

TOP-TEN REPORT FOR BUNGAY AND THE VILLAGES (APRIL & MAY 2025)
East Suffolk Councillors Toby Hammond and Anthony Specca

1. Anthony and Toby were dismayed to learn that East Suffolk officers had deemed a vital district-wide Resident Parking Exemption scheme to be impermissible under the law. The scheme allows residents to park in otherwise time-restricted zones outside their houses should they lack off-street parking of their own. It was first put into place to ease parking congestion during Covid lockdowns, but it also happens to fill an important gap for Bungay, which unlike other East Suffolk towns lacks a dedicated resident parking scheme of its own.
2. Fortunately, we were successful in securing a reprieve for the exemption scheme on behalf of Bungay residents, who hold a significant share of the exemption permits issued across the entire District. Existing permits will continue to be valid until September, and they will not expire in June as permit-holders were originally told. We have further argued that the exemption scheme should not be terminated without some feasible alternative for Bungay.
3. Over the course of the 2024-25 civic year, Toby and Anthony were pleased to be able to support many worthy community projects with our Enabling Communities funding. Organisations supported included Black Shuck Festival, Bungay Folk Festival, Bungay Museum, Bungay Tennis Club, Earthwake, Lowestoft & Waveney Breastfeeding Support, Mary Walker Foundation, and Playground Proms. We also supported Bungay Town Council to produce a town guide, Ilketshall St Andrew to purchase a Speed Indicator Device, and Barsham & Shipmeadow and St Margaret South Elmham parish councils to afford village repairs and improvements.
4. Anthony and Toby were pleased that the Planning Inspectorate upheld a decision by Suffolk County Council to refuse planning for a second anaerobic digester at Copland Way, Ellough. We had lobbied against the development, as many residents were opposed to the project. A recent report by Chatham House found that bioenergy crops require approximately 40–50 times more land than solar PV to produce an equivalent amount of energy.
5. Meanwhile, for the first time, solar PV is now cheap enough to make sense in the UK without subsidy. We can therefore expect more solar-farm proposals in our flat and sunny Suffolk, with new schemes already suggested for Flixton, Ringsfield, Ilketshall St Andrew and Shipmeadow. Although 77% of the UK public support solar energy in their local area, the finer details are really important to get right. Significant community benefits and biodiversity gains are possible, and as a Green-led council we are keen to demand the very best from solar developers.
6. As noted in past reports, plans to reorganise local government in Suffolk – from a two-tier district-county model to a simplified unitary structure – are well underway. There is now an opportunity to have your say about these proposals via a public consultation open until 25th July. Please see: <https://midsuffolk.govocal.com/en-GB/projects/have-your-say-suffolk>.
7. Toby and Anthony met with Bungay Town Council and members of the River Waveney Trust to discuss what we believe is an exciting opportunity for them to take over the running of the Riverside Centre at The Staithe. This under-used building has huge potential to support the work of the RWT to improve the state of our river.
8. In a recent reshuffle, Toby has been reappointed to the Planning North Committee, and he has also been made Chair of the Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth Community Partnership.
9. Anthony has been re-elected as Chair of East Suffolk Council for a third consecutive term. He's looking forward very much to advancing the projects he initiated during his past terms – especially the East Suffolk Youth Council – and to serving the Council for another year.
10. As Chair, Anthony was pleased to represent East Suffolk at the VE Day 80th Anniversary Service at St Edmundsbury Cathedral, and at the Southwold Mayor's Charity Concert. He was also delighted to make an official visit to Martlesham Primary Academy to meet their Year 1 and 2 pupils and teachers.