

## District Councillor Report – Harry Richardson

31<sup>st</sup> March 2026

<p><b>Local government reorganisation</b></p>	<p>The government has announced that there will be three unitary authorities in Suffolk: West Suffolk, Central and Eastern Suffolk, and Ipswich and South Suffolk.</p> <p>These will be formally established on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2028, at which point the Districts, Borough and County Councils in Suffolk will be abolished. Elections to ‘shadow unitary authorities’ will be held in May 2027, with an initial five-year term.</p> <p>All of the current District ward of Thurston (Beyton, Norton, Stowlangtoft, Thurston and Tostock) will be part of the new ‘West Suffolk’ authority, with varying consequences.</p> <p>I will aim to provide a verbal update at upcoming Parish Council meeting and Annual Parish Meetings on the specific implications of this.</p>
<p><b>Locality budget</b></p>	<p>As we are now about to enter the 2026/27 financial year, my locality budget funding is open for applications. I have up to £10,000 to spend on community projects between now and March 2027 – and I have already had some expressions already – so please do share this with any interested parties.</p>
<p><b>Nature recovery grant</b></p>	<p>Mid Suffolk District Council has launched a Catchment and Landscape Nature Recovery Grant, supporting large-scale, collaborative environmental projects across river catchments and wider landscapes. The fund focuses on biodiversity recovery, priority habitats and species, sustainable flood management, and improving water quality and resilience.</p> <p>Grants of £50,000–£200,000 are available to charitable trusts and eligible partnerships working across multiple parishes or towns. Match funding is encouraged but not essential, and projects must demonstrate strong community benefit and local engagement.</p> <p>Alongside this, the council has also introduced a Community Nature Recovery Grant, offering up to £50,000 for smaller-scale projects such as tree planting, wildlife corridors, and habitat creation within the district.</p>
<p><b>New sports fund</b></p>	<p>Local sports clubs continue to benefit from the Mid Suffolk Sports Infrastructure Fund, which has already awarded over £400,000 to improve sporting facilities across the district.</p> <p>Launched in 2025, the fund supports voluntary and community organisations with grants ranging from £20,000 to £250,000, prioritising projects outside Stowmarket to ensure fair access to facilities across Mid Suffolk.</p> <p>Four new projects have recently been approved, and a further £750,000 will be available to apply for during 2026/27, reflecting strong ongoing demand.</p>

Cllr Harry Richardson

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