

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – APRIL 2021



Cllr Stephen Burroughes - Framlingham Division

• SUFFOLK LEADERS REVIEW CLIMATE EMERGENCY & COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN

Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders met on February 26 to discuss local plans to reduce the impact on the environment as part of Suffolk's climate emergency declaration, and to focus on the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and how Suffolk plans to enter a local recovery phase when the time is right. In 2019, all councils in Suffolk declared a Climate Emergency, committing themselves towards working to achieving Carbon Net Zero by 2030 through day-to-day business operations. To support this work and to chart progress, Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) agreed to map out the projects already underway, and explore what would be needed to meet the challenge of reducing carbon across Suffolk.

There are already a number of notably successful projects up and running with the installation of plug-in vehicle charging points, the planting of new trees and hedgerows, and the planned use of new zero and ultra-low emission fleet vehicles for councils and Suffolk Police. Taking a collaborative approach to this work gives partners across Suffolk a greater voice in encouraging others to follow this example and to lobby and work with Government on new environmental initiatives. Leaders previously commissioned an independent evidence base to inform development of a collaborative climate emergency plan across Suffolk.

The collective work towards achieving Carbon Net Zero is based around the following six key themes:

- Domestic Buildings
- Transport (public and private)
- Industry and Commercial Energy Use
- Power (consumption and generation)
- Finance
- Cross cutting issues (that affect all partners)

During the same Suffolk Public Sector Leaders meeting there was also a presentation to update the group on Suffolk's recovery plan for Covid-19 following the Prime Minister's announcement this week, charting the four significant markers to reopen schools and in time businesses and hospitality.

The presentation at SPSL updated how the Leaders' and NALEP joint investments created a Suffolk Inclusive Growth Investment Fund the first round of which has seen some £338,000, to support the roll out of the Virtual High Streets initiative in Babergh and Mid Suffolk; enabled businesses to take on apprentices in 2021, improved coordination of work across Suffolk's network of business innovation hubs and invested in Suffolk's creative digital sector, providing space for business growth and support for business start-ups. The second round of investment will be announced in March 2021. As part of the revised timetable given the continued period of Covid-19 response, Suffolk's recovery plan is due to go to Suffolk Public Sector Leaders' meeting in June to ensure there is continued momentum and support measures in place.

• OVER 98% OF PUPILS RECEIVE PREFERRED SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACE

On March 1 it was announced that 98.16% of pupils received a place at one of their Preferred Secondary Schools in Suffolk on National Offer Day. This year, Suffolk County Council (SCC) received 7,652 applications from parents indicating at which secondary school they would prefer their child to be educated from

September 2021. 7,114 pupils received offers for their first preference school and 7,511 pupils received an offer for one of their three preferred schools.

- **FEEDBACK SOUGHT TO IMPROVE RECYCLING CENTRE BOOKING SYSTEM**

People of Suffolk are being asked to rate their experience of the 'book a slot' system that's in place to visit a Recycling Centre. A booking system was introduced at Suffolk's recycling centres in May 2020 to manage maximum visitor numbers and enable the safe reopening of the service after closure at the start of the first Covid-19 lockdown. The sites welcome around 14,000 visitors per week on average.

Suffolk County Council is working on upgrades to the booking system software to improve the customer experience by making it quicker and easier to make and amend bookings. Before any improvements can take place, the council is seeking feedback on how well the booking system has worked so far. [People can give their views by completing the 2-minute questionnaire online](https://www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk) at [suffolkrecycling.org.uk](https://www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk).

Suffolk has long held ambitions to Create the Greenest County and the Suffolk 2020 fund, which is a programme of work all about investing in projects that benefit Suffolk communities, aims to support the council's climate emergency declaration and improve Suffolk for all residents in years to come.

- **BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO ACCESSING DIGITAL CARE SERVICES IN SUFFOLK**

On March 5 Suffolk County Council announced the launch of a new project which commits to providing a range of accessible local care support services to help residents continue to live independently in their own homes. As a largely rural county, Suffolk County Council is committed to providing a wide range of accessible local care support services to help residents continue to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. This approach is even more important at the current time with Covid prevalent in the community, and the authority has successfully adapted its services through the use of technology to reduce risks to the health of residents as well as staff at this time.

Making the most of the advances in digital technology and keeping residents and communities connected has really proved successful in recent months as more and more people see the benefits of using the range of opportunities to personalise the care services they receive through digital options.

As a result of Suffolk 2020 project funding, the Council is launching a new initiative to adapt and kit out a number of community vehicles with digital connectivity and provide a showcase for a range of supportive technology and digital solutions to take out and about into local communities, introducing residents to the potential benefits of using the equipment and services.

Last year, Suffolk County Council successfully introduced the use of video carephones to people who may be vulnerable or shielding, to help them stay connected with friends and loved ones during periods of isolation. As part of this Covid response, it became increasingly clear that there was a significant number of other elderly, vulnerable and isolated people in Suffolk who do not have the ability to access technology or connectivity but may find such services useful and beneficial. Such an approach has already proved to be successful in other parts of the UK and is supported by national and regional data.

The plan is for Suffolk County Council to enhance existing community vehicles as 'Mobile Digital Care Hubs' to enable residents to experience some of the digital care technologies first-hand to better understand opportunities available to them and if they would support them to meet their individual needs. The vehicles will be travelling around the county with a focus on reaching those who live in more isolated areas of Suffolk.

The project will provide a chance for skilled members of staff to talk about, show and demonstrate some of these technologies first-hand and provide a better understanding of how digital care can help individuals to live more safely and independently for longer.

Digital care solutions offer a wide range of other benefits including improved wellbeing and the ability to stay better connected with family, friends and other people who may offer invaluable support.

- **SUFFOLK SECURES £3.1M FOR BUILDING DECARBONISATION INITIATIVE**

It was announced on March 9 that Suffolk County Council, working in conjunction with property specialists Concertus, was successful in gaining over £3M of funding. This funding has been received from The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to promote capital energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation projects within buildings used to provide frontline public services. Working with Concertus, the council has been preparing a range of packages to support the decarbonising of various buildings in the Council's estate including applications for the council's headquarters at Endeavour House in Ipswich, four rural fire stations, Beacon House, Waterloo Centre and Leiston Children's Centre.

The council's Children and Young People service also reviewed their portfolio of school buildings along with Concertus. This review resulted in the submission of grant applications for nine schools across the county, all of which were successful. This grant scheme aligns with BEIS' new mission and priorities: fighting coronavirus, backing business, unleashing innovation, and tackling climate change. Through this scheme, it is supporting the council's own commitment to be net zero by 2030 along with the Government's own net zero goals and encouraging further green investment within the UK.

Packages of work vary from building to building, but many include the fitting of solar panels and battery storage, as well as improvements to wall or roof insulation and installation of Air Source Heat Pumps to move away from the use of fossil fuels for source of heating. The council hopes to have the work completed at all the sites before the 30 September 2021.

- **SUFFOLK INCLUDED IN GOVERNMENT'S UK GIGABIT BROADBAND PROGRAMME**

On March 19 it was announced that Suffolk is to be included in the £5 billion strategy to deliver next generation, gigabit-capable broadband to the entire country. The programme aims to connect the first one million homes and businesses with gigabit speed broadband in the hardest to reach 20% of the UK by 2025. Gigabit-capable broadband connections offer the fastest and most reliable speeds currently available. Connections will enable and create a range of social benefits alongside boosting jobs and economic growth over the coming decades, and help improve connection and opportunities, especially for rural communities. It is hoped the rollout will give people the freedom to live and work more flexibly.

The scheme will use a broad range of interventions to deliver gigabit broadband, including contracts for new publicly funded infrastructure, use of broadband vouchers and other innovative solutions to deliver the roll out.

- **SUCCESS FOLLOWING £500K BOOST FOR HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENTS NEAR SCHOOLS**

It was announced on March 23 that locations around schools across Suffolk have benefitted from new road markings and signs, following £500,000 Highways Investment Fund (HIF) cash boost. The extra funding, which was announced by Councillor Andrew Reid, cabinet member with responsibility for highways during his speech at February 2020's full council meeting has been focussed on improving the safety of pupils and parents travelling to and from school, refreshing lines and cleaning and repairing signs in and around school zones.

Following inspection of the condition of road lining and signs in the vicinity of every school in Suffolk, 146 locations were identified as requiring new signs to replace those that were damaged or missing. Additionally, 218 areas with faded road markings are receiving a refresh. Sign cleaning and light vegetation works have also been carried out where it was required. As of March 2021, almost all sign-related works have been completed. Road markings are being refreshed continuously and it is hoped that the project will be finished in its entirety by the end of April 2021.

- **100,000 TREES PLANTED AS PART OF AMBITIOUS COUNCIL SCHEME**

On March 23 it was announced 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. Located in the Little and Great Waldingfield area, the 100,000th tree, a field maple, is part of 6.4 miles of new hedgerow which the council has planted across a number of its farm holdings.

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. Local straw mulch is being used to reduce competition from weeds and to help retain moisture as the hedges become established. The tenant farmers will continue to maintain the hedgerows located on their land.

- **AUTOMATIC NUMBER PLATE RECOGNITION CAMERAS TO BE INSTALLED IN VILLAGES ACROSS SUFFOLK**

An announcement on March 24 noted that Suffolk County Council and Suffolk's Police and Crime Commissioner and Suffolk Constabulary, has 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. An ANPR camera 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 has 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.

For further information from my report or questions please contact me at:

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