

## County Council Report March 2021

### Locally

Our new Police Community Engagement Officer Cheryl Claydon is keen to get out and meet residents and will be setting up outdoor street meets in our area – most probably at weekends – from late March.

### Highways

Highways has had a slighter lower allocation from Department of Transport for the coming year than for this year. We are though doubling the budget for drainage and are planning to use the extra £1m of emergency post winter funding to fix potholes.

### Vaccination Centres

We now have vaccination centres in Haverhill, Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds and rapid testing centres in Haverhill, at the Arts Centre, Newmarket, St Ethelred's parish centre and Bury St Edmunds, West Suffolk College. These have been set up to be used by people unable to work from home. They are able to be booked ahead and call in and undertake a lateral flow test and get a result in about 30 minutes. The aim is that nobody should be more than 5 miles from a testing centre. Given that one in three people show no symptoms, it is important where people are not working from home that they should have the peace of mind of checking whether they are Covid-free. Testing is vital in breaking the chain of infection and keeping Suffolk safe

### Recycling centres

Suffolk County Council and its partner FCC Environment, who manage and run all 11 of Suffolk's recycling centres, are proposing to relocate the Chalkstone Way Recycling Centre to a new location, currently occupied by FCC's Waste Transfer Station at Homefield Road in Haverhill. The proposal is to create a new, modern, split-level Recycling Centre designed to make access for residents easier as well as to maximize recycling. The new recycling centre would be built within part of the existing transfer station site. The replacement recycling centre is being proposed to overcome increasing demand at the existing site at Chalkstone Way. With the forecasted housing growth in the area, future demand is expected to exceed the current site's capacity.

The proposals for the brand new, purpose-designed recycling centre include a raised mezzanine platform to provide residents with an elevated position from which to safely dispose of waste-removing the need for steps. The easy to use layout will allow visitors to access the clearly marked recycling bays, introducing greater separation between public vehicles and large operational vehicles. The proposed centre is expected to reduce queuing on the highway and remove the need for the site to be closed to the public while the large recycling containers are emptied and serviced. Details about the proposals can be found on the Suffolk Recycling

website: [www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk](http://www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk)

We are also working to upgrade the booking system introduced for recycling centres during the first lockdown to allow same day booking and number plate recognition of vehicles to free up members of the staff team

### Budget

Suffolk County Council has set its budget for the coming year and is increasing its spending to £597.9million, some £41million (7.4%) more than 2020/21. As part of this, the council will be spending £15.3million to address its ongoing Covid-19 costs. There are no proposed reductions in council services or personnel in 2021/22.

The council's income from council tax is going to be £7.9million less than expected in 2021/22 and this shortfall will be met by using council reserves. Reserves can only be spent once and do not

represent a viable long term financial solution. This effective use of reserves is made possible because Suffolk County Council has maintained a consistent approach to managing its finances effectively for a number of years, holding a proportionate level of reserves for this exact situation. In 2021/22, general Council Tax will rise by 1.99 per cent, which represents an increase of £26.68 for a Band D property, from £1,224.70 in 2020, to £1,251.38. There is also a two per cent rise in the Social Care Precept. This means a Band D property will see an overall rise of £53.55 this year for Suffolk County Council's element of their Council Tax bill, from £1,343.61 in 2020-21 to £1,397.16 in 2021-22.

### **Keep Moving Suffolk Campaign**

A new digital resource has been launched to help parents and carers build exercise into the daily routines of children being home schooled during lockdown. Providing information about, and access to, a host of curriculum-based and other popular resources, the resource brings together, in one place, everything parents could need to bring exercise into the home in a fun and engaging way. Produced as part of the popular Keep Moving Suffolk campaign, it responds to data showing that activity levels of children and young people have fallen significantly during lockdown prompting fears of a long-term impact on their physical and mental health and wellbeing. [Keepmovingsuffolk.com](http://Keepmovingsuffolk.com)

### **Discovering Suffolk Project**

A project called *Discovering Suffolk* has been launched to raise further awareness of the range of great walking routes, areas of interest and variety of landscapes that form Suffolk's beautiful countryside through public rights of way and points of access. The Stour Valley footpath will be included in this scheme.

The key element of the Discovering Suffolk project, funded by the Suffolk 2020 fund, is the development of a smartphone app alongside a range of supporting QR codes fixed to rights of way signposts located along different routes to promote walking, cycling and exploring Suffolk's countryside. Old/rotting way markers will be replaced.

### **Electric Vehicle Charging Points**

To date we have had about 50 expressions of interest from local communities across the county which want to host new electric vehicle charging points. If the village hall is interested - for more information and to apply to join the network, please visit [www.greensuffolk.org/plug-in-suffolk](http://www.greensuffolk.org/plug-in-suffolk) £300,000, from the Suffolk 2020 Fund has been invested into creating 100 fast charging points in rural areas of the county

### **Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service**

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has been recognised nationally for its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) was commissioned by the Home Secretary to examine how fire and rescue services are responding to the pandemic. In her report, Zoë Billingham, HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services, said of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service: "We were impressed with how the service adapted and responded to the pandemic effectively." SFRS staff have been redeployed to support other departments in Suffolk County Council, in response to the pandemic. These include:

- Providing additional resource to colleagues in the Coroner's Office
- Setting up and administering the first booking system and phoneline for testing key workers
- In April 2020, around 30 firefighters volunteered and trained to work alongside paramedics to drive frontline emergency NHS ambulances, in turn freeing up paramedics to care for patients
- Teams have also helped deliver food, essential items and medicine as part of the Home But Not Alone scheme

### **Recycling campaign**

A new campaign was launched in Suffolk to help people get their recycling right. Each year more than 10,000 tonnes (about 20%) of recycling from Suffolk homes is rejected due to the wrong items being placed in Suffolk's recycling bins. This is the same as 1 in 5 lorries full of recycling going to waste. The cost of sorting and disposing this spoiled recycling is more than £1million. The campaign, *Together We Can Get Our Recycling Right* includes a [leaflet to all households](#) with the do's and don'ts of what can easily be recycled at home, plus tips on how to recycle other items not accepted in home recycling bins. The campaign will be supported on the Suffolk Recycling website and social media channels.

The worst offending items incorrectly found in recycling bins include glass, black sacks, food waste, cartons and nappies. There are three simple steps that householders can take to improve the quality of their recycling. These include:

- Put glass in a bottle bank, not in your wheelie bin
- No bagged items. Keep your recycling empty, clean and dry
- Keep all food out of your recycling bin. Put any food you cannot eat or compost in your rubbish bin.

### **Support for people with dementia**

Suffolk County Council is launching an exciting new project as part of its work in supporting local care home providers and the ongoing care of residents with Dementia by developing virtual reality content, helping people recall and access positive memories that they hold dearly. Such experiences assist the support offered on a day to day basis, providing a variety of positive stimuli to those using the equipment and valuable respite for their carers.

The intention is to produce a range of local, Suffolk-based films and interactive materials that people can enjoy and experience with the support and input of their carers or family members.

### **Long Range Wide Area Network (LoRaWAN)**

Suffolk County Council launched an initiative last month deploying 'gateways' to build a network that covers all of Suffolk and will enable individuals or organisations to measure things like temperature, sound and movement via sensors linked to the Long Range Wide Area Network (LoRaWAN).

The network is being built in partnership with Norfolk County Council and funded by the New Anglia LEP. Once finished, the network will be made up of almost 100 'gateways' or data receivers and transmitters fitted to public sector buildings across the county. Businesses and individuals can buy their own sensors, adapt them to measure different things like visitor numbers, weather data and temperature, and tap into the gateways for free.

### **New Freeport**

Last week at SCC, we confirmed support for the creation of a new Freeport (Freeport East) which would cover both the ports of Felixstowe and Harwich as part of the Government's aim to create a number of Freeports across the country to drive job creation, investment and international trade post Brexit. A Freeport includes secure customs zones and tax sites where business can be carried out inside a country's land border, but where different tax and customs rules apply. These rules mean Freeports can potentially reduce administrative burdens and tariff controls, provide relief from duties, import taxes, and ease tax and planning regulations.

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