

# Parish Report – July 2023

## Councillor

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### **Concern over SCC budget position**

At Cabinet on 13 June, my group raised concerns about the significant extra expenditure announced by the Conservative administration since the 2023-24 budget was set in February.

Cabinet were reviewing the 2022-23 finances against the budget that was set, including an overspend of £27.7m and a significant £57.2m taken out of Council reserves – the council's 'safety net' funds to be used when needed.

On 16 May 2023 the Cabinet announced that an extra unbudgeted £720k would be found to cover the £60k monthly shortfall for Suffolk Libraries for a year, and at the council AGM on 25 May the Leader of the Council, Cllr Matthew Hicks, announced a further unbudgeted additional £10m for road surfacing in the next 20 months. Given that neither of these items were budgeted for only a few months ago when the current budget was set, my group raised concerns in the meeting whether the administration's budget setting procedures were sufficiently robust.

### **North Falls Offshore Wind Farm**

On 13 June, Cabinet reviewed the consultation response for the extension of the North Falls wind farm. The wind farm is situated just off the Essex coast so Suffolk County Council is a consultee rather than a decision maker.

A number of issues were discussed which will be included in the consultation response, for example the impact on A12 traffic, the views from Suffolk coastal Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the need to consult with communities on the Suffolk coast. The developers will also be asked to time construction so it does not clash with the tourism season.

### **National Grid Reinforcement Works between Bramford and Twinstead**

The Cabinet also reviewed and approved a response to the Planning Inspectorate on upgrading the power lines between the villages of Twinstead in Essex and Bramford in Mid Suffolk.

There were concerns about the impact of the works to the local countryside, particularly the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where the National Grid have agreed to lay cables underground.

The government's aspiration is for 50GW of offshore wind power by 2023, and in East Anglia this means that our throughput must increase from 4.1GW currently to 24.5GW. The existing power line between Bramford and Twinstead is at full capacity and it was acknowledged that the works were necessary to facilitate the increases to wind farm development.

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