

**Suffolk County Council Report
February 2023**

Dear All,

Please see below an update for February 2023. As always please email or telephone me if you have an issue that you would like my help with and please do not hesitate to share my contact details with anyone if they need to get in touch.

Kind regards

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Council focuses on children's services, adult care and the environment, as budget confirmed

Suffolk County Council has approved its financial budget for 2022-23, alongside its first-ever full Net Zero carbon budget.

Both items were passed at the Full Council meeting on Thursday 17 February 2022, providing a focus on children's services, adult care and the environment.

The council's budget will rise by 4.5% (from £598.2 to £625.4m), with the additional money generated by a 1.99% increase in council tax, a further 1.00% from the Adult Care Precept, and an increase in grants received from the Government.

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.

Fire service finalises plan to protect Suffolk's communities

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), outlining how it will manage and reduce risks across the county, has been given the green light.

The plan details Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's priorities until 2027, including:

- Updating how response times are reported to include from the time of call and focus on the areas of highest risk, such as dwelling fires
- Addressing climate change to support Suffolk County Council's ambition to be a carbon-neutral authority by 2030, with a view to introducing more non-fossil fuel vehicles in the fleet
- Developing preventative safe and well visits, including continued work with the National Farmers' Union to tailor advice to rural and farming communities
- Assessing how the service works with partner agencies, such as supporting the ambulance service when appropriate and if capacity and resources allow for this
- Reviewing the recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters and specialist support staff to ensure Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service remains a diverse employer of choice

These priorities were identified during extensive research and pre-consultation engagement with staff and stakeholders. In addition, hundreds of Suffolk residents helped to inform the final document by providing feedback on proposals during the CRMP public consultation, which ran from October to December 2022 and included a series of public events held at six supermarkets across the county.

Suffolk County Council will support Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service with implementing its CRMP and has allocated over £5.3million to fleet replacement in its 2023/24 budget, which includes the purchase of 20 state-of-the-art fire engines to ensure that firefighters have the equipment needed to help meet the service's priorities.

The new CRMP replaces Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's previous Integrated Risk Management Plan, which was implemented following approval by Cabinet in July 2019.

New highways services arriving in Suffolk as multi-million-pound contract awarded

Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, has been awarded Suffolk's new highways services contract, which will begin on 1 October 2023.

Following an extensive procurement exercise, Suffolk County Council has confirmed Milestone will be its new contract partner for up to 20 years. The new partnership, which is worth in the region of £800 million - £1 billion, will be delivering highway projects and improvements across Suffolk, including but not limited to maintaining roads, pavements and rights of way, drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting.

When searching for its new highways partner, the county council 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.

The council wanted 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.

A rigorous procurement exercise was carried out over many months, with various stages of discussions with service providers, to evolve their solutions to meet the various contractual requirements and deliver an effective and efficient highway service for Suffolk. Final submissions were evaluated and extensively moderated before the final winning contract was awarded.

Ten nominees up for Suffolk's Green Hero award

Voting is now open, for you to choose Suffolk's "Green Hero".

The award will go to an outstanding individual who inspires others to care for the environment, connects people, and brings environmental projects to life.

Suffolk County Council's Creating The Greenest County Awards for 2023 will see a total of nine awards presented to schools, businesses and communities from across the county. They celebrate the achievements of those in Suffolk who are protecting our environment, reducing their carbon emissions and inspiring others.

You can read all about the ten nominees, put forward by members of the public, at www.greensuffolk.org/hero, where you can also place your vote.

The judging panel is made up of previous winners, sponsors and environmental experts and awards will be presented at an environmentally-friendly ceremony to be held in March at The Hold, in Ipswich.

The Awards categories are:

- Green Business
- Green Small Business
- Green Tourism
- Green School
- Green Hero
- Green Community
- Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscape
- Waste Reduction and Recycling
- Derek Moore Award – for outstanding contribution

To vote for your Green Hero, visit www.greensuffolk.org/hero - voting closes on Friday 3 March 2023.

Suffolk's exemplary commitment to retrofitting homes

Commendable efforts are being made across Suffolk to ensure the retrofit of energy inefficient homes.

While the Warm Homes Suffolk initiative is ensuring that the most vulnerable households receive support, the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership is tackling the shortage of trained installers in the county.

Almost 50 people have been trained in retrofitting through Skills Bootcamps, providing a much-needed boost to the workforce needed for the delivery of warmer homes.

The skilling-up of 46 people in Norfolk and Suffolk in three levels of retrofitting through the Government funded initiative comes after Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders agreed to create a Fuel Poverty Retrofit team to support those struggling most with their energy bills.

A Fuel Poverty Retrofit Team will work with residents living in energy inefficient properties to address funding issues and ensure a consistent supply of installers.

An extension of the Warm Homes Suffolk Scheme, the move is expected to lead to around £50m worth of work and deliver almost £4.8m in combined potential savings for households through insulation, air source heat pumps and the replacement of single glazing.

Improving the energy efficiency of homes is a key determination of Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan, as doing so will help the county to address climate change and achieve its goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2030.

More than 62,000 properties in Suffolk are thought to have the worst Energy Performance (EPC) grades of E, F and G and 28% of its households are facing fuel poverty. The new team will strive to secure funding to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and ensure minimum standards for the private rental sector.

Just as crucial as the money to fund installations is an available workforce that can meet the demand, and 46 people in Norfolk and Suffolk have received training in domestic retrofitting thanks to the Skills Bootcamps coordinated by New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership.

They have received training in three levels: Retrofit Advice (Level 3), Award in Domestic Retrofit Assessment (Level 4) and Diploma in Retrofit Coordination & Risk Management (Level 5).

Up to around 40 more people are expected to be trained in retrofitting after a successful bid by New Anglia LEP to deliver more Skills Bootcamps in Wave 4 of the initiative.

The LEP, in partnership with Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils, was successful in gaining £1m funding to deliver Skills Bootcamps on behalf of the Department for Education.

Suffolk Trading Standards secures compensation for victims of callous company chief

The director of a Suffolk mobility furniture company which promised life-improving products but left customers significantly out of pocket has repaid £50,000 from the proceeds of his crimes.

David Waters, 74, of Manwick Road, Felixstowe, was the sole director of Anchor Mobility, a company found guilty of 15 counts of unfair commercial practice by Ipswich Crown Court.

His offences included fraudulent trading, poor customer service, and misleading consumers by taking large deposits with the promise of delivering goods without ever doing so, resulting in Waters being sentenced to 32 months in prison and fined £15,000 at a hearing in December 2019.

The conviction would not have been possible without the intervention of Suffolk Trading Standards, who discovered more than 20 victims when investigating Anchor Mobility after receiving numerous consumer complaints.

Suffolk Trading Standards also sought additional compensation for all known victims, leading to Waters appearing at Ipswich Crown Court again last June, when a judge ruled that he must repay £50,000 in proceeds from his crimes, reflecting the assets available to him.

Compensation ranging from £600 to over £5,000 is currently being paid out, much to the relief of victims and their loved ones, who praised Suffolk Trading Standards for its efforts in securing a successful outcome.

Anyone who believes they may have fallen victim to a fraudulent trader should contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on **0808 223 1133**.

Hundreds of illegal vapes seized in Suffolk

Suffolk Trading Standards has stopped the sale of dangerous vapes at premises in Ipswich, Felixstowe, and Lowestoft in their bid to tackle one of the top threats on the high street.

Officers recently discovered over 370 vapes which did not meet the legal requirements, including some which offered as many as 10,000 puffs when a legal vape would offer around 600.

When used properly, vapes and e-cigarettes can be a successful way of helping people to stop smoking. But criminals are capitalising on this, leading to a rise in illegal vapes, which can contain high levels of nicotine, contaminants, or banned ingredients such as taurine or caffeine.

In addition, some retailers are increasingly selling vapes to underage children, who are often enticed by the colourful packaging and sweet flavours used by some vaping manufacturers.

Consumers can protect themselves by looking out for the following to ensure the vape that they are purchasing is legal:

- The tank of a vape is a maximum size of 2ml, and the largest refill bottle is 10ml in size or less
- All liquids should come in childproof bottles displaying nicotine warnings and have an accompanying safety leaflet
- Vapes should have a nicotine strength of no more than 20mg/ml or 2%
- A maximum number of around 600 puffs is offered

Anyone who suspects that a shop is selling unsafe e-cigarettes and vaping liquids or making sales of age-restricted products to children can report this in confidence to Suffolk Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice Consumer helpline on **0808 223 1133**.