



# December 2023 Row Heath Parish Report

## From Councillor Colin Noble, County Councillor for Row Heath

Thank you for reading this Parish report. I do hope you and your family had a lovely Christmas holiday.

At the county council, January sees the Local Government settlement announcement (the grant funding the government provides each council to run things like adult Social Care and Children's Services) and the sum worked into the budget calculations. Next comes budget scrutiny, where councillors from across Suffolk examine and debate the proposals ahead of the County Councils' cabinet meeting, followed by Full Council in February, where the budget for the year is voted on and the coming year's Council Tax is set. The settlement is a cut in funding, so difficult decisions must be made. The County Council, like District and Parish Councils, cannot run a deficit and can only use reserves once, at the same time as there are inflationary increases in the cost of delivery of Adult Social Care and a significant increase in the number of the county's children that need some form of support. And so the county council element of the final Council tax bills that will land on all our doorsteps in late March will rise.

It's the coldest time of year, and we all see our heating bills mount. Add to this, other costs are rising, so I have decided to continue to keep the support information at the top of this report, and if any of your residents need any help beyond contacting the numbers and emails listed, please do give them my contact details. I will try to point them in the right direction for support.

I wish you and your families a happy, healthy, and successful New Year.

Colin Noble.

### Help with the cost-of-living crisis

The Council has produced a leaflet detailing the support that can be offered across the county and here in Row Heath.

SCC Cost of Living Leaflets with lots of information on are available for distribution.

If your Parish Council would like a supply of these to be able to give to residents please email the quantity you would like, together with your organisation name and delivery address to [costofliving@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:costofliving@suffolk.gov.uk) and the county council will arrange to send these to you. Please allow up to 2 weeks for delivery, although they aim to issue them sooner than this.

A printable version for easy download was requested, this can be found here: [Cost of living leaflet](#) (PDF 628KB)

All Libraries hold copies of the leaflets. The Rural Coffee Caravan have additional leaflets and can share these with warm spaces together with their information packs.

### **Suffolk County Council response to local government finance settlement**

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities yesterday (18<sup>th</sup> December) announced its funding package to support councils in England to deliver frontline services.

This year's local government settlement announcement presents more challenges than we, and many other County Councils, expected. It means next year we will have no choice but to consider changes to some of the services we provide.

The Government is facing considerable financial pressures and requests for funds from all corners of society, not least from councils across the country. We have consistently lobbied for more funding in Suffolk.

The County Council fully understand this position as we too have increasing demands on our services and rising costs to provide them – but the money we receive is not keeping pace with this need.

Despite being a financially well-run council, we have significantly less funding than we need – especially in services like SEND, home-to-school transport and children in care. To prioritise these areas, we will have to make difficult decisions about the services we deliver, how we deliver them and council tax.

### **Father Gritmas, Gritty Gritty Bang Bang and Spread Sheeran prepared for county's cold snap**

As temperatures plummet, highways teams have now switched their main focus to ensuring the county's roads are treated and kept free from snow and ice. Despite experiencing mild temperatures in the autumn, our highways teams have been carefully planning our winter gritting operation for months to ensure we are prepared for whatever the weather throws our way.

Over the past week, our 39-strong gritting fleet, named by the Suffolk public, including Father Gritmas, Gritty Gritty Bang Bang and Spread Sheeran went on multiple treatment runs across half of the entire local road network in Suffolk.

The gritting treatment of our roads in Suffolk is vital to ensure people can continue to travel and do so safely during winter. During the 2022/23 winter season, Suffolk used around 12,989 tonnes of salt to treat a total distance of 177,983 miles – which equates to travelling the circumference of Earth over seven times! Suffolk Highways currently has a stock of around 17,000 tonnes of salt across the county for the season ahead and is well prepared for any further drop in temperatures.

Our highway teams are responsible for gritting 36 Priority 1 (P1) routes, which amounts to around 1,259 miles, including all A and B roads, roads to fire stations, hospitals, main bus

routes and rail stations. They also have 34 Priority 2 (P2) routes, which amounts to around 843 miles of the network, this includes other bus routes, roads leading to rural villages and access to schools. The P1 routes are completed when road surface temperatures are forecast to drop below 1°C and P2 routes are carried out when the forecast predicts there to be a longer period of cold weather conditions.

This entire operation requires extremely careful pre-planning and running throughout, every single decision to grit or not is based upon forecasted road surface temperatures, whilst also considering the impact of other factors, such as wind and heavy rain.

But gritting the priority network isn't all that the teams do to prepare our county for wintry weather; Suffolk Highways has also refilled 2,100 grit bins across the county at registered locations, such as the bottom of hills, or on junctions of minor roads. Grit bins are owned by [parish and town councils](#) and to ensure that the contents of grit bins are used to make roads safer, our communities are encouraged to monitor how and where the grit is used and if more is required to report it via the reporting tool.

Suffolk's residents can also do their part to support us with our gritting efforts by parking considerately and leaving enough room so that our vehicles can grit the road – if we can't fit, we can't grit!

Anyone who would like to know when and where we are gritting over the coming months, all gritting activities will be posted to Suffolk Highways' X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook and Instagram accounts – so I encourage you to give us a follow and keep abreast of all our team's movements this winter season.

More information on gritting can be found on the county council website, and details of which roads are gritted can be found on [one.network](#), by selecting the 3 lines on the search box, then data layers, driver information then winter gritting routes.

Suffolk Highways' winter gritting efforts form part of the county council's wider 'Winter Matters' campaign, which launched last week, and offers advice to help Suffolk residents stay warm, safe and well this winter.

From stopping the spread of winter illnesses, to heating your home for less, residents can find advice at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/wintermatters](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/wintermatters) to help you and your loved ones look after your money, health, wellbeing and safety during the colder months. Information will be regularly shared on the council's social media channels throughout winter, follow Suffolk County Council on Facebook or @SuffolkCC on X, using the hashtag #WinterMatters.

### **Beware the five scams of Christmas, warn Trading Standards**

While shoppers look to snap up a bargain Suffolk Trading Standards is urging them to take a few simple steps to avoid being ripped off. Fake websites, scam texts and bogus competitions are just some of the tactics fraudsters use.

**Graham Crisp, Head of Suffolk Trading Standards, said:**

**“Be wary of offers that look too good to be true and try to stick with reputable websites that you recognise and trust.**

“Be suspicious of requests to make a bank transfer and ensure you research any individual or businesses requesting financial or personal details.”

The five scams to look out for over Christmas are:

1. **Scam delivery texts and emails** – You may get an email or text message saying your package has been delayed and it asks you to click on a link to track its status. This link could lead you to a phishing site that steals your personal information. Malicious texts are where someone clicks on a link and provides information, they may then get a phone call from someone claiming to be from their bank who offers to help safeguard funds by trying to convince someone to transfer money into a bogus 'safe account'. Forward suspicious text messages to 7726 and send scam emails to [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk)
2. **Fake and copy-cat websites** - The holiday season brings endless emails offering deals, sales, and bargains. Some lead to look-alike websites that trick people into downloading malware, making non-existent purchases, and sharing private information. Authenticate a website by checking the address is spelt correctly. Ideally, type it in rather than clicking on a link, or go to [getsafeonline.org/checkawebsite](https://getsafeonline.org/checkawebsite)
3. **Bogus charities** - Only donate to trusted, well-known charities. Before giving, check the charity's name and registration number. You can verify this at the Charity Commission's website at [charitycommission.gov.uk](https://charitycommission.gov.uk)
4. **Gift Card scams** - Fraudsters impersonate one of your email contacts to ask you to buy a gift card for them as a favour. They will typically say they need help buying it as a present as they are too ill, too busy or have an issue with their payment card. The scammer then asks you to share the serial numbers of gift cards to steal the value purchased. If you receive an email asking for personal information or any form of financial help, call that friend or family member on a trusted number and let them know their account may have been hacked
5. **Fake social media contests, giveaways, and bogus sellers** - Social media platforms are full of bargains but are also where scammers lie in wait with too-good-to-be-true offers. Fraudsters set up fake pages with offers to catch your eye and encourage you to share. These are designed to "pharm" any personal information that you have publicly available on your profile. Search for the official page to see if an offer or giveaway is legitimate.

Anyone losing money to fraud should contact their bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 20 40 or at [www.actionfraud.police.uk](https://www.actionfraud.police.uk)

Suffolk Trading Standards can be contacted via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133. For a weekly email from Suffolk Trading Standards go to [www.suffolk.gov.uk/JoinTheFight](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/JoinTheFight).

## Rough Sleeping

West Suffolk Council are taking active steps to reduce the numbers of people rough sleeping in the West Suffolk Area. This is a very difficult and challenging situation.

If you see or suspect someone is rough sleeping, please report this to [www.streetlink.org.uk](https://www.streetlink.org.uk) or directly to the Team on 01282 7578178

## Highways Locality Budget

I have a budget for minor highways works ranging from better signage to dropped kerbs, if there is a small highways improvement you would like to see, please let me know.

### **Locality Budget**

I have a small budget for community projects which can often help kick start an initiative with some seed funding or help to buy a new piece of equipment that a community group need. Let me know if there are any groups or projects that could benefit from a grant.

**Cllr. Colin Noble**

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