

District Councillor Report: Walsham Le Willows

April 2026

Devolution and local government reform	The government has decided that there will be 3 unitary authorities in Suffolk. While detailed boundaries are still being finalised, the three unitary councils, West Suffolk, East Suffolk, and South Suffolk and Ipswich are planned to be in place from May 2028. Elections for the new shadow authorities will take place in May 2027, with the new councils formally taking over responsibilities from May 2028. The idea of the transition period is to enable detailed work for reorganisation to take place, and services will be delivered as usual throughout the process.
Funding for Neighbourhood Plans	Government funding for Neighbourhood plans has been withdrawn. MSDC has now introduced funding to support Parish Councils in the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans / Reviews, which seek to allocate sites for housing development that make an agreed contribution to meeting the district-wide housing needs. There is a limit of £20,000 for any specific Neighbourhood Development Plan.
£120k boost for art and culture in Mid Suffolk	The Mid Suffolk Culture Fund was first awarded in 2025 to support community organisations that contribute to the rich culture of the district and help provide opportunities for people to engage with the arts. Up to £20,000 was made available for each project and a total of £100,505 awarded during the first funding round. This year, 10 organisations have received a share of £119,496, with projects covering a wide range of areas and all age groups. Among the recipients is the Stowmarket Culture Group, which has been awarded £15,000 for the delivery of the 'Jubilant' youth summer arts festival, and Orchestras Live, which will use a grant of more than £8,000 to facilitate an intergenerational orchestral project in Eye and the surrounding areas. There's a further £12,494 for Wingfield Barns CIC to fund four-day Easter drama workshops and £14,843 for DanceEast's dance-based intervention for people living with dementia and their carers.
A14 litter	Work has started on a clear up of the A14.

	For example, two trucks of rubbish were cleared from the side of the A14 between junctions 49 and 50 , for Tot Hill and Stowmarket while the road was closed for work.
Works starting on 3G football pitch	Works to deliver a brand new 3G football pitch and mini athletics track in Stowmarket are due to start in the coming weeks. The project is being funded by contributions from Mid Suffolk District Council, the Premier League, The FA, the Government's Football Foundation as well as S106 developer contributions. Being built in the grounds of Stowmarket High School, the 3G pitch and athletics track will be available for community use with Everyone Active managing the facilities and associated booking system outside of school times.
Riverside land purchased for future generations	Mid Suffolk District Council has purchased almost eight acres of land in the heart of Stowmarket to preserve it as a future riverside haven for nature and wildlife for future generations. The land, between Takers Lane and the River Rat, adjoins the council's existing open space at Pikes Meadow – unlocking potential for a new riverside walk, connecting Combs Ford and Gipping Way. The council's investment is a further step as part of work to enhance biodiversity and nature – protecting and strengthening the district's wildlife and habitat diversity – and providing public green space, as well as safeguarding the land from future development. The land is already home to several wildlife species which quietly thrive, sometimes just feet away from a busy dual carriageway.
Funding for young people	Church Road play area in Old Newton and Wetherden play area are both set to receive funding to upgrade play equipment making the areas more welcoming, inclusive and beneficial for a wider range of children. Needham Market Scout Hut will also get funding towards the completion of a wider project to create a modern, larger and more versatile building.
Footpath from Wattisfield Road to Sports Club	SCC is going to check the work done on this footpath at 13:00 on Tuesday April 21st.
Bus stop by the church	SCC will be carrying out some experimental digs w/c 7th April to check if the foundations for a bus stop by the church are suitable