

## **Report for Kersey PC by County Councillor Robert Lindsay 18.11.24**

### **Verge cutting Cherry Hill**

After much toing and froing the cabinet member for Highways maintenance has told the officer responsible for this to ensure it is done. Initially the argument was that it “did not meet intervention criteria” but this does not apply since it was on the schedule to be cut and was not.

### **40mph A1141 Semer and Kersey**

The consultation ran from 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct to 24<sup>th</sup> Oct. A month ago I had been told that the final officer report would be submitted for decision by the end of that month. After that “a job pack” will be given to the contractor who’ll have 14 weeks to deliver the job. I have written to ask them for an update, none at the time of writing.

### **Flooding prevention – Storm Babet a year on.**

The county’s cabinet on November 5<sup>th</sup> allocated an extra £1.5m to deliver flood prevention work it has identified in the parish-based investigations it has by law to conduct (seven out of an estimated 50 total investigations done so far).

It is asking for another £20million from government. They had a ten year backlog even before Babet of drainage work that needed to be done.

### **Warm Homes**

The council announced a new £3m fund for interest-free loans to home owners wishing to undertake energy efficiency upgrades such as insulation, solar panels, batteries, glazing, or heat pumps. The loans (up to £15,000) to be repaid over a maximum of seven years at 0% interest. The scheme will be open to homeowners across Suffolk from November, but you can register your interest now at <https://www.lendology.org.uk/warm-home-suffolk-loan>. Unlike the earlier Warm Homes grants, which failed to get adequate take up, these loans are not means tested.

### **Pavement safety and preventing trips and falls**

At Council on 17 October my political group brought forward a motion that the county review its priorities for repairing pavement defects in order to ensure quicker interventions where tripping incidents are most likely. Currently, if there is a difference in the surface level of the footway of 20mm or more, this will be repaired, but we argued that in areas of high footfall or where a trip or fall had been recorded, this threshold was too high. Most members of the public who trip or fall are over 65, and it would make sense for the repair policy to be more flexible. The administration at the council voted down our motion. They claimed a review of highways processes was being undertaken. Our group will try our best to input into this. My feeling is that there ought also to be some flexibility over the maximum width of pavement that highways will clear of encroaching vegetation – currently no more than 50cm.

### **Some devolution after all**

After the new Government scrapped Suffolk’s plan for devolution, it is now “exploring” whether to put the county in charge of some £9.4million a year (60% of the £16m a year on offer in the original devolution deal) to have control of adult education schemes. That includes funding the three Suffolk further education colleges – currently directly funded by central Government. A cabinet report is recommending the council take up the offer of an annual “Adult Skills Fund” and officers have drawn up a “Strategic Skills Plan”.

NB Part of this plan identifies that Babergh residents have the lowest median annual pay of any district in Suffolk (£30,901) and that unlike other Suffolk areas, that median rate fell from 2021 to 2022. Babergh also has the lowest proportion of adults with higher education certificate or above qualifications (equivalent to first year of a degree). The figure is 30.6%, compared to 37% for and 48% nationally.