

## **PARISH REPORT FEBRUARY 2025**

### **ORWELL & VILLAGES**

#### **Council Reorganisation**

The Government has given all Suffolk councils until 21<sup>st</sup> March to submit proposals for the reorganisation of local government in Suffolk. Suffolk County Council has put forward a proposal for a single Suffolk-wide unitary authority. No other council is currently supporting their proposal.

Ipswich Borough Council have suggested a Greater Ipswich taking parts of East Suffolk such as Felixstowe, Martlesham, Kesgrave and Woodbridge and parts of Mid-Suffolk into a Greater Ipswich unitary authority. However, this may mean that the rest of East Suffolk would become unsustainable due to the vast reduction in council tax take which would result.

Discussions are continuing amongst district councils but the consensus which seems to be emerging is for two unitary authorities – East incorporating Ipswich and West comprising West Suffolk, Mid Suffolk and Babergh. Working on the projected population figures this would result in roughly 420,000 residents in each of the two authorities. Whilst this is below the current Government suggested population of 500,000 for a unitary authority it would provide a little more localism for decision-making.

The full council is due to meet on 19<sup>th</sup> March with a Cabinet meeting taking place immediately afterwards to agree the decision and provide a submission to the Government prior to the deadline.

#### **Nature at Work**

116 wild spaces will be left to grow during the spring and summer as part of East Suffolk Council's 'Nature at Work' scheme, which is being delivered in partnership with environmental charity Groundwork East.

New signs have been installed on council-owned land across the district to help identify the wild areas where grass cutting will be limited to twice per year for the benefit of pollinators such as bees and butterflies. The signs feature a QR code directing people to further information about the scheme, including how residents and community groups can get involved. A map of all the sites is available online, and photos from the locations will be added throughout the year.

Additionally, Groundwork East will be visiting local schools to help them create their own Nature at Work sites in their school grounds, and later in the year, Groundwork East will be working with town and parish councils to build awareness of the sites. Town and parish councils will be encouraged to help monitor the sites to better understand what species are present and how the sites are changing.

Ten East Suffolk schools will be supported by Groundwork East to create native wildflower meadows and habitats for wildlife on their school grounds. These spaces can then be used for learning activities, encouraging future generations to be conscious of and inspired by the natural world.

Nature at Work replaces the Council's previous project known as 'Pardon the weeds, we're feeding the bees', which was launched in 2020.

### **Funding top up for families most in need**

Uniform banks in East Suffolk are invited to apply for additional support through a new funding scheme.

Following previous successful rounds of funding, East Suffolk Council has now allocated further funding to its East Suffolk Uniform Bank grant scheme and applications for ‘top up’ funding are now open.

Grants of up to £1,000 per application are available and can be put towards vouchers for shoes worth up to £15 per child and/or the purchase of new, branded uniform where supply is limited.

The funding is available for all existing uniform banks in East Suffolk, regardless of whether they have previously received funding from the grant scheme.

To apply for this funding, please visit: [www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/uniform-bank-grant-scheme](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/uniform-bank-grant-scheme)

Successful applicants will be notified via email within five working days of the panel assessing their application.

### **East Suffolk By-Election results**

Two by-elections were held in East Suffolk on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February. The first in Woodbridge caused by the death of Lib Dem councillor Kay Yule and the second in Rushmere St Andrew caused by the resignation of Conservative councillor Deanna Dean. Results were:

#### **Woodbridge**

Ruth Leach	LD	1023
	Con	391
	Reform	274
	Lab	219
Majority		632

#### **Rushmere St Andrew**

Robert Cawley	Con	377
Green		373
Reform		347
Labour		166
Majority		4

### ***Ease the Squeeze on Cost of Living***

Are you, or someone you know, worried about the increasing cost of living? We understand the pressures faced by many people today and we are working closely with key partners to ensure support is available to help ease the squeeze for households in East Suffolk.

To make it as easy as possible for you to access the services and support available, locally and nationally, we have gathered information about them in one place:

**[www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/squeeze/](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/squeeze/)**

For the most up to date information regarding East Suffolk Council, please visit:

**[www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk)**

**View the Well Minds East Suffolk booklet:** [tinyurl.com/9xhka624](https://tinyurl.com/9xhka624)

If parish councillors need to contact either of us, please feel free to do so.

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