

**From:** Owen Grey Owen.Grey@eastsoffolk.gov.uk   
**Subject:** Owen Grey - District Councillor's Update - Spring 2024  
**Date:** 10 April 2024 at 19:55  
**To:** Owen Grey Owen.Grey@eastsoffolk.gov.uk



Dear All,

Please see here my District Councillor's report for Spring 2024.

### **Storm Babet**

Much of my time over the past 5 months or so has been taken up by addressing the problems caused by the flooding. As you know, hundreds of homes and businesses were impacted and it is vital local authorities and national agencies learn the lessons – particularly as many of our watercourses, ditching and drainage systems have been neglected in recent years. I surveyed the trouble spots in the immediate aftermath of the flood, meeting with many of you to better understand what needs to be done. I collated my findings in a report (attached for reference) for the attention of the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs, local MPS, Suffolk County Council, the Environment Agency, the Water Management Board, Anglia Water, and East Suffolk District Council. The report was co-signed by my fellow District Councillor, Vince Langdon-Morris.

In March 2024, I met senior leaders at the Environment Agency and Suffolk County Council for a follow-up. It is clear that rhetoric such as '1 in 100' or '1 in 1000-year' event is both frustrating and redundant. One flood is one too many. Unfortunately, it is my understanding that the Environment Agency and the County Council do not possess the funding and resources to introduce a comprehensive strategy for our area. The Environment Agency is adopting a targeted approach, supporting those homes most at risk. While this is certainly welcome, it does little to tackle the problem definitively. I am continuing to call for greater attention towards the upkeep and management of our rivers and ditches/drainage system. I strongly believe we need a 'source to sea' approach for our rivers to ensure problems aren't compounded for those living downstream. At East Suffolk District Council, we are looking at what more we can do to support residents when such weather events hit, in the hope of bridging any gaps in County or national-level support. If Parish Councils or Residents wish to inform me of any further flood-related concerns or issues, please do contact me at [Owen.Grey@eastsoffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Owen.Grey@eastsoffolk.gov.uk) - I want to keep banging on various authority and agency doors so your perspectives help!

### **Audit and Governance (Committee work)**

As some of you know, I am also chair of the District Council's Audit and Governance Committee. I have been busy looking at a raft of projects and programmes, from housing and commercial rents to green strategies, the collection of revenue, and the nature and extent of local authority investments to ensure the authority is delivering value for money. I am conscious that due to the cost of living we need to make sure the Council uses every penny to maximum effect. The Committee meets every quarter and members of the public are welcome to observe proceedings either online or in-room. I have also attended numerous meetings of the Scrutiny Committee, where I have questioned Council officers and Cabinet members on housing, coastal management, the local plan (and planning strategy more generally), as well as the provision of taxi licences (and fees), and the district's plan to tackle anti-social behaviour. I have also attended the County's Suffolk Police and Crime Panel to scrutinise the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

### **Planning and Development**

There have been some proposals put forward in the Ward in recent months. If there must be building, I would prefer social and affordable housing for local people and families. I am also clear that any new development needs to take into consideration our experiences of the flood. There have been instances where some developments have compounded water run-off problems (i.e. serving as concrete slides). I also remain in disbelief that planning approval was ever given to those sites situated on flood plains (e.g. in Parham). Any new development needs to factor in a comprehensive drainage system (better than that which present conditions evidently imply). Developers also need to be held to account if they do not do the required groundworks prior to development. Again, if Councils or residents have any concerns about developers or suspicions that obligations are being circumvented, please contact me at [Owen.Grey@eastsoffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Owen.Grey@eastsoffolk.gov.uk)

### **Supporting the Community**

Over the past year, I have been grateful for the opportunity to support a number of community projects, including but limited to: the Rural Coffee Caravan (Sweffling), speed calming and management (Easton), village hall repairs (Badingham and Parham), Christmas on the Hill (Framlingham), flood recovery (United Free Church, Framlingham), and road signage (Cretingham, Monewden, and Hoo). I have also committed funding to a Community Partnership E-Bike hire pilot scheme and to "Youth Take Over Day."

*(Youth Take Over Day takes place in November each year and is a flashmob event in the year for*

(Year Take Over Day takes place in November each year and is a flagship event in the year for young people to take ownership of issues that they care about most. Working with our high schools, colleges and SEN schools, challenges are set each year to encourage young people to take over and put forward their ideas. Over the years, there have been different challenges and themes with brilliant work produced by participating young people. One of the most successful challenges has been asking young people to produce and plan a community project and 'pitch' for funding – the twist being there is actually funding available to support projects!)

I have an annual budget of £7,500 and would welcome any further applications from Parish Councils and community organisations (through the Parish Council). I try to spread the money throughout the year, but if there is a time-sensitive project I am happy to flex. I am also keen to help you access any other pots of funding at District level (and am equally happy to lobby County Council on your behalf) – just let me know.

Best wishes,

Owen



**Owen Grey | Councillor for Framlingham Ward  
Chair, Audit & Governance Committee**

East Suffolk Council

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Storm Babet - Impact of the  
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