



Cllr Elaine Bryce; Carlford Division

Annual Parish Report 2021/2022

Carlford Division

Boulge; Brandeston; Bredfield; Burgh; Charsfield; Clopton; Cretingham; Culpho; Dallinghoo; Debach; Earl Soham; Easton; Great Bealings; Grundisburgh; Hasketon; Hoo; Kettleburgh; Letheringham; Little Bealings; Monewden; Otley; Playford; Swilland; Tuddenham St Martin; Westerfield; Winesham

Introduction

As I sit to compile my first ever annual report, it's difficult to believe that it's been almost a year since I was elected as your County representative for Carlford Division. The role is a huge honour and privilege and I am incredibly proud to represent our communities across Carlford.

I make no apology for the length of this report – much has been achieved over the past 12 months and this report is intended as a reminder of those achievements. As we have continued to learn to live with Covid, our communities have been resilient and once again, the kind and generous spirit of people here in Suffolk has come to the fore, as it is doing so again now with the first families fleeing the devastation and conflict in the Ukraine preparing to settle here in Suffolk.

As your County Councillor, I work closely with your East Suffolk District Councillor, Lydia Freeman, and I cover some 26 Parishes across the Carlford Division. It's fair to say, certainly in my role, that highways issues are a clear priority and I have supported Brandeston Parish Council with a number of key issues since my election in May 2021. I am especially pleased that the new heritage fingerpost signs have now been installed and they really do make such a positive difference.

As we look ahead to the once in a lifetime event with Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and our very own Festival of Suffolk, I'd like to congratulate our hardworking Parish Councils and community volunteers – so much hard work goes into planning our own celebratory events and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible over the coming weeks and months.

In closing, I'd like to thank you for your support over the last year. I look forward to continuing to work with you and supporting our communities, and in the meantime, my door is always open - do please drop me an email and I will always do my very best to try and help.

With best wishes,

Elaine

Cllr Elaine Bryce

Carlford Division

Suffolk County Council, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 2BX

Tel: 07955 434440; Email: elaine.bryce@suffolk.gov.uk

March 2021

Automatic number plate recognition cameras to be installed in villages across Suffolk

In March 2021, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk's Police and Crime Commissioner and Suffolk Constabulary, launched the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras.

The Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras are being used to help detect and deter speeding offences that have been highlighted in Suffolk villages and educate drivers on the importance of road safety.

These cameras will be installed at a site where it has been identified by a parish council, with support from their county councillor, there is a problem with speeding and / or rat running on roads with a 20 or 30mph speed limit.

An ANPR camera will identify a speeding vehicle by capturing an image of the number plate of the vehicle. Data will then be shared with the Police and the County Council. The County Council will write to the owner of the vehicle on behalf of both parties explaining that their vehicle has been registered as speeding. Repeat offences at a particular location could prompt the deployment of speed enforcement vans and subsequent fines to those who breach the speed limit.

Ten ANPR cameras will be purchased and each one will remain in situ for up to one week per site. There is the option of extending this period if needed.

The project received funding from the Suffolk 2020 Fund, which is a programme of work all about investing in community projects and improving Suffolk for all residents now and in years to come. The funding secures the ANPR project for a two-year pilot where its impact to reduce speeding will be monitored before it receives a further financial commitment.

100,000 trees planted as part of ambitious council scheme

It was announced in March 2021 that 100,000 trees had been planted in just five months, since Suffolk County Council committed £228,000 from its Suffolk 2020 Fund to protect biodiversity.

The council has been working closely with the farm tenants, The Woodland Trust, Giles Landscapes, The Suffolk Tree Warden Initiative and local communities to ensure that a total of 102,586 saplings have been distributed and planted in the best possible places available over this last winter.

Lowestoft's Gull Wing officially marks the start of construction

The start of construction work on Lowestoft's Gull Wing was formally marked in March 2021. The start of construction work on Lowestoft's Gull Wing was formally marked on 22 March 2021, despite officials not being able to host a traditional groundbreaking ceremony at the site, due to Covid lockdown restrictions.

Instead, a video featuring a range of people involved with the scheme has been released, including Jack and Hayden, former Somerleyton Primary School pupils who won the schools competition to give the Gull Wing its name.

In the video, a number of facts about the Gull Wing are revealed, such as how long it will take to open when ships need to pass underneath, and how many tonnes of concrete will be used during construction.

April 2021

Reflections on a year of the Keep Moving Suffolk Campaign

Thursday 1 April 2021 marked the first anniversary of the Keep Moving Suffolk Campaign.

Just nine days after the Prime Minister announced the first lockdown on the 23rd March 2020, Suffolk's Most Active County Partnership launched the Keep Moving Suffolk campaign. The ambition was to help people stay active or become active during the pandemic.

In the last year, 20,000 'Active at Home' booklets were distributed to help older adults undertake physical activity at home and 12,000 'Movement and Mental Health' cards circulated to support young people's mental health.

Over 1,600 age-appropriate sports activity packs were provided to looked-after children, 3,500 activity packs given to digitally isolated older people to help them stay active and resources supplied to support more than 25,000 primary school children walk to school.

In just one month (September) of the new 14-month Love to Ride programme, participants cycled over 50,000 miles whilst our **Dance with Millie tutorials**, to help children stay active whilst home-schooling, received thousands of hits.

99% of pupils receive a preferred primary school on National Offer Day

In April 2021, 99.15% of children were offered a place at one of their parents' three preferred schools and 95% were offered a place at their first preference school.

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Suffolk County Council received 7207 applications from parents indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2021.

May 2021

Schools across Suffolk recognised for their efforts in encouraging active travel

In May 2021, pupils from Great Barton Primary Academy and Stowupland High School were recognised for their efforts in encouraging active and sustainable travel.

The Pupils received Bronze Modeshift STARS accreditations for their efforts. Exning Primary School who first received a Bronze accreditation in 2019, became the first primary school in Suffolk to receive a Silver Modeshift STARS accreditation for their ongoing commitment and hard work.

- Great Barton Primary Academy – encouraging road safety, by working with local councils to relocate and promote the puffin crossing near the school. This includes designing new street signs and a Park & Stride campaign
- Stowupland High School – encouraging active and sustainable travel and road safety. A group of sixth form students set up a walking bus to help new Year 7 students build confidence walking to a new school
- Exning Primary School – received their silver accreditation for their ongoing hard work promoting sustainable travel, road safety and improving air quality outside the school gates by running an anti-idling campaign.

Although these schools are not within the Carlford Division, school safety is an issue which often comes up at our primary schools and the initiatives above show what can be achieved. The Modeshift STARS Accreditation scheme encourages schools across England to implement their own travel plans to increase levels of sustainable and active travel in order to improve the health and well-being of children and young people. More information on Modeshift STARS can be found at – www.suffolk.gov.uk/adviceontravel as well as top tips and advice on travelling to school.

The accreditations further support the county council's Let's make a change for the future campaign which is encouraging residents to consider more active and sustainable travel options during the COVID-19 pandemic to avoid overcrowding the county's transport network, and longer term to experience the benefits of improved health and wellbeing, less congestion and cleaner air.

A new electric taxi-bus service launches in East Suffolk

In May 2021, Suffolk County Council launched Katch, a new sustainable, electric taxi-bus service in the East of the county.

Katch provides a travel solution for local residents and visitors in Wickham Market and Framlingham, as well as for those who need to meet their rail connections at Wickham Market train station in Campsea Ashe.

With support from East Suffolk Council, Framlingham Town Council, Community Rail Network, East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership, Greater Anglia and CarsSmart, Katch delivers on the commitment Suffolk councils have made to grow the region's passenger transport in a sustainable way. It also plays a part in cutting carbon to help reach the Government's ambition of zero emissions by 2050 and Suffolk County Council's own target of being carbon neutral by 2030.

The Rail Network Development Fund from the Department of Transport provided a grant for the vehicles electric charging points at the train station at Campsea Ashe.

Katch started on **Monday 17 May 2021** and ran as a trial for 12 months.

The service will be available seven days a week from:

- 6.30am to 10.30pm on Monday to Saturday
- 9am to 7pm on Sunday

If successful and is regularly used by commuters and rail passengers, Suffolk County Council is keen to facilitate further schemes across the county.

State-of-the-art vehicles join Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's fleet

In May 2021, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service unveiled three new vehicles, packed with the latest technology, to support firefighters at emergency incidents. The Command Support Vehicles will typically be used as a hub at large, complex incidents, from which officers can manage operations and work with other emergency services.

Some of the new features on the vehicles include:

- Dedicated WiFi, enabling officers at the scene to quickly stream and share data, images, footage and plans with colleagues who are based remotely, for example at the Combined Fire Control Room
- LCD display built into the side of the vehicle, allowing officers to share content with other agencies attending an incident, such as live drone footage and plans
- Latest communications and computer technology with access to live information, weather reports, data on substances and chemicals, and direct contact with other agencies and services

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has invested £360,000 in the new units, which replace the three existing Command Support Vehicles.

Suffolk County Council leader vows to “build back better, stronger and greener” after COVID

In May 2021, SCC further committed to protecting vulnerable residents, strengthening Suffolk’s economy and a strong focus on the environment are at the heart of council's new priorities.

Protecting and supporting vulnerable residents, strengthening Suffolk’s economy, a strong focus on the environment and delivering value for money for the taxpayer is at the heart of priorities outlined by Suffolk County Council’s leader today.

Councillor Matthew Hicks said that in the next 4 years, Suffolk County Council will:

- Drive up educational standards through a project led by the National Literacy Trust.
- Maintain the Outstanding rating for Children’s Services from OFSTED
- Launch a £20m programme to spend £10m tackling highways flooding and a further £10m improving and upgrading 500 miles of pavements and footpaths.
- £14.5m in upgrading or building new waste recycling centres.
- Continue investing £45m building over 800 new school places for children with Special Educational Needs

On education and children’s services he said:

“We are already investing £45m building over 800 new school places for children with Special Educational Needs. Working with our partners, we will drive up educational standards through a project led by the National Literacy Trust and we will create a network of Family Hubs.”

On adult social care and supporting vulnerable people he said:

“The reality is by 2031, a fifth of Suffolk’s residents will be aged over 70, and we must be prepared for that. We will harness new technology, like we did when we supported the Digital Care Phone project last year. We will also continue our unwavering support for our fantastic care workers, who do so much to make sure people get the care and support they need.

“Since 2017 we have spent over £1bn on caring for vulnerable residents. This huge level of support will continue.”

“On the post pandemic economic landscape in Suffolk, He outlined his vision for an economic recovery looking to build an economy fit for the next 30 years, describing an economy that “embraces new greener technology, that invites investment in the right training and skills and benefits everyone equally.”

“In 2019 this council [declared a climate emergency](#) – and since then we have been working hard to meet our responsibilities to become a carbon neutral authority by 2030.

“£3m to improve heating systems in council offices, fire stations and schools. And we are investing £14.5m in upgraded or new waste recycling centres and we are promoting greater biodiversity.”

He also celebrated the increase diversity of the county council, noting that 39% of councillors were now women and the election of one of the youngest county councillors in the country. He confirmed his new cabinet and noted significant changes to some portfolios.

These were:

- Combining Finance and Environment into a single portfolio
- The creation of a new Cabinet member for Education, SEND and Skills
- A new portfolio focusing on Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding; and separately a portfolio that links Transport Strategy with Economic Development and Waste
- Bringing together Public Health, Public Protection and Communities into a single portfolio

In explaining these changes, Councillor Hicks said that placing Finance and Environment together reflects the fact the council now publishes a carbon budget alongside the financial budget. He also hoped that by splitting Operational Highways from Transport Strategy, more focus could be given to addressing issues with highways maintenance.

June 2021

Suffolk County Council launches the new Cassius service

In early June 2021, it was announced that SCC are partnering with Alcove, Rethink Partners and Provide CIC to deliver their innovative care technology service to people in Suffolk over the next 3 years.

From July 2021, the Cassius service will give our social work practitioners, occupational therapists and other front line professionals, new ways to support people to live better and independent lives.

Initially the service will launch with a high impact, targeted range of technology that will continue to grow into the full Cassius collection. This means that the technology can be customised to meet people’s needs and to address individual challenges which will help them live independently at home for longer.

Independent review of aspects of Suffolk’s SEND services to be carried out

It was announced in June 2021 that A multi-agency team from Lincolnshire would carry out an independent review into SEND provision.

The SEND (special educational needs and disability) review focussed on the processes, communication protocols and family-facing elements of SEND services within Suffolk County Council. It did not look at specific cases or the provision given to specific children.

The review was completed within six weeks. The report, with any recommendations, has been published on Suffolk County Council's website, shared with those who contributed to it and also scrutinised, in public, by the council's Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

The review team from Lincolnshire consisted of two senior officers from Lincolnshire County Council, performance analysts and the chair of the county's parent carer network.

SEND services in Suffolk are delivered in partnership by Suffolk County Council, Suffolk's NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups and education settings.

The review looked at:

- The effective flow of cases
- Communication with young people and families
- Processes for dealing with incoming enquiries from young people and families in a timely manner
- A focus on the family-facing elements of the service
- The allocation of provision and, where appropriate, placement in a timely way for children

Suffolk County Council is eager to work collaboratively and productively with the Campaign for Change group, and parents and carers not involved or represented by the group, to make improvements in SEND services.

Leaders earmark major investment as part of Suffolk taking its first steps on road to Covid recovery

It was announced in late June 2021 that a significant investment of £6.238m was approved to support Suffolk's long-term recovery beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.

Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) approved a significant investment of £6.238m towards a range of strategic, community focussed projects and programmes that support efforts in Suffolk's long-term recovery beyond the Covid-19 pandemic. This money will be used to increase the offer for young people and families, to improve access to housing, to help local businesses get back on track, to address the climate emergency commitment and to drive future public engagement plans.

Combined with investments previously made last September, this means SPSL has invested a total of £9.788m to support Suffolk's longer-term recovery from Covid-19 in the key areas of economic growth, supporting communities, community safety, tackling climate change, housing and in listening to local people.

The role of SPSL is to continue to seek to maximise opportunities to benefit Suffolk's communities, identifying and providing additional resourcing and financial contributions on top of what has already been put in place, to build upon the existing commitment and funding designated by local public services across the county.

As part of the discussion surrounding Suffolk's Strategic Recovery Plan, the group agreed to allocate the investment across the following strategic themes:

- **Climate Change** - £1.5m to implement the Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan agreed and launched by Leaders today
- **Inclusive Growth** - £2.05m towards supporting Suffolk's businesses recovery and the potential Haughley Junction rail upgrade
- **Supporting Communities** - £2.6m to invest in future housing projects, improve literacy levels, identify families most in need of support and strengthen the local care offer for young people
- **Engagement** – £0.139m – to support Youth Healthwatch projects and develop a countywide approach to engaging communities

July 2021

Suffolk County Council begins procurement process for next Highways Service contract focusing on developing local skills and talent

In Early July 2021 Suffolk County Council began the process of finding its next long term Highways Services partner.

The council was looking for a partner to deliver key operational projects after the current contract ends on 30 September 2023.

As part of preparations up to this point, the council has worked with leading industry analysts to understand the different types of arrangements that other local authorities have in place, to look at which specialist providers are in the marketplace and to find out what aspects of contract agreement may work best for Suffolk based on the range of outcomes the council wants to achieve from any new contract process.

The council is looking to develop a contract that utilises a blended 'hybrid' approach, enabling the council to enter into one contract that covers the majority of Highways Service functions and two contracts with specialist providers for streetlighting and traffic signals

(ITS). The council will be looking for the new contract to focus on delivering greater social value, utilising local skills and talent, giving young people the opportunity to work in the sector as well as building on the council's commitment to carbon reduction and protecting the environment.

The whole contract development process will take just over two years to complete. Once the appropriate tender documents have been prepared outlining the council's requirements, initial advertisements will go out in December 2021. Discussions will begin with any interested prospective contractors in early 2022. Following such a rigorous tendering process, the council hopes to be able to award its chosen contract in early 2023 with the new service provider beginning in October 2023.

The procurement process needs to begin now to provide enough time to go to the market to seek relevant specialist companies which may be interested in tendering for the contract which is worth in the region of £800m - £1 billion over a projected 20 year period.

Suffolk says thanks for going the extra mile

In July 2021, residents were thanked for their sacrifices during the pandemic.

Over the last 16 months, countless people in Suffolk have gone the extra mile by helping others, such as volunteering, doing the shopping for a friend or putting a neighbour's bins out. Saying thank you to people who have helped means a great deal, which is why the latest stage of the 'Suffolk Says Thanks' campaign is about celebrating everyday acts of kindness by presenting people with a specially designed pin badge.

Voluntary organisations, local councils and others who are part of the Collaborative Communities Board will be presenting the new Suffolk Says Thanks badges to Suffolk residents who have gone above and beyond during the coronavirus pandemic.

Everyone can get involved by saying thank you to others through the campaign website. By visiting suffolksaysthanks.com, people can thank a friend, a volunteer, neighbour or family member by downloading and sharing one of the free cards, posters or social media graphics.

The Suffolk Says Thanks campaign launched in June 2020, inspiring school children to link up with the county's care homes, and countless messages of thanks to people across Suffolk for the little – and often big – things they do that make a difference to others' lives.

August 2021

Suffolk's new Chief Fire Officer appointed

In August 2021 Jon Lacey was appointed to the post of Suffolk's Chief Fire Officer and Executive Director for Fire and Public Safety.

Jon will lead Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service and its staff, as well as having responsibility for Suffolk County Council's Trading Standards and emergency planning services and being a member of the corporate leadership team.

Jon will bring a wealth of experience to Suffolk, gained from a 24 year career with fire and rescue services. He began in 1993 as an on-call firefighter with West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, before becoming a wholetime firefighter.

He was Assistant Chief Fire Officer at West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and has responsibility for Prevention, Protection and Response, as well as the county council's Resilience and Emergency Team, a service like Suffolk's Joint Emergency Planning Unit.

Suffolk homeowners can cut carbon emissions as successful solar panel buying scheme returns

It was announced in August 2021 that Suffolk residents can come together to invest in renewables through a group-buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage.

Solar Together Suffolk, in conjunction with Suffolk County Council, helps homeowners feel confident that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from pre-approved installers.

This innovative scheme builds on three years of the highly successful Solar Together programme run in Suffolk. Since 2018, the scheme has installed solar panel systems in 1,028 households across the county. On average, homeowners have saved 33% on installation costs, £263 on energy bills in year one, and stopped harmful carbon emissions entering the atmosphere.

Suffolk County Council brings [Solar Together Suffolk](#) to residents as part of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, on behalf of all of Suffolk's local authorities. This is in partnership with independent experts iChoosr to make the transition to clean energy as cost effective and hassle-free as possible. Across the UK, iChoosr has delivered almost 5,000 installations to date and over 80,000 tonnes of avoided lifetime carbon emissions.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service adds four new enhanced appliances to its fleet, fitted with solar panels

In August 2021, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service unveiled state-of-the-art rescue vehicles and equipment to provide firefighters with the latest technology for rescues.

Four new "enhanced rescue tenders" will be based at Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft, Newmarket and Princes Street (Ipswich), giving cover across the county and strengthening the emergency response across Suffolk's communities.

The new equipment and vehicles are also the latest innovations in green technology, supporting Suffolk County Council's climate emergency declaration and ambitions to be net zero by 2030. The fire appliances are the first in Suffolk to be fitted with solar panels, have more fuel-efficient engines and also carry battery powered hydraulic rescue equipment.

September 2021

Suffolk's first 'healing woods' locations announced

In September 2021, four locations were announced by Suffolk County Council as 'healing woods and spaces'. They will offer people better access to nature and provide a positive legacy to the pandemic.

The healing woods and spaces will be located in:

- Bury St Edmunds
- Combs and Little Finborough
- Eye
- Hopton

The council's healing woods project connects with the motion unanimously passed by the county's councillors earlier this year, to commit to developing mental health support in Suffolk, in response to the impacts of the pandemic.

Research, such as that recently published by the University of Essex with The Green Light Trust, demonstrated that access to woodlands and green space can significantly improve people's wellbeing.

The four sites will develop unused spaces and existing green areas, to make them more accessible and offer dedicated places for peaceful reflection and a positive focus.

Youth Focus Suffolk puts young people at the heart

It was announced in September 2021 that 18 youth projects from across the county had been awarded a share of just under £240,000.

This is in response to the gaps faced after Covid-19 for activities and services for young people.

Almost 2.5 times over-subscribed, the Youth Intervention Fund, hosted by Suffolk Community Foundation, attracted an array of bids and has successfully granted both rural and urban projects from Lowestoft to Newmarket, Hadleigh to Eye.

It is expected that an additional 1,900 young people will benefit from these activities offered through the voluntary and community sector over the next 12 months and the

schemes include performing arts to increase confidence, mentoring programmes to support mental health, forest schools and construction skills.

Suffolk Community Foundation successfully levered in additional contributions of £79,350 through philanthropic donations and will be supporting the groups as they deliver their work over the year ahead.

The Youth Intervention Fund this year has formed part of a wider programme, called Youth Focus Suffolk, which is funded through the county council's Suffolk 2020 fund. The project supports both the voluntary sector and communities to become more resilient in supporting their young people through a range of measures. This includes a fully funded programme of training, which is open for all adults to access, and ranges from youth mental health awareness, accredited youth work as well as themed support around drug and alcohol awareness, gambling and exploitation.

The project has also mapped out current youth provision to help people find out about the opportunities in their local area for young people to take part in and provides a peer mentor space online for professionals and volunteers alike to share experiences and learn from others.

More information about the project, and resources to support those working with young people, can be found at the new online platform www.youthfocus.suffolk.gov.uk

HRH The Duke of Gloucester officially opened The Hold

On September 15th 2021, His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester officially opened The Hold, a new archives and heritage centre on Ipswich's Waterfront.

The Duke was given a tour of the £20million building, a partnership between Suffolk County Council and the University of Suffolk, which is home to more than nine centuries of history safely preserved by Suffolk Archives.

His Royal Highness was greeted by Suffolk's Lord Lieutenant, Clare, Countess of Euston, as well as a line-up of civic guests, and was then shown round by Kate Chantry, Strategic Manager of Suffolk Archives.

During the visit The Duke met Tim Greenacre, Chief Operating Officer at the University of Suffolk, Dr Harvey Osborne, Course Leader for BA (Hons) History and students, and saw the state-of-the-art teaching facilities including a 200-seat auditorium and seminar rooms.

Lord Lieutenant, Clare, Countess of Euston then gave a short history of the Suffolk Medal, including showing a replica which is on display in the building's main street.

Representatives from local history groups were introduced to The Duke in the John Blatchly Local Studies Library, named in honour of the esteemed local educator, author and historian.

The Duke was shown treasures from the Suffolk Archives collections spanning 900 years of Suffolk's history, including the oldest document - a Charter of King Henry I granting churches and property to the monks of Eye Priory from around 1119 - and the newest contemporary collections of Black Lives Matter protest placards.

His Royal Highness also met representatives from organisations which contributed to The Hold, including the National Lottery Heritage Fund which awarded nearly £11million to make the project possible, as well as those involved in the design and construction of the building.

To complete the visit to The Hold, His Royal Highness unveiled a plaque to declare the building officially open and signed a book which will be added to the archive as a record of the visit.

New Suffolk Recycling Centres online booking system improvements to deliver greater customer experience

It was announced in September 2021 that Suffolk County Council has developed a new, more user-friendly booking system which enables residents to book slots for recycling.

For bookings from 27 September, people can view all available time slots in real time, to see which booking slots are free at any given moment. The system allows you to book up to seven days in advance. If circumstances change, you can easily cancel your slot up to one hour beforehand or equally, you can click to amend your booking if required.

The system is also able to advise customers on which sites accept specific materials, such as plasterboard to ensure the correct type of booking is made to save customers' time, and it can also be used to share real time messages with customers, for example if any site needs to close due to adverse weather or emergency situations. The new booking system is connected to automated numberplate recognition to allow for a trial of automatic entry gates.

Customer survey results show overwhelming support for the use of a booking system and the Council has gathered feedback from customers and site staff on how the booking system can be further improved, which have shaped the design of this new system. Through the use of bookings the council can avoid the frustration of long queues at peak times and increase the overall throughput and efficiency of the service for residents.

To make a booking, visit suffolkrecycling.org.uk.

Rachel Hood, Cabinet Member for Education, SEND and Skills at Suffolk County Council

Published in September 2021:

I want to dedicate this column today to the situation with Suffolk's special educational needs and disabilities (known as SEND) provision.

I was newly elected in May to this Cabinet position and SEND became my first priority.

You will have seen coverage in today's paper about an Independent Report into our services. This report follows a review carried out by a team from Lincolnshire, including Lincolnshire County Council and a parent carer network, and was commissioned by ourselves after a significant increase in correspondents from concerned parents and carers earlier this year.

This wasn't a review of everything we do, but focussed on the processes, communication protocols and family-facing elements of our SEND services. I would like to share with you the outcomes and actions we are taking following publication of the review yesterday. The review has found that we must change what we are doing in a number of areas.

I would like to say sorry for the difficulties that some families have experienced as a result of how we have been doing things. We recognise that we have let down some children and young people as certain aspects of our services have simply not been good enough.

Our priority now is to implement wide-scale improvements, and to do this with pace, impact and efficiency. We have already started to make improvements to the way we do things and whilst, wide-scale improvement will take time, we are determined to make things better. There have been many positive changes to the way we deliver SEND services in the past 18 months and we are proud of these, but clearly there is some way to go.

The review made nine recommendations and we have used these to draft an action plan, which can be read online. One of the recommendations made in the review was to work with a third-party organisation to deliver improvements. The council has since secured Impower as a strategic partner, who will bring capacity and extensive experience of working on SEND systems across the country. This partnership work began yesterday. Other recommendations include staff training, reviewing the process for allocating specialist placements and working with education leaders and parents and carers to understand the demand for specialist provision and use of data and local intelligence to inform sufficient planning.

We have already made significant longer-term improvements within SEND, which we continue to build upon. We have agreed a £45.1m capital programme to create an additional 870 specialist education places over a 5-year period to 2024. Two hundred and ten places opened last year with a further 310 opening this academic year and includes new specialist schools in Bungay, Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds. We have also improved the time in which it takes us to issue Education Health and Care Plans from 18% in 2016 to 95% in 2021. £1million has also been invested into speech and language therapies by Ipswich & East Suffolk and West Suffolk CCGs.

At the moment, more than 6,000 children in Suffolk currently have a health and care plan to identify what support they need to help with their special educational needs. The number has nearly doubled from 3,000 in 2014. A further 12,000 pupils have special educational needs and do not require a health and care plan. Currently, there are 2,000 places at either special schools or specialist units for those with more complex needs. We continue to increase the number of places.

Your children's education and welfare is fundamental – I fully recognise this as a parent myself. We want to work together to give your children and young people the very best chance in life.

We accept without reservation the findings of the review and are grateful to the Lincolnshire team for their attention to detail, professionalism and advice. We have learnt

very valuable lessons from this review, and we will act on these recommendations in the best and quickest way.

You can [read the report and action plan here](#).

If you would like to discuss any aspect of the report or action plan please contact us via email at SendReview@suffolk.gov.uk

October 2021

MPs from Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex and County Councillors, united to protect the countryside and communities from the worst impacts of new pylons and cables

In October 2021, the Offshore Electricity Grid Task Force (OffSET) was set up to review and respond to the Government's Offshore Network Transmission Review (OTNR).

A new group of MPs from across the region, under the chairmanship of Sir Bernard Jenkin, and including County Councillors from the region, has been set up to ensure that the emerging proposals of the Government's Offshore Network Transmission Review (OTNR), and proposals to change the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Planning regime, are effectively scrutinised.

The Offshore Electricity Grid Task Force (OffSET) supports the government's commitment to meet the target of Net Zero by 2050, and the aspiration to deliver 40GW of Offshore Wind, by 2030. However, this will result in a succession of electricity generation and connection projects in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex, over the coming decades, which will have significant impacts on the environment and communities of the region.

The group believes that these ambitions and targets cannot be met, on an "at any cost" basis. Therefore, the further development of the onshore transmission system, and the connection of offshore wind farms, and interconnectors, will require a new deal for communities and the environment. It remains a key priority that we speed up the Government's timetable to transition to the offshore transmission system, in order to protect our communities from the damaging effects of multiple cable corridors.

As well as scrutinising and responding to new policies and initiatives, the group will be a contact point for Ministers and senior officials, as well as for the National Grid, Crown Estate, and Ofgem, to engage with Regional Leaders. The group will also be inviting key stakeholders and community groups to meet with them, to better understand the impacts, and opportunities, of Net Zero transmission and generation infrastructure in the region.

OffSET's mission statement:

"OffSET exists to promote strategic leadership of the development of a coordinated offshore electricity grid, to address the need for increased grid capacity which off-shore wind, coastal new nuclear, and international interconnectors will demand, while standing up for the

countryside of East Anglia so that the welcome transition to net zero electricity generation does not do unnecessary damage to our communities or the environment.”

Suffolk continues to create the greenest county with £150,000 for new trees

It was announced in October 2021 that a joint bid by a number of Suffolk’s authorities secured funding from the Forestry Commission to plant around 3,000 trees this coming planting season.

Suffolk County Council submitted the bid on behalf of itself, Ipswich Borough Council, Babergh District Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and West Suffolk District Council. The successful bid will see £149,712.55 come into the county for new trees, from the Local Authority Treescapes Fund.

The fund targets treescapes that have been neglected or suffered damage in the past, including disused and vacant community spaces and those affected by tree diseases such as ash dieback. The locations are chosen where they are likely to be experienced directly by people, as well as on improving the age structure of trees in all the project areas.

One of the interesting methods being adopted to re-establish woodland as part of this project, is the Miyawaki method.

It is regarded as one of the most effective tree planting methods for creating cover quickly on neglected land, or land that has previously been used for construction or agriculture. It uses natural principles, such as using trees already native to the area and replicating natural regeneration processes, and is particularly effective in the urban environment.

The planting will also contribute to Suffolk’s commitment to support the Queen’s Green Canopy project. Suffolk is working towards linking up existing woodland with the planting of new trees and hedges to connect communities and encourage natural corridors for biodiversity, aiming to plant a tree for every resident.

November 2021

Government funding boost for Suffolk community schemes

In November 2021 two Suffolk schemes received Government funding totalling more than £940,000

Enabling Self-Employment in Suffolk and the Suffolk Road to Net Zero business support programme are among 477 schemes across the country to receive backing from the Community Renewal Fund.

This is a £200 million pot set up by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities aimed at boosting skills training for the unemployed and investing in businesses developing low-carbon technology.

The two Suffolk schemes, which are both being led by New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) and which were put forward by Suffolk County Council, receive a total of £945,974.

Enabling Self-Employment, which receives £412,208, delivers self-employment support across Suffolk, particularly amongst disadvantaged communities in East Suffolk.

Building on the established programme of Business Start-Up support in Norfolk and Suffolk, it works with employed and unemployed people – including those who were on furlough or who are under-employed and economically vulnerable – from deprived groups and communities.

Suffolk Road to Net Zero receives £533,766.

This is a scheme offering grants to support businesses in developing low-carbon projects and which contribute to the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan's key theme of reducing industrial and commercial emissions, informs a model for place-based Net Zero strategies, and generates benefits for nature-based solutions.

Suffolk County Council investing £12.8m to decarbonise its buildings

It was announced in November 2021 that properties, including fire stations and libraries, will receive investment as the council continues to drive its ambition to be Net Zero by 2030.

Suffolk County Council will be committing £12.8m towards reducing the carbon produced by buildings in its corporate estate.

Cabinet members today (9 November 2021) approved a report to commit to this investment, as well as implementing the SCC Energy Management Strategy, as recommended by the Climate Emergency Policy Development Panel.

The council already has a history of providing dedicated investment to improve the energy efficiency of its buildings and services, which has led to reductions in carbon emissions in recent years. Previous projects have included replacing fossil fuel boilers with bio-mass units, installing solar panels and solar hot water systems, rainwater harvesting and updating lighting.

This latest investment will also work towards reducing energy consumption across the council's buildings to mitigate the effects of increasing energy prices and associated costs.

Through the Energy Management Strategy, the council will target how it can be 'smarter' with its buildings by reducing electricity consumption, reviewing the heating and cooling of its buildings, continuing its LED lighting rollout, replacing older fossil fuel boilers and generating its own energy.

Suffolk's Greenest County Awards Winners Announced

In November 2021, Suffolk celebrated the people and organisations making the biggest environmental difference in the county.

As COP26 came to a close, Suffolk celebrated the people and organisations making the biggest environmental difference in the county. An innovative food recycling company, a nature reserve and the county's Tree Warden Network are among those collecting awards at The Hold in Ipswich today (Friday 12 November 2021).

Full details of the winners can be found here:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/show/suffolks-greenest-county-awards-winners-announced>

December 2021

Annual Public Health Report focuses on Mental Health impact of Covid-19

Suffolk County Council, in December 2021, endorsed far-reaching recommendations to improve Suffolk people's mental health and wellbeing.

This includes the creation of a dedicated fund of £2.5m and the development of a cross-system group to support community wellbeing in Suffolk.

Each year, the Director of Public Health in Suffolk produces an independent report, which explores a topic or area of strategic focus that is of importance to Suffolk. This year's report titled "Better, together: Public Mental Health in Suffolk", focuses on the actions that need to be taken to support and enable good mental health and wellbeing in the community, following the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The strains of the Covid-19 pandemic have meant that the issue of mental health has been in the public consciousness like never before. The unprecedented measures required to reduce the spread of the virus, have placed extraordinary pressures, and demands on the whole population, with around 1 in 5 adults in Britain experiencing some form of depression in the first three months of 2021 – more than double the figure prior to the pandemic. Almost half of adults have reported that their emotional and mental wellbeing has been affected.

The report highlights that those impacts may be as damaging and long-lasting as the physical effects of the virus. It focuses on actions which can be taken by communities, public and private sector organisations to try and mitigate these effects and protect and promote good public mental health in Suffolk now and for the future.

The report makes six recommendations, which have today been endorsed by Suffolk County Council. Among the recommendations is the development of a cross system group focused on public mental health, which will report into the Health and Wellbeing Board, and a

dedicated Suffolk Public Mental Health Fund to support good public mental health in Suffolk communities.

The £2.5m funding, comes from the Government's Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), in recognition of the need to support Public Mental Health, which in turn both supports behaviours which continue to reduce the spread of the virus as well as supporting longer term recovery. The Health and Wellbeing Board will oversee this and will be discussing principles for how to deliver the recommendations at its next meeting in January.

The 2021 Annual Public Health Report for Suffolk, 'Better, Together: Public Mental Health in Suffolk' [can be viewed online here.](#)

Suffolk County Council approves extra £20m investment in highway drainage and footpaths

In December 2021, Cabinet members committed an extra £20 million over the next three years into further improving Suffolk's highway drainage systems and footpaths.

In recognition of the increasing maintenance demand on these areas, councillors approved the use of £10 million to specifically deliver an increasing number of drainage schemes that deal with problems that affect larger numbers of people, and a further £10 million to improve footpath quality and access.

Suffolk Highways will use the drainage investment alongside funding from the Department for Transport to increase the number of highway flooding sites which are resolved, providing a highway network that is more resilient and accessible during heavy rain and severe weather events.

The footpath investment will be focused on urban areas and busy footpaths in rural areas - providing a safer and more accessible network that supports people accessing local bus services, health care services and local shopping precincts.

Over 10,000 new LED streetlights installed across Suffolk

It was announced on December 17th that Suffolk's LED replacement programme reached a new milestone, with over 10,000 streetlights upgraded with new, sustainable LEDs.

Bouygues Energies & Services, the contractor leading the programme has successfully installed 10,799 new lanterns and counting as part of the project to replace all 43,400 streetlights in the county. These lanterns use less energy and produce a more natural and focused light than the traditional orange glow of streetlights.

The project, which is due to complete by the end of 2022 will also allow opportunity for other streetlight owners within Suffolk such as Parish and District Councils to upgrade their streetlights as part of this process.

This upgrade supports Suffolk County Council's ambitions for becoming a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030. The benefits include; supporting a reduction in carbon emissions by saving energy and reducing light pollution, as well as providing clearer images on CCTV, traffic cameras and dashcam footage for the benefit of public safety. The teams have been working their way through the west of the county and are making progress in Stowmarket and Sudbury.

Aside from the reduction in energy usage and minimising light pollution, the project will also bring down ongoing maintenance costs for the authority. The County Council expects to reduce its annual electricity costs on the streetlights by around 76%, saving more than £1.7 million a year. By upgrading the lighting system with smart technology, this will increase the control the County Council has over its power consumption which will further reduce costs.

Prior to commencing in towns or parishes, Suffolk Highways is contacting those councils in case they wish to upgrade their parish-council owned street-lighting at the same time. All heritage-style lanterns which have been identified will be upgraded towards the end of the programme.

Children's services and adult care at the heart of Suffolk County Council's new budget plans

In December 2021, Suffolk County Council outlined how it plans to spend money on public services in 2022/23.

- More money to support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Extra resources for adults in need of care
- Additional funds to prevent flooding and fix footpaths

Under the proposals, the council's budget for 2022-23 would rise by 4.5% (from £598.2 to £625.4m). This additional money is generated by a 2.99% increase in Council Tax, and an increase in grants received from the Government.

The proposals will be presented at a scrutiny meeting in January, then put forward for approval by councillors in February.

Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment at Suffolk County Council, said:

"I've worked with my colleagues to propose a budget which will not see any reductions in our services, and invests further where it is most needed. Our aim is always to provide the best possible services for everyone in Suffolk and provide value for money.

"This has been a difficult budget to consider, particularly as Covid continues to make life challenging on every level, including our finances.

"We also continue to face rising costs and hugely increasing demands on our services year on year, particularly our adult care and children's services.

“But this is a budget which helps us to respond to these demands, and meets our priorities for next year. For example increasing our family services budget by £1.1m from next year, to specifically to address the recommendations made by the recent independent SEND review – this is in addition to our previous commitment of £45m to develop SEND provision.”

The council’s priorities are to:

- promote and support the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk
- strengthen the local economy
- protect and enhance the environment
- provide value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer

Some of the detail of the budget proposals, includes:

- £1.1m increase for the family services budget, specifically to address recommendations made by the recent independent SEND review
- £1m additional funding for Suffolk Highways over the next four years, for example to fund road signs and responsible verge cutting
- £10m to specifically deliver an increasing number of drainage schemes (over the next three years)
- £10m to improve footpath quality and access (over the next three years)
- £12.8m to decarbonise the buildings that we own (by 2030)
- Investments this year to set up future borrowing for bigger schemes, such as SEND and carbon reduction

Regarding Council Tax, the proposed 2.99% increase would be made up of a 1.99% increase in general Council Tax and a 1.00% increase dedicated to funding adult care.

This means costs for a household would look like:

- Band D property: £27.60 per week (80 pence per week increase from 2021-22)
- Band B property: £21.47 per week (62 pence per week increase from 2021-22) (Band B properties are the most common in Suffolk)

Councillor Rout continued:

“Proposing an increase in council tax is not a decision we take lightly, particularly when our costs of living are going up too.

“However, I think there is increasing recognition of the pressure our services are under. In our public consultation, there were more people who agreed that council tax would need to go up next year, compared to those that didn’t. This was especially true for funding adult care.

“By paying this extra each week, we are all helping the council to provide its key services, and helping support those who need it most.

“If anyone does have concerns about paying their council tax, they may be eligible for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which is managed by our borough and district councils. You could receive help if you are on a low income, even if you are working.”

The budget proposals will be presented at a Scrutiny Meeting on Tuesday 11 January 2022, with the final budget discussed at a Full Council meeting on 17 February 2022.

January 2022

Council prepares budgets for its finances and the environment Suffolk County Council waives fees for Platinum Jubilee events

To mark the celebration of Her Majesty the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee, Suffolk County Council will be waiving street party road closure fees.

On Sunday 6 February 2022, Her Majesty the Queen celebrated her Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years of service. To celebrate this milestone, events will be taking place across the Country, particularly over the four-day Bank Holiday weekend, between 2 and 5 June 2022. This bank holiday gives communities and people throughout the UK the opportunity to come together and celebrate with their neighbours.

For all events on Sunday 5 June 2022, which is being referred to nationally as the ‘Big Jubilee Lunch’, Suffolk County Council will not be charging fees normally associated with road closures.

The following website has been set up for those who are looking to organise a street party as a group of residents, or as a local authority, for an event in a large public space, such as a park:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent>.

If any applications are received after 11pm on Sunday 27 March 2022, these may still be processed. However, Suffolk County Council cannot cover the costs of traffic management for the event, nor will Suffolk County Council be able to provide any form of traffic management equipment. This is due to possible supply chain constraints and other operational demands.

For full details, including street party event criteria, information on insurance and licences, please ensure you visit this link <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent>

If you have any queries, please contact Suffolk County Councils Customer Services team on 0345 606 6171 or email customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk

Find more information on how to get involved in celebrating Her Majesty's historic reign, at platinumjubilee.gov.uk.

Council's Net Zero ambitions aim high with first-ever full carbon budget and biodiversity commitment

In January 2021, Suffolk County Council published proposals for its first-ever full carbon budget, as it strives to be a Net Zero organisation by 2030.

- Inaugural full carbon budget to be presented alongside financial budget
- Policy to enhance biodiversity across 30% of Suffolk County Council's estate

The Net Zero Carbon Budget will allow the council to measure its carbon emissions, and monitor and evaluate the impact of decisions it makes. This will mean it can report each year on its progress, tracking its ambitions towards Net Zero.

There are many activities which the council will monitor, from the energy used powering its buildings to the miles travelled by council workers, from the waste it disposes to the fuel used to run buses and gritters.

Suffolk County Council recently announced a £12.8 million investment to begin decarbonising the buildings that it owns, reducing emissions and making them cheaper to run. We have a history of providing dedicated investment to improve the energy efficiency of our buildings and services. This has led to reductions in carbon emissions in recent years, through projects such as replacing fossil fuel boilers with bio-mass units, installing solar panels and solar hot water systems, rainwater harvesting, updating lighting and improving insulation.

Growing Suffolk's Biodiversity

Proposals have also been published which would see Suffolk County Council enhance the biodiversity value of at least 30% of its land and assets by 2030.

It would also see the council working with partners, communities and landowners to help substantially reverse the decline of biodiversity across Suffolk.

The proposed policy is a result of the work undertaken by the Policy Development Panel (PDP) which was set up in July 2021.

The policy proposal includes ambitions which stretch across the whole organisation, from looking at how it manages highway trees to the impact of street lighting, from how it procures goods and services to the potential nature-based flood management solutions.

The Net Zero Carbon Budget proposal will be presented at the Cabinet meeting on 1 February 2022 and discussed at the Full Council meeting on 17 February 2022. The Biodiversity PDP proposal will be presented at the Cabinet meeting on 1 February 2022 and can be immediately implemented if agreed.

Warm Homes Suffolk Fund to heat up cold homes this winter

It was announced in late January 2022 that residents can cut energy costs and reduce their carbon through a new scheme.

Suffolk residents who are struggling to keep their homes warm, can contact a new project which offers funding and free advice at www.warmhomessuffolk.org.

Suffolk's councils have joined together to establish Warm Homes Suffolk, which launches today. The team will be on hand to offer expert advice on reducing energy bills, energy usage and identify benefits that residents may be entitled to, to help keep their homes warm.

The work of Warm Homes Suffolk will also help the county towards its target of Net Zero by 2030, as the project aims to better insulate homes and provide more efficient heating, meaning less carbon is released into the atmosphere.

A successful bid was made to the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for £2.7 million pounds of funding to run Warm Homes Suffolk - The Warm Feeling Fund. This is part of the Government's (Local Authority Delivery phase two) LAD2 Scheme, designed to improve the energy efficiency of Britain's homes.

The bid was led by Suffolk County Council, on behalf of all councils in the county.

For eligible residents, the scheme can offer a range of home upgrades, including cavity, loft and external insulation, installation of solar photovoltaic systems and switching central heating to more efficient low carbon heat pumps.

The scheme is available to homeowners, those renting and landlords. There are some conditions to meet before being able to access funding, which is aimed at residents who are:

- earning under £30,000 per annum
- currently receiving benefits (or think you may be eligible)
- living in homes with a low energy rating

If you are a landlord with tenants and property that meet the above criteria, then you could receive a subsidy of up to two-thirds for work which improves the energy efficiency of your property, up to the value of £5,000.

More details and further information about eligibility can be found in the on the Warm Home Suffolk website www.warmhomessuffolk.org, or by calling **03456 037 686**. Lines are open Monday to Friday between 9am and 4pm.

February 2022

Council's commitment to further enhancing Suffolk's natural environment

It was announced in February 2022 that Suffolk County Council will be doing even more for the county's natural environment.

Suffolk County Council will be doing even more for the county's natural environment, as it confirms plans to enhance the biodiversity of at least 30% of its land and assets, by 2030.

This means it will be progressing its work around managing highway trees, planting more hedgerow, nature-based flood management solutions, roadside nature reserves, and much more.

The council already planted 100,000 trees last year, and is on course to plant another 100,000 this year. It has also put in around 20 kilometres of mixed species hedgerow.

The plans will also help work towards the council's ambitions of being a Net Zero organisation by 2030, with Suffolk's nature being an integral part of the carbon cycle.

The policy's ambitions stretch across the whole organisation, from looking at the impact of street lighting, to how it procures goods and services.

One example of the positive changes that the council will make, is to stop using Glyphosate in all highway maintenance operations. This will happen as soon as it is able to deploy a suitable alternative, and at the latest by 2023 for routine weed treatment programmes. The council will work with other local authorities, both locally and through the Local Government Association, in reaching this goal as soon as possible.

The proposals were agreed at Suffolk County Council's Cabinet meeting on 1 February 2022, following the work undertaken by the Policy Development Panel which was set up in July 2021.

Suffolk cements commitment to keeping its communities safe

A new strategy was published in February 2022 outlining how Suffolk will address Violence Against Women and Girls has been published today.

The strategy has been prepared collaboratively by the Safer Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) – consisting of representatives from Suffolk County Council, district and borough councils, the police, Suffolk's Police & Crime Commissioner, community safety partnerships, health and probation services, the Norfolk & Suffolk Criminal Justice Board and Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership.

All board members hold a shared ambition to tackle the incredibly important issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) which includes, but is not limited to, domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and revenge porn – all of which have a devastating impact on victim-survivors, families, and communities.

Much work has been done on preventing VAWG since the launch of the county's first strategy in 2018, which led to the establishment of Suffolk's 24/7 domestic abuse helpline, additional accommodation for survivors and the creation of a Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Unit to help offenders address and alter their behaviour.

However, with recent figures showing an increase in sexual offences and domestic violence nationally, the board recognises the need to continue to drive forward positive change through effective partnership working.

Suffolk's new VAWG Strategy outlines how this will be achieved in the county, with four key objectives – prevention, supporting victims, pursuing perpetrators, and strengthening the system – forming the basis for its approach.

Relevant strategies, policies, and legislation, including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the police and Government's response to VAWG, have also been reflected to enable Suffolk to complement the national effort.

In addition, the strategy will be accompanied by an action plan for 2022 – 2025 to help ensure meaningful activity. This has been informed by members of the board, local charities, and domestic abuse survivors – who praised the system for enabling them to co-create proposals and have their say.

To support the board in implementing both the strategy and action plan, Suffolk County Council has contributed £350,000 towards this.

The strategy is available to [view online here](#).

Good news for Suffolk as Government gives the green light to negotiate a County Deal

Published in February 2022, Leader of the Council, Matthew Hicks, reflected on the news that Suffolk County Council was given the go ahead to negotiate a County Deal

Leader of Suffolk County Council, Councillor Matthew Hicks, explains why a new county deal is good for Suffolk, and why we don't need a new Mayor.

In August last year, I wrote about the efforts of Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders in working to secure from the Government a devolution deal for Suffolk. Last week, at the same time as the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper, we heard the news that Suffolk was successfully chosen as one of nine areas across the country to have been given the opportunity of negotiating a new County Deal.

This is fantastic news for Suffolk, and I am delighted about it.

One of the questions I've heard a lot since the announcement is, what would a deal mean for Suffolk? To clarify we do not have a deal yet, and we have many more months of negotiations and discussions with Government ahead of us before we can look to finalise an actual deal.

Some of the areas we included in our initial discussion centred around the development and roll out of Oyster style travel cards to increase the attractiveness and effectiveness of public transport and longer term funding for major transport infrastructure upgrades, not just one-off funding.

We also discussed with Government the opportunity of keeping all the apprenticeship levy funding raised in Suffolk in Suffolk, benefiting more people here. This could create the opportunity to work with the University, colleges, business and others to explore how this money could be better used.

Negotiating the devolution of the powers necessary to develop more innovative projects to help deliver further action on Climate Change and make good on our promises around net zero by 2030 are also possible. Whilst I was delighted to read the other day that in a recent study Suffolk County Council was ranked as the third-best county council nationally for our response to the climate crisis, our ambitions in this area could be taken further still via a County Deal.

What I can promise you, however, is that during the negotiations I will be pushing the Government for the maximum amount of benefit for the people of Suffolk.

Finally, one of the areas related to this announcement which gained a lot of attention, especially from the media, was the potential for a directly elected Mayor of Suffolk, like the Metropolitan Mayors across the country in areas like the West Midlands. Let me say here and now, this is not something which Suffolk has asked for and importantly not something we need to secure a deal with Government.

Whilst of course we recognise the work of such Mayors like Andy Street and Ben Houchen, this additional level of oversight is not needed for our deal given the strong levels of co-operation and leadership already found here in Suffolk. Do not forget, this opportunity is the result of an ongoing dialogue to promote Suffolk to central Government strongly supported by our MPs and the partnership working with district and borough councils. Going forward this partnership working will continue alongside health partners, emergency services, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chamber of Commerce.

I have always been ambitious for Suffolk, and I believe the opportunities within a County Deal would help unlock more potential in Suffolk and help us level up across the county; especially as we start to slowly escape the clutches of COVID. We will negotiate hard for a deal that will give us the tools we need to build back better, build back stronger and build back greener.

Halfway mark reached as over 20,000 Suffolk streetlights replaced

In February 2022 Suffolk County Council's programme to replace 43,400 streetlights with new energy-efficient LEDs reached the halfway mark.

Contractor, Bouygues Energies & Services begins work in Ipswich.

To date, the teams have replaced 21,215 new streetlights with the new lanterns and are well on the way to successfully delivering the project on budget and to programme timescales.

These LED lanterns use less energy and produce a more natural and focused light than the traditional orange glow of streetlights. They are extremely long-lasting products and have an expected lifetime of up to 100,000 hours. This is approximately two times longer than a typical conventional street lighting lamp. As a result, Suffolk County Council is expecting to reduce its annual electricity costs on the streetlights by around 76%, saving more than £1.7 million a year. This is 16% more than what was originally anticipated.

The programme is on schedule to be completed by the end of May 2022, with all heritage-style lanterns being upgraded towards the end of the programme. Prior to commencing in

towns or parishes, Suffolk Highways is contacting those councils in case they wish to upgrade their parish-council owned street-lighting at the end of the project.

Keep a look out for signs in your area to see where the teams are working next and follow [@Suff_highways](#) on Twitter for regular updates.

March 2022

First section of Gull Wing bridge in Lowestoft arrives

At the beginning of March 2022, the first major steel section of the Gull Wing bridge in Lowestoft arrived.

The North Approach Viaduct (NAV1) section arrived at the construction site on Lake Lothing on Tuesday March 1 on a barge following a 32-hour crossing from Ghent in Belgium.

Leading building and civil engineering contractor Farrans is constructing the bridge for Suffolk County Council.

Fabricated by Victor Buyck Steel Construction, NAV1 is approximately 55m long.

On delivery it weighed 380 tonnes and, when ready to move into its final position spanning the East Suffolk railway line, it will weigh approximately 1,450 tonnes.

The complex process of navigating the barge into the inner harbour and then transferring the steel structure from the barge on to the site was overseen by a team of experienced civil engineers, port masters and marine experts.

In the coming days it will be moved to a special platform where a concrete slab deck will be cast in situ before the entire span is moved and placed in its final position during a weekend long railway possession.

NAV 1's arrival was dependent on weather conditions remaining favourable and it needed to arrive during a slack tide to travel into the inner harbour.

Suffolk County Council's leaving care service receives high praise from Ofsted

In March 2022, Suffolk County Council's leaving care service received high praise from Ofsted.

Ofsted inspectors assessed the local authority's arrangement for care leavers as part of a focused visit to the service. The visit follows on from the Outstanding rating received by SCC's Children's Services department in 2019. The services for children in care and care leavers was the only area at the time to be rated 'Good' and therefore was an area of priority for the council.

At the recent visit inspectors concluded that care leavers are successfully helped to transition to independence and reach their full potential. The service was seen to have a culture that is “determined, ambitious and creative” with practitioners who build trusting relationships with care leavers. Practitioners were seen accessing a wide range of specialist expertise to provide services to care leavers that are individualised and responsive.

Inspectors also said that “Many care leavers achieve well, exceeding their own expectations. All are valued and their achievements are celebrated. Persistent efforts are made to reach out to those who are difficult to engage.”

The full report can be found here: <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50178373>

Equality and communities to get higher profile in Suffolk County Council cabinet changes

A new cabinet role was established in March 2022.

Equality and support for local communities are to get greater focus among Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet team when a new cabinet member starts on 7 March.

Councillor Bobby Bennett will join Suffolk County Council’s cabinet as cabinet member for equality and communities, where she will take specific responsibility for the authority’s policy decisions on safer and stronger communities, community safety (including domestic abuse, prevent and violence against women and girls), equality, libraries, the voluntary sector, arts and heritage, coroner services, customer services, Citizens Advice, gypsy and traveller services and human resources.

At the same time, Councillor Philip Faircloth-Mutton will become deputy cabinet member for transformation – supporting Councillor Richard Rout and helping to oversee the council’s major service improvement and development programmes. He also starts his new role on Monday 7 March.