proposals were outlined for £18.9m of High Needs Provision Capital Funding received by the council from the government for 2025-26 and 2026-27. This funding enables to

council to increase the number of specialist education placements in the county for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The report outlined the following allocations:

- Specialist provision at secondary phase – £9.8m (168 places)
- Satellite provision linked to special schools – £4m (80 places)
- Mainstream inclusion capacity (ringfenced and flexible) – £2m
- Post-16 specialist provision – £1m
- Adaptations to mainstream schools – £2m

Demand for specialist school placements continues to rise in Suffolk, with a 17% increase in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in the last year. A greater number of specialist school places across the county means children can be educated closer to home, and without the high costs of independent schools or out of county placements.

You can see information about the council's SEND Sufficiency Strategy 2026-2030 here:

<https://www.suffolklocaloffer.org.uk/asset-library/Suffolk-SEND-Sufficiency-Strategy-2026-2030.pdf>

Budget Outturn for 2025-26 Financial Year

Cabinet on 14 July also reviewed the council's financial outturn for the financial year ending 31 March 2026. The council overspent last year by £15m overall, a figure which the council will need to take from its reserves to balance the books. The main areas of overspend for the council are in Care Purchasing for Adult Social Care, and Children in Care placements. Other areas in adult care did exceed their savings targets for the year, but the increase in demand was still greater than the money saved. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), a 'negative reserve' where the council holds its debt for overspending on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), increased by £70m over the year. The government recently announced it would pay off 90% of councils' DSG debt in autumn 2026, but this will still leave Suffolk County Council with £16m of DSG, which will continue to rise until the government takes over SEND funding from April 2028.

At the same meeting, Cabinet also agreed that the council would object to the EcoPower Suffolk Solar Farm planned for Mid Suffolk, and agreed that the council would submit a business plan to the Department for Transport (DfT) for improvements to the A12 between the Seven Hills roundabout and the Woods Lane roundabout. The cost of the scheme has increased from £57.46m in 2021 to £63.61m in 2026 due to the construction inflation, although funding from DfT and third parties will cover most of this, with the cost to the council currently calculated at £3.5m.

Adult Social Care Service rated 'Good' by Care Quality Commission (CQC)

Suffolk County Council's social care services for adults were judged as 'Good' again by CQC following an inspection in December 2025. The rating given to the council was 67%, with the threshold for 'Good' being 62%. Adult social care services are provided by the council to elderly and disabled adults, and those with learning disabilities and autism who need extra help. CQC stated that areas of strength included committed and compassionate staff, strong partnership working with health (NHS) and good multi-agency working to keep people safe. It also complimented the council on its focus on helping people remain independent and its use of digital technology to support people safely in their own homes. It also identified several areas for improvement, including better support for unpaid carers, staff capacity issues in some teams, reducing waiting times in parts of the system and ensuring care reviews were consistently person-centred.

You can read the full report here: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/care-services/local-authority-assessment-reports/suffolk-0726>

Public Consultation on Cuts to Healthy Child Service

Suffolk County Council has launched a public consultation on proposed changes to its Healthy Child Service, which is provided by the council's Public Health team. The changes include cessation of the Young Person Pathway and Family Nurse Partnership, who provide specialist support to parents under the age of 21 after they have a baby. The proposals also include removal of the Community Staff Nurse role from Health Visiting teams, and the School Nursing service to become term-time only. The consultation runs until 18 September, with a decision likely to be made at Cabinet after that.

You can read through the proposals and respond to the consultation here:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/consultations-petitions-and-elections/consultations/healthy-child-services-consultations>

Social Media and Helpful Links

Follow us on:

Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/scc.green/>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/suffolkgreens/>

Group Website - <https://suffolkgreens.org.uk/>

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>

Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safety-advice-in-the-community/what-to-do-in-a-flood>

<https://suffolkprepared.co.uk/get-prepared/risk-advice/flooding/>

Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>