

West Suffolk District Councillor  
Report  
for  
Hargrave Parish Council  
January  
2024



### Dear Councillors

Hopefully, at the time of writing (January 8<sup>th</sup>) it's not too late to wish you all a 'Happy New Year'. Elections keep coming, from the District Council Elections in May 2023, County Council in May 2025 and the\* Election of the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in May this year, not to mention the forthcoming General Election.

The West Suffolk Council year culminated in the final meeting of full Council on December 19<sup>th</sup>, the current administration, now in office since May, have laid out strategic priorities and vision for the term ahead. The Leaders Statement from December 19<sup>th</sup> below gives more detail.

### Leader's statement

1. It's December and our thoughts are turning to Christmas and the New Year. This is a magical time for many but for others it is very challenging. I know each and every one of you have been working hard this year to champion your communities to help meet those challenges and represent our area. Indeed, recently our staff were out in the early hours checking on those sleeping rough in freezing temperatures and helping them find support. I will touch later on in this statement of how we are working as a council to tackle these issues, especially poignant at a time when people are sleeping out in freezing temperatures.

#### Strategic Priorities and Vision

2. A New Year often brings changes and tonight we will be looking at agreeing ambitious aims for the Council through the new draft Strategic Priorities.

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

3. The strategic priorities and vision we are setting for the Council, if agreed, will bring clear focus and direction on what we are delivering. The vision and priorities, outlined in the document, are designed to make sure West Suffolk Council continues to address the needs of local communities and of future generations.
4. Importantly, the document also highlights how, through strengthened engagement, there will be a step change in how the voices of local people will be at the heart of shaping what the Council does. This puts councillors squarely in the centre of talking to residents, businesses and partners bringing everyone closer to understanding issues and informing the solutions.
5. Central to the new priorities is also a commitment to make sure essential services that communities and businesses rely on continue to be delivered well. Local communities rely on us delivering high quality and value for money services consistently.
6. Using this living document as our guide we will now, together, engage with our communities and partners as well as lobby decision makers to achieve our priorities.

### **Budget – Medium Term Financial Strategy**

7. We will soon be setting our budgets next year and as part of that at our meeting we will be agreeing the principles that underpin what we are trying to achieve. We end this year with a broadly break even position through good budgeting and prudent financial management.
8. West Suffolk Council's response to the financial challenges and opportunities are based on six key themes. These themes have been further developed for this council and they represent an appropriate response to the ongoing financial situation.
  1. Aligning resources to the West Suffolk strategic priorities and the delivery of essential services.
  2. Sharing services and innovation in service delivery.
  3. Behave commercially, delivering a return to our communities.
  4. Considering new funding models.
  5. Supporting online access to council services.
  6. Taking advantage of new forms of local government finance.
9. There are challenges ahead for all local authorities and public services around funding and we must continue to make robust financial decisions to make sure we continue to deliver for our communities. This budget and its themes will drive our strategic priorities and will be the financial engine to deliver our vision.

### **Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

10. We also will be talking at Council about continuing the 100 per cent Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2024 to 2025.
11. If agreed families in West Suffolk on low incomes, including those in work, suffering from the cost-of-living crisis would benefit for another year from a 100 per cent discount in Council Tax.

12. It is part of a range of ways the Council is supporting communities including those with the highest risk of financial hardship as a result of the current cost of living crisis.
13. Last year saw public and stakeholder support West Suffolk Council temporarily changing the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for one year. This year the consultation also shows support.
14. The average working age recipient of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) receive up to an additional £174 discount on their Council Tax for the single year.
15. The proposal is highly targeted to reach those who are already on means tested benefits, many of whom are working, and has a low administrative cost. This could benefit around 4,700 residents and represents a one year only £500,000 investment by organisations that set Council Tax precepts in supporting those most in need that meet the criteria.
16. The cost to the Council would be worked through the 2024 to 2025 budget setting process.
17. By providing additional support to residents the aim is to help avoid crisis situations, for example, homelessness, which I have already shown is on the rise, and fewer applications for Exceptional Hardship Payments from those in receipt of Council Tax support.
18. This is a short-term measure and if agreed the West Suffolk Council's LCTRS would revert to the current minimum 8.5 per cent contribution rate from April 2025.

## **Local Plan**

19. Our meeting includes some of the fundamental building blocks crucial for the continued prosperity and ambitions of our communities and businesses. One of these is the West Suffolk Local Plan which has seen some of the highest engagement of any such plan that the council has developed. As such the proposals are based on evidence and hundreds of views expressed by residents, companies, partners, organisations and councillors. Now we need to go out once more and engage with our communities on the submissions stage draft. I will not debate it here in my statement, but I want to highlight how vital the plan is and put the spotlight on some of the proposals as well as thanking all of you who have been part of this long but vital work.
20. The West Suffolk Local Plan will guide how and where new homes and employment will be built to the year 2040. Policies to deliver more affordable homes and sustainable housing through measures including solar panels on roofs wherever practically possible, feature in the latest draft plan. If adopted, the local plan will also require new homes to be more accessible, so that they can be adapted to people's changing health needs. That in turn will mean people can stay longer in their own homes which is better for them and their families, as well as reducing the impact on health and social care.
21. Once adopted, the local plan will ensure funding from developers is secured to pay for infrastructure such as money toward education provision, highways, footpaths and cycleways.
22. The West Suffolk Local Plan will allocate new sites for 5,211 new homes alongside 9,075 that already have planning permission. While the total number it needs to deliver over the plan period is 13,702, the local plan deliberately and sensibly over allocates to allow for flexibility over the plan period.

23. The local plan also makes provision of 86 hectares for employment growth including 47.9 hectares which are new allocations.
24. By allocating land for much needed housing and employment for West Suffolk's growing communities, the local plan also protects other areas such as the countryside from harmful, speculative development, and it ensures that residents and elected councillors, continue to have a public voice and a say on planning applications submitted to the Council.
25. This is so much more than lines on a map or statistics about housing numbers and employment. This is about the success of our district and the future lives of generations to come.

## **Rough Sleeping**

26. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis has seen an increase in the number of people and families needing help in West Suffolk after finding themselves at risk of homelessness. Later in my statement you will see some of the actions and investments we are making in this area to help the most vulnerable and lead to many having a better New Year.
27. Helping those rough sleeping and at danger of becoming homeless is one of our key responsibilities and I have no doubt it is one of the most complex tasks we face.
28. I want to thank our staff who do a brilliant job in a challenging area and were out in the early hours across West Suffolk doing the regular count and checking on those rough sleeping.
29. The Council has geared up for the winter to help those in need and keep people off the streets. We have also been running campaigns to explain what we are doing to reduce the number of people sleeping rough and crucially prevent people becoming homeless.
30. As part of this campaign we have encouraged those who have faced these issues to tell their stories. These are powerful and give an insight into the challenges and issues people face that bring them into contact with our services. We will be sharing them on our website and social media.
31. I would urge you to follow the link and to hear Dave's story (not his real name). He tells how he has turned his life around with the help of our teams and partners. See Dave's story on [YouTube](#).
32. Dave is one of many rough sleepers who have been helped by West Suffolk Council. The Council has invested in accommodation and support over the years and established a Rough Sleeper Service. While the number of people rough sleeping can fluctuate daily as people are accommodated or become homeless, the number of people rough sleeping in West Suffolk on 1 November 2023 was four. It's still four too many and we are doing all we can to encourage those who are rough sleeping to take up the support and accommodation available to them.
33. Over the past 12 months, West Suffolk Council has invested more than £1.2 million to improve existing temporary accommodation and increase the overall amount it can access. In the six months from 1 April to 30 September this year, the housing team at West Suffolk Council has intervened to prevent 77 households from becoming homeless. Another 90 households who became homeless have since been re-housed.
34. The Council is continuing to work with and help another 148 households including some who are currently living in temporary or emergency accommodation.

35. Numbers have increased compared to the same six months last year when the council helped prevent 47 households from becoming homeless, “relieved” 90 households out of homelessness and were continuing to work with and help another 141 households.
36. Anyone can end up facing homelessness, and none of us can assume we will never need help. In a fair and just society, surely we should expect that when the worst happens there will be support which will help set us back on course.

## **Provincial House**

37. I am pleased Cabinet has backed a plan to invest up to £2 million into Haverhill town centre to attract more businesses, support current traders and boost adult skills and education.
38. This will help relocate the town's Personal and Professional Learning Centre run by the Eastern Education Group back into the heart of the town centre at Provincial House. The proposals include remodelling the building to attract more businesses while bringing an income to the council to help invest in services.
39. It will very much help us meet the new priorities of sustainable growth and thriving communities.
40. Many of you will know the Council bought Provincial House in 2019, to help retain a major employer, AXA in the town, as well as identify an opportunity to use the building's prominent location on the High Street to encourage footfall and support local businesses.
41. Since then, phased works have been going on to bring the building up to the required standards, such as being accessible. Investigations have also been carried out to find what is the best use of the property to re-purpose the vacant space creatively, create jobs, deliver wider public benefits, and drive people to use the town centre.
42. Following those investigations, the Council is partnering with the Eastern Education Group (West Suffolk College) as part of the One Public Estate initiative to explore the potential to re-locate the Learning Centre back into the heart of the town and centre of the community.
43. The £2 million is coming from the Investing in our Growth Agenda fund (supported by external borrowing) and will help fund the investment needed in the remaining vacant floors including the work required to relocate the college.
44. Works would also include new landlord circulation space - essential to maintain safety and comply with current building regulations. It would also help create smaller, modern and flexible business spaces tailored to suit the needs of new start-up/business incubation spaces and also attract existing businesses that might be tempted to relocate elsewhere.

## **Flooding**

45. This has been the first time we have come together since the storms last month and the flooding that effected the UK and East Anglia.
46. I want to thank our staff and councillors who were helping their communities as well as working alongside partners during the storms themselves and the recovery period.
47. Following the Government announcement of grants and council tax reductions through the Flood Recovery Framework, councils in Suffolk received more than 750 reports of internal flooding to homes or businesses.
48. Suffolk councils have been working together, with Suffolk County Council collecting information and assessing the reports, and the district and borough councils distributing the funding to eligible property owners.

**And finally...**

49. I had the pleasure of thanking our staff for all their hard work this year and I want to do the same to each and every one of you. Representing your communities is rewarding but hard work. I think it shows dedication and a care for your communities which deserves recognition. Thank you for championing West Suffolk and I hope you have a good Christmas and New Year.

**Councillor Cliff Waterman Leader of West Suffolk Council**

**Request from The Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner**

PRECEPT SURVEY: PCC proposes increase in precept to fund Constabulary in 2024/25

As your Police and Crime Commissioner, setting the policing budget is one of my most important responsibilities. I must ensure that the Chief Constable has the resources required to provide an efficient and effective service.

Later this month I will need to make a decision about the policing element of the council tax precept. I am planning to ask the [Police and Crime Panel](#) to support my proposal to raise the policing element of the precept by £13 a year (for a Band D property) to enable us to maintain the standard of service that the public expect.

I would be very grateful if you could take part in the survey (link below) and let me know what you think. Could I also ask you to forward this on to others within your organisation/network and anyone else you think may be interested to comment.

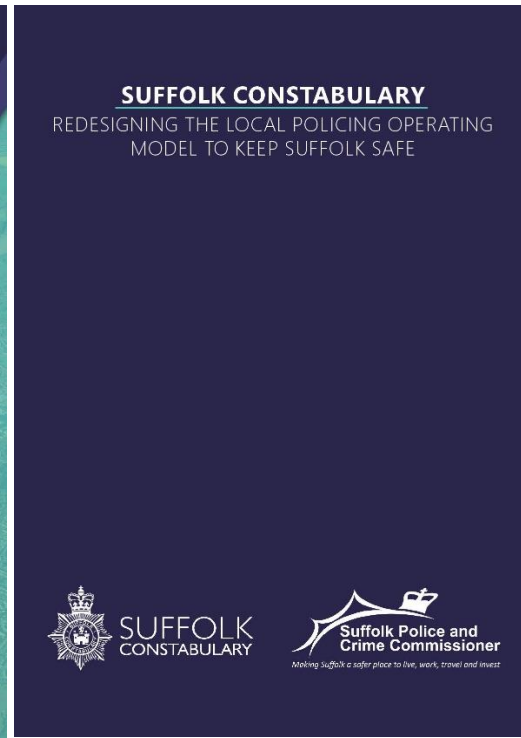
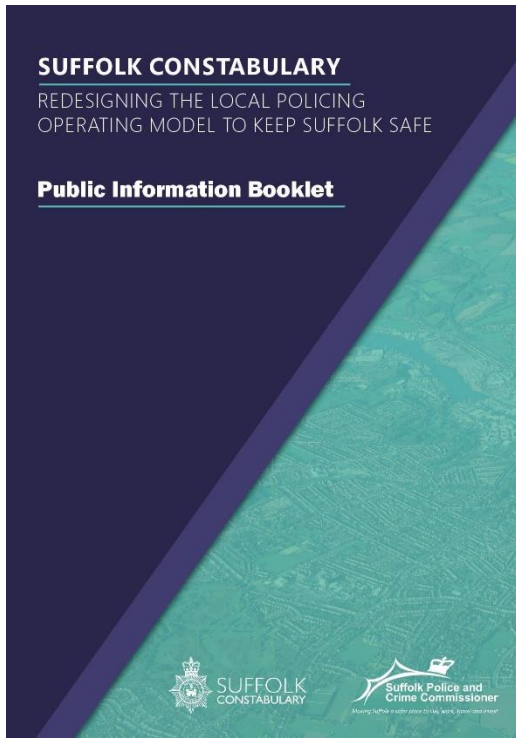
[PCCPreceptSurvey2024](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PCCPreceptSurvey2024) <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PCCPreceptSurvey2024>

Please go to my [website](#) for more detail. <https://suffolk-pcc.gov.uk/news/precept-survey-pcc-proposes-increase-in-precept-to-fund-constabulary-in-2024-25>

**Tim Passmore**

**Police & Crime Commissioner for Suffolk**





## Introduction

Suffolk Constabulary will be changing its local policing model from December 2023 to ensure we continue to provide the best possible service for the public.

We understand it is crucial for officers to be where people need them to be, when they are needed the most.

The demands on neighbourhood policing have risen enormously over the last few years, increasing the pressure on our teams.

Our priority will always be to do all we can to keep the public safe and bring criminals to justice. To achieve that we need to evolve.

This reshaping of our local policing structure will enhance the way we respond to emergencies, deal with other incidents, investigate offences, prevent crime, and interact with communities across Suffolk.

The new model will be comprised of three parts: Community Policing Teams, Response Investigation Teams, and a County Partnership and Prevention Hub.

### Community Policing Teams

Community policing is the bedrock of all we do. There are 50 new Community Policing Areas with 80 Community Policing Officers. They will be more visible and have local ownership of the areas they serve. Officers, supported by Police Community Support Officers, will be embedded in their specific Community Policing Areas. This will enable them to understand better the public's concerns and target our activity where it is needed most.

The constabulary's existing Rural and Wildlife Team and Kestrel Teams, which proactively target neighbourhood crime across the county, will remain unchanged. They will support the Community Policing Teams.

### Response Investigation Teams

Officers working in our Neighbourhood Response Teams will no longer only respond to emergencies. They will now be part of Response Investigation Teams, who will have additional officers moved from the current Safer Neighbourhood Teams. They will continue to be responsible for emergency and non-emergency calls, but they will also tackle high-volume crime investigations.

### County Partnership and Prevention Hub

The hub will co-ordinate the work between police and partners across Suffolk and will provide consistent delivery of frontline policing across the county. Among its responsibilities will be anti-social behaviour, hate crime, and issues with children and young people, along with neighbourhood policing.

We strive to do all we can to listen to our communities, and to live up to their expectations. The remodelled local policing structure is being put in place as a result of extensive research, including analysis of our demand.

The new model will not increase the number of officers and staff we have in local policing. What it will do is ensure they have the best opportunity to be in the right place at the right time, doing the things the public expect from us.

Our vision has always been, and will continue to be, to ensure Suffolk remains a safe place to live, work, travel, and invest.

If you have a view to share about the new operating model, please email at [cpcooperatingmodel@suffolk.police.uk](mailto:cpcooperatingmodel@suffolk.police.uk)

Chief Constable Rachel Kearton  
[www.suffolk.police.uk](http://www.suffolk.police.uk)

Police & Crime Commissioner Tim Passmore  
[www.suffolk-pcc.gov.uk](http://www.suffolk-pcc.gov.uk)





## Response Investigation Teams

### What is changing?

The current Neighbourhood Response Teams (NRT) will become the Response Investigation Teams (RIT). The change in name brings renewed focus on quality investigations and there will be an increase in officers in the RIT's, moving across from the current Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

The RIT will respond to incoming demand of both emergency and non-emergency calls, including missing people and will investigate volume crime that is not allocated into the Criminal Investigations Department or the Safeguarding Investigation Units.

The RIT will investigate some volume crime that was previously investigated by the Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

### Where will the Response Investigation Teams be based?

The Response Investigation Teams will be based right across Suffolk.



#### West Area

Bury St Edmunds  
Forest Heath  
Sudbury  
Haverhill  
Stowmarket

#### South Area

Ipswich West/Central  
Ipswich East & Woodbridge  
Felixstowe

#### East Area

Lowestoft  
Halesworth

The Response Investigation Teams will consist of the following numbers across 5 teams in each command area:

#### West Area

5 Inspectors  
25 Sergeants  
155 Police Constables

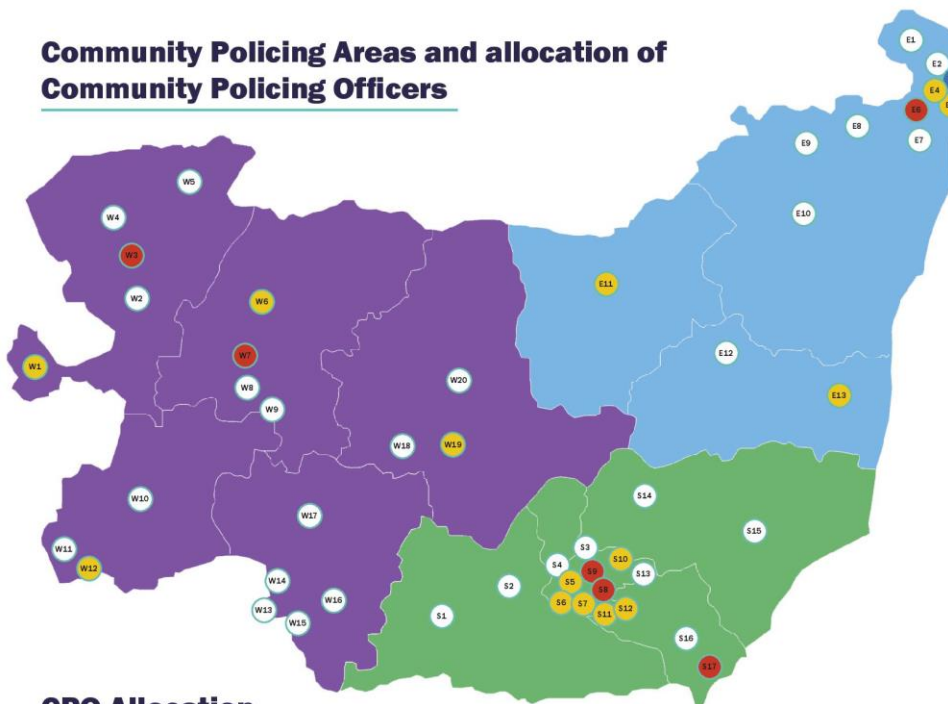
#### South Area

5 Inspectors  
25 Sergeants  
170 Police Constables

#### East Area

5 Inspectors  
15 Sergeants  
95 Police Constables

## Community Policing Areas and allocation of Community Policing Officers



### CPO Allocation



1 CPO



2 CPO's



3 CPO's



5 CPO's

East	Ref	Locality
Gunton, Oulton and Lothingland	E1	Lowestoft
St. Margarets	E2	Lowestoft
Harbour	E3	Lowestoft
Normanston	E4	Lowestoft
Kirkley	E5	Lowestoft
Pakefield and Whitton	E6	Lowestoft
Carlton Colville and Kessingland	E7	Lowestoft
Beccles and Worlingham	E8	Lowestoft
Bungay and Wainford	E9	Lowestoft
Halesworth and Southwold	E10	Halesworth
Debenham and Eye	E11	Halesworth
Framlingham and Yoxford	E12	Halesworth
Leiston, Saxmundham and Aldeburgh	E13	Halesworth
South	Ref	Locality
Hadleigh and Nayland	S1	Ipswich West
Claydon, Copdock and Peninsula	S2	Ipswich West
Whitton and Castle Hill	S3	Ipswich West
Whitehouse	S4	Ipswich West
Gipping	S5	Ipswich West
Stoke Park and Sprites	S6	Ipswich West
Bridge	S7	Ipswich West
Alexandra	S8	Ipswich Central
Westgate and St. Margaret's	S9	Ipswich Central
Rushmere and St. Johns	S10	Ipswich East
Gainsborough and Holywells	S11	Ipswich East
Priory Heath	S12	Ipswich East
Kesgrave and Bixley	S13	Ipswich East
Woodbridge and Wickham Market	S14	Ipswich East
Deben and Orford	S15	Ipswich East
Martlesham and Orwell	S16	Ipswich East
Felixstowe	S17	Ipswich East
West	Ref	Locality
Newmarket	W1	Forest Heath
Manor and Red Lodge	W2	Forest Heath
Mildenhall	W3	Forest Heath
Lakenheath and the Rows	W4	Forest Heath
Brandon	W5	Forest Heath
Bury Rural North	W6	Bury St Edmunds
BSE Town - North	W7	Bury St Edmunds
BSE Town - South	W8	Bury St Edmunds
Bury Rural South	W9	Bury St Edmunds
Haverhill Rural and Suffolk South West	W10	Sudbury & Haverhill
Haverhill Town - North and West	W11	Sudbury & Haverhill
Haverhill Town - South and East	W12	Sudbury & Haverhill
Sudbury Town - South	W13	Sudbury & Haverhill
Sudbury Town - North and East	W14	Sudbury & Haverhill
Great Cornard	W15	Sudbury & Haverhill
Waldingfield, Boxford and Bures	W16	Sudbury & Haverhill
Sudbury Rural North	W17	Sudbury & Haverhill
Mid-Suffolk South and West	W18	Stowmarket
Stowmarket	W19	Stowmarket
Mid-Suffolk North and East	W20	Stowmarket



*Mike Chester*



District Councillor for the Chedburgh and Chevington Ward