Suffolk County Council Annual Report

I can not believe that I've been your county councillor for nearly 15 years, I currently hold the position of cabinet member for adult care and I sit on the West Suffolk Hospital Foundation Trust as a governor and am a foundation governor for the King Edward VI Foundation Trust.

New street lighting proposed to reduce the county's carbon footprint

Suffolk County Council is looking to reduce its carbon footprint by investing £9.8m in street lighting, after Cabinet approved an LED street lighting replacement project on 25 February 2020.

Following a review of its street lighting policy in 2010, and with energy prices set to increase at between 8% and 12% a year, the Council has decided the high energy consumption of its existing lanterns could create further pressure on its resources in the near future.

The Council owns and maintains over 60,000 streetlights. Back in 2010, the Council took numerous steps to help reduce both the energy costs and carbon footprint of its lighting stock. This included the introduction of part-night lighting arrangements and conversion to LED for those lighting units that were consuming the highest level of energy.

The proposal to convert the remaining street lighting stock to LED will help to reduce both Suffolk's energy consumption and carbon footprint, whilst providing crisper illumination of the streets for residents. The project will also ensure that Suffolk remains resilient to any future energy price increases. The project will be completed in the autumn of 2022.

Suffolk County Council recognise the importance of our environment in Suffolk and the impacts of climate change. Where possible, want to ensure that we protect and enhance the natural environment, decrease carbon emissions and reduce the use of scarce resources, for the well-being of future generations and the natural world. Initiatives such as this are important in helping us to achieve that aim.

Suffolk County Council will be replacing almost 43,000 lights with new energy saving LED lanterns. This will save approximately 60% of our current energy bill which can invested elsewhere. We will be able to reduce our carbon usage by around 80%, benefitting residents throughout Suffolk.

County Council approves budget to spend more on services for vulnerable residents

On 13 February 2020, Suffolk County Council approved its annual budget. The Council will increase its spending power again this coming financial year, particularly in Children's and Adults services, where demand continues to rise year on year.

In 2020/2021, the Council's budget will rise to £556million which represents an increase of £37m (7.1%) from 2019/20. Children's and Adults Services represent around 70% of the Council's overall spend.

This year's budget is based on a 12-month financial settlement from government, rather than the three or four-year agreement which is usually offered.

As well as addressing the need to maintain funding for key services, the Council will invest an additional £3.5m into two one-year programmes, the Suffolk 2020 fund (£3m) and a highways investment fund (£500k).

The Suffolk 2020 fund will be used for projects that can deliver a real difference for local communities. The intention is to adopt good ideas covering more than one area of Suffolk, rather than having a number of small-scale projects. To qualify for the fund, projects must link to one of the following themes: carbon reduction; carbon offset, road safety, natural environment; built environment; innovation; and use of technology.

Each project must offer a clear return on investment through positive economic, social, or environmental impact. County Councillors can put ideas forward on behalf of their community and must seek the sponsorship of a Cabinet Member for consideration. Further details of the fund will be made available in due course.

The £500k highways investment fund will focus on improving the safety of pupils and parents travelling to and from school, by refreshing lines and cleaning and repairing signs in and around school zones.

The funding is allocated for use within the 2020/21 financial year and looks set to benefit areas around many Suffolk schools, complementing the road marking renewal programme that is taking place as part of the move of civil parking powers. Suffolk Highways officers are developing a plan of how these extra works will be identified and delivered. Further information will be announced in due course.

Suffolk County Council know that the setting of a balanced budget is never easy. Especially given the continuing financial challenges the council have seen during the last few years in a number of our services.

It is right that we continue to focus our budget and resources where they will have the biggest impact. Suffolk County Council are pleased to say this year our calls have been answered, at least in part. The provisional local government settlement for this year enables the Council to set a budget for 2020/2021 that will see no change to current service levels over and above those planned through our ongoing transformation programmes.

Unfortunately, however, as Suffolk County Council are only getting a 12-month settlement, the council lacks the longer-term certainty needed to deal with the large departmental budgets that Suffolk County Council manage including Children's and Adults Services. The Council are therefore taking the measured decision to raise council tax by 1.98 per cent and implement a 2 per cent rise in the Adult Social Care Precept, which is ring-fenced for use within our highest demand service.

New permit scheme aims to address roadwork disruption

On 28 January, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet gave the go-ahead for a new permit scheme that they hope will reduce delays on Suffolk's roads caused by roadworks.

The introduction of a roadworks permit scheme for the county's roads will give Suffolk County Council's Network Assurance Team enhanced powers to place conditions on work carried out by utility companies and other organisations, including Suffolk Highways.

At present, public utilities simply need to inform Suffolk County Council of the dates when they are planning to do their works. Under a permit scheme, they would have to ask for permission and the council can either approve, refuse or amend their request as they see fit.

Applicants would also have to pay a fee when applying for a permit to do roadworks. The cost will vary depending on the duration of the proposed work, the strategic importance of the affected road, and the time of day the work is due to take place. If roadworks occur outside of the peak congestion periods, the fee could be reduced.

The permit scheme is used successfully elsewhere in the country and there is typically a reduction in congestion on the network.

A permit scheme will provide more power to control proposed roadworks. It places responsibility on the applicant to better plan their work. The Council hope a permit scheme could reduce the impact of that work on the road network and our residents.

A permit scheme should result in less disruption and less time that vehicles spend in traffic/delays. Consequently, there should also be a reduction in fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

According to the Department for Transport, other counties that have run a permit scheme have seen a reduction in disruption and so Suffolk County Council will endeavour to ensure those who live, work and visit our county also benefit.

There will be a cost to the local authority to administer the permit scheme because they will need to recruit additional staff and amend existing software to cater for permits. However, the costs associated with the additional work involved will be recovered through the fee income associated with the scheme, making it cost neutral.

The permit scheme will be in place from 1 April 2020.

New recycling centre opens in Bury St Edmunds

The £3.9million flagship site in Fornham Road, Bury St Edmunds, opened on 16 January and replaces the now closed recycling centre at Rougham Hill.

The new recycling centre is part of the West Suffolk Operational Hub, a £23million project by West Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council to manage waste by relocating a number of facilities to a single site.

The centre is the first open air site in Suffolk where all containers can be accessed by the public from ground level, removing the need for steps. Visitors can recycle the same wide range of materials as they did at the Rougham Hill recycling centre.

There is also an onsite Reuse shop selling items either reclaimed from the skips or donated directly by the public, with proceeds going to the Benjamin Foundation.

Date agreed for plans to tackle Suffolk's parking problems

In January 2020, it was announced that councils in Suffolk will take on responsibility for local parking management from 6 April 2020.

Traditionally, roadside parking offences were a matter for the Police. However, parking has become a lower priority for them, so Suffolk County Council is transferring this responsibility to local district and borough councils under a process known as civil parking enforcement, or CPE.

This means each council will be responsible for issuing parking fines, warnings and notices in their area, although a deal has been struck by Babergh and Mid Suffolk councils to have their parking enforced by Ipswich and West Suffolk officers.

A consistent approach is being planned across the whole county, meaning fines will be the same, regardless of which authority manages parking in that area.

Councils already manage public car parks in many towns and villages, so the changes make sense. Suffolk Constabulary is supportive of the move because the transfer of responsibilities will enable

them to spend additional time on keeping communities safe and arresting and bringing offenders to justice.

Moving the responsibility from the police to local councils requires that statutory notice is given in Parliament. The parliamentary order was laid on 9 January 2020.

Suffolk celebrates CQC success

In January 2020, Care Quality Commission statistics showed that Suffolk is now top of the table for comparator local authority areas.

In Suffolk, 89.04% of Adult Social Care locations are rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission, the standards agency for adult care.

When it comes to the national rankings, Suffolk is performing equally well. Ranked as third nationally for 'Good' or 'Outstanding' rated care locations, Suffolk shines out as a great area for adult social care.

This is particularly impressive when it is considered that Suffolk has over 100 more adult social care locations than any of the other areas listed in the top ten.

Councillor Rebecca Hopfensperger, Cabinet Member for Adult Care, said:

"This is an incredible achievement and something that is worth celebrating. This to me, illustrates that Suffolk is a great place for Adult Social Care, with a wealth of care providers who do fantastic work.

"There are of course, still areas where we can improve and I know work is continuing to raise standards where it is required, but I am confident that we are working hard to address any concerns.

"These results make me incredibly proud and grateful to our care providers for the fantastic way that we are caring for local people."

More information regarding the CQC ratings of local authority areas or individual care locations can be found on the **Care Quality Commission website**.

Council pushes forward with commitment to creating more places for specialist education in Suffolk

Suffolk County Council, like many other local authorities, faces an increasingly large demand for education places for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND).

In September 2019, a cross-party Policy Development Panel (PDP) was established to review the county's local offer and identify suitable specialist education places.

The work of the PDP involved a comprehensive analysis. They visited a variety of SEND settings in and around the county, considering the views of service users and their families, partners, and educations providers on the best way to grow Suffolk's specialist education offer both in the short and long term to meet future demand.

A green light to move forward with the work of the PDP was given at the Cabinet's Committee meeting in January 2019. Further work was then done by the Council's Capital Strategy Group to provide an overview of the required level of investment for individual projects.

In April 2019, Cabinet approved a financial investment of up to £45.6 million to support the development of a number of local specialist provisions for children and young people with SEND.

The investment, which covers new special schools and specialist units attached to existing mainstream schools, will create over 800 new specialist education places in the county.

Providing more specialist education placements locally will mean that the county's children and young people with additional needs will not have to spend unnecessary time away from their family and home travelling to a specialist provision outside of Suffolk. They will also have the opportunity to strengthen their roots within their local community, so they are able to build strong local networks as they move into adulthood.

In December 2019, Suffolk County Council were in a position to announce more details of the development of new SEND units attached to mainstream schools in the county. Following a thorough evaluation process, a number of suitable schools have been identified to develop:

- Two Generic Key Stage 1 Units at Pipers Vale Primary Academy and Burton End Primary Academy.
- Three Communication and Interaction Key Stage 2 Units at Murrayfield Primary Academy, Houldsworth Valley Primary Academy, and Causton Junior School.
- One Cognition and Learning Key Stage 2 Unit at Clements Primary Academy.
- Three Communication and Interaction Key Stage 3/4 Units at Copleston High School, Ixworth School, and Newmarket Academy.
- One Cognition and Learning Key Stage 3/4 Unit at Castle Manor Primary Academy.

In total, this means an additional 168 new specialist placements will be available for children and their families in Suffolk from September 2020, on top of existing specialist provision. A further commissioning round will begin in Spring 2020 and will consider further expressions of interest from mainstream schools who hope to open units in September 2021.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service rated "Good" in Government inspection

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has undergone its most comprehensive, independent inspection in many years and has been rated as "Good" for its effectiveness, efficiency and how well it leads and manages its staff.

The findings come from a report published on 17 December 2019 by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). Inspectors reviewed every aspect of the service, from how we respond to 999 emergencies, to looking at policies, and interviewing a wide range of firefighters and staff.

The report praises many aspects of the service, particularly how well it collaborates with other emergency services and agencies, how it responds to fires and other emergencies, how it ensures fairness and promotes diversity, and the financially sound way the service is run.

The Hold topping out ceremony

On 25 September, contractors R G Carter, along with senior officers from Suffolk County Council, the University of Suffolk, Ipswich Vision and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, celebrated the official 'Topping Out' of the new 'The Hold' building.

Located on the campus of the University of Suffolk, within Ipswich's unique and regenerating Waterfront, the building will house the majority of Suffolk's nationally and internationally significant archives.

More than just a new building, 'The Hold' project will also be the engine for a transformed, audience-focused Archives service reaching out to diverse communities in Ipswich, the county and the nation, through its activity and digital programmes, engaging people in new and exciting ways.

The Hold is set to open its doors in spring 2020.

Eleventh shared Police and Fire station officially opened

In August 2019, the new shared Police/Fire station formally opened in Beccles. This is the eleventh shared community Fire and Police facility in Suffolk with stations already operating in Leiston, Newmarket, Saxmundham, Felixstowe, Woodbridge, Ixworth, Elmswell, Debenham, Framlingham and Clare. There are also plans for further joint stations in Stowmarket and Ipswich.

Financial support for the project was secured from the Home Office as part of central government's drive for closer emergency services collaboration.

Suffolk businesses celebrated for reducing carbon emissions

On 10 July 2019, an event was held at one of Suffolk's most sustainable business centres to celebrate the carbon reduction efforts of over 400 Suffolk and Norfolk businesses.

Since their launch in 2010, Suffolk Carbon Charter awards have been presented to hundreds of businesses who show commitment to reducing their carbon emissions, as part of Suffolk's ambitions for Creating the Greenest County.

Many projects have been developed under the Creating the Greenest County banner since 2007. The partnership continues to work with local communities and businesses to help realise the environmental and economic benefits of reducing energy consumption, adapting to climate change and enhancing the natural environment.

Guests saw displays of a hydrogen vehicle, electric cars, electric motorbikes and promotion of Plug In Suffolk, the UK's first open fast charging network for electric vehicles. Guests were also given a tour of the event venue, home to Woolley, a property management company that thrives on creating sustainable developments and holders of a Gold Suffolk Carbon Charter award themselves.

The event was sponsored by Business Energy Efficiency Anglia, which provides energy efficiency grants to eligible businesses in Suffolk and Norfolk.

To find out more about how your business can benefit from the Suffolk Carbon Charter, Business Energy Efficiency Anglia and other projects to support your environmental ambitions, visit **www.greensuffolk.org**.

Suffolk pothole repair scheme to go countywide

In June 2019, it was announced that a trial scheme to tackle potholes swiftly has been so successful it is being rolled out across Suffolk.

The Suffolk Highways scheme, which started in Ipswich in October 2018, changes how potholes are categorised.

The new system allows engineers to repair potholes close to each other during the same visit, tackling smaller potholes before they can expand.

Previously, they fixed larger holes first and smaller ones at a later date.

The new policy reduces the amount of time workers have to travel between jobs.

Suffolk County Council awarded £4.41m for smart streetlights

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport's (ADEPT) SMART Places Live Labs programme launched on 31 May 2019.

The £22.9million programme, funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) will see eight local authority led projects develop and test prototypes and applications across SMART materials, communications, energy and mobility.

Projects range from harvesting renewable energy from roads and innovative data analytics to using plastics in road surfacing treatment.

In total ADEPT received 28 bids from local authorities across the country. Suffolk County Council was one of the eight successful projects and has been awarded £4.41m for an innovative project to create a network of smart streetlights across the county.

Hannah Bartram, Chief Operating Officer for ADEPT said: "Live Labs is a really exciting programme for ADEPT. It gives local highways authorities and their partners the opportunity to innovate, test and introduce new applications for emerging SMART technologies across the local road network.

New Highways Self Help scheme empowers Suffolk people to do more in their community

'Highways Community Self Help', launched in May 2019, is designed to support and empower town and parish councils in Suffolk to carry out minor maintenance tasks in their area.

The much-anticipated scheme was developed in partnership with towns and parishes across Suffolk after it was recognised that many of these councils were willing to carry out additional works to maintain and improve the look of their communities.

The types of works that town and parish councils are keen to undertake include:

- Sign cleaning
- Fingerpost cleaning/painting/repair
- Tree pruning/branch removal
- Hedge cutting/pruning
- Siding out of footways, or paths (widen to original/full width)
- Grass verge cutting
- Weed killing/weed removal.

Towns and parishes across Suffolk will be able to carry out these tasks and more through one or more of the following four options:

- Buying in services from contractors
- Using their own trained employee(s)
- Using volunteers to undertake work
- Buying additional services from Suffolk Highways.

Towns and parishes that are interested in joining Community Self Help are encouraged to visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/communityselfhelp for more details.

Ofsted confirms that Suffolk County Council's Children's Services are 'Outstanding'

On 21 May 2019, it was announced that Ofsted inspectors had awarded Children's Services at Suffolk County Council the top grade of 'Outstanding' following their visit in April 2019.

Only eight other Local Authorities, out of 152, had at that point been judged to be 'Outstanding' overall.

Ofsted's inspection report of children's social care services said:

"Services for children are of an exceptionally high standard. They are child-focused and make a positive difference to children's lives".

Inspectors were impressed with improvements made across the service since it was rated 'Good' in 2015. The report states that, "stable and aspirational leadership and strong political and financial support have created conditions that are conductive to continuous improvement and the development of sustainable, high-quality services".

Inspectors commended the staff, highlighting that "the work that staff are doing with children and young people is impressive; the way that they are doing it is making a real difference to their lives". The report states that, "workers build positive and purposeful working relationships with children and their families. They ensure children are safeguarded, and that their wider needs are addressed. They consistently act to ensure the best outcomes for children".

Workforce management was also recognised by Ofsted as a strength. Our strong workforce management was recognised again in December 2019, when Suffolk County Council was awarded silver in the Social Worker Employer of the Year category at the national Social Worker of the Year awards.

Highways

Suffice to say that highway issues tend to be the majority of the issues that are raised with me including potholes, drainage issues, speeding and signage issues to name but a few. We were due to have a site visit to discuss some of the outstanding issues but due to the COVID lockdown all face to face meetings were cancelled. I have therefore complied a list for the community warden from Suffolk County Council to go and inspect and report back on.

Locality Budget/Highways Locality Budget

This year I have supported the village through my locality budget on the following schemes: -

Provide Bollards on the village green.

Provide Signage for the Crematorium and not suitable for HGVs in Mere Road.

Contact

As ever if you need to contact me you can phone me on 07876 683 516 or email rebecca.hopfensperger@suffolk.gov.uk