



March 2021 Parish Newsletter
Cllr Karen Soons 07864 601 887
Karen.soons@suffolk.gov.uk



Visit suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus for health advice, service changes, business support and schools' guidance.

Keep up to date on the latest guidance on Covid-19 from central government here: www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Automatic Number Plate Recognition to help improve visits to Suffolk's recycling centres

On the 29 January Suffolk County Council announced it will install Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras at its recycling centres.

Alongside the installation of an automatic entry system at its recycling centres, these measures are intended to improve customer experience and plan for future demand.

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 community projects, aims to support the council's climate emergency declaration and improve Suffolk for all residents in years to come.

A booking system was introduced at Suffolk's recycling centres in May 2020 when sites reopened following closure at the start of the first Covid-19 lockdown and saw

14,000 visits per week during the summer. This can rise up to 27,000 per week in normal times, without current social distancing rules.

The project is part of the Suffolk 2020 programme and aims to improve the efficiency at the recycling centres by linking the online booking system with automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) technology and automated entry barriers.

Each of Suffolk County Council's 11 recycling centres had the ANPR technology installed as part of its contract with FCC, who manage and run the sites in Suffolk. The council is now looking to use the technology to further improve the current booking system for residents wishing to visit the centres and make the most of the technological opportunities.

The cameras give an accurate count of vehicle numbers and also record how much time each vehicle is on site. This will allow Suffolk County Council to maximise site availability and to develop new and existing sites to better meet the needs of the increasing population of Suffolk.

Data from the system could also assist in identifying rogue traders fraudulently using the free household waste service to dispose of trade waste. The system also has the facility to link to the DVLA database and identify the type of vehicle and registered keeper details if necessary.

The council will also be working on upgrades to the booking system software to improve the customer experience by making it quicker and easier to make and amend bookings.

Councillor Paul West, Cabinet Member for Waste Services, said:

“We have already seen how well the ‘book a slot’ system has been working in Suffolk, but we know we can make improvements to make the experience for people visiting the sites even quicker and easier.

“By linking the ANPR cameras with the booking system we can speed up the process for customers getting in and out of their recycling centre. The easier we make it for everyone to recycle, the better the outcome for our environment and the people of Suffolk. This approach will help us reduce potential queues at sites, plan site visits and continue to improve the customer experience for everybody using Suffolk’s recycling centres.”

Unique Suffolk project to save up to 600,000 tonnes of water each year

On February 2, a new project was announced that would see water normally pumped into Suffolk's River Deben, now being used in a new scheme near Felixstowe.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of tonnes of drainage water which fills land near the river's estuary is pumped away. This pumping process can also damage precious saltmarsh and mudflats, which are important habitats and part of the local ecosystem.

But now, the majority of this water is being carefully pumped inland thanks to an innovative project being led locally by Suffolk County Council, Felixstowe Hydrocycle Ltd, the Environment Agency and University of East Anglia.

The water is being reused by local farmers to irrigate food growing on their land and, in the future, can potentially be used in the public water supply.

In the East of England, new ways to source water are necessary because there is a growing demand for more and more water. This is due to future pressures from climate change, the need to supply demand from housing growth, industrial use and agriculture. But with this growing demand, our natural habitats must remain respected and protected.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection said:

"This project is an example of the council's ambition to respond to the climate emergency we declared in March 2019.

"There is a contradiction that we drain this water off our land out into the sea, whilst we experience both droughts and floods. I'm proud that we are pioneering innovative projects like this in Suffolk, which will make water supplies more sustainable, whilst also protecting our natural environment. This is part of the council's Holistic Water Management Project, which I hope inspires other authorities to follow our lead."

Suffolk County Council increases budget to support most vulnerable residents and county's recovery from Covid-19

On February 11, Suffolk County Council agreed its budget for 2021/22.

Following approval of its annual budget, Suffolk County Council is increasing its planned spending once again in 2021/22 to £597.9million, some £41million (7.4%) more than 2020/21. As part of this, the council will be spending £15.3million to address its ongoing Covid-19 costs, arising from the continuing local response to the pandemic. There are no proposed reductions in council services or personnel in 2021/22.

This year's budget is based on a 12-month financial settlement from government, rather than the 3 or 4 year agreement which is usually offered.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic over the last 11 months or so, the Government has continued to support local authorities as they adapt to serve communities, redeploy staff into alternative specialist roles and see income streams such as business rates and council tax reduce significantly. Suffolk County Council has received around £82.2 million in financial support during 2020 to meet Covid-19 related costs and whilst the challenges of continuing to respond, and in time recover, from Covid-19 remain, significant financial pressures will continue.

The council's income from council tax is going to be £7.9 million less than expected in 2021/22 and this shortfall will be met by using council reserves. Reserves can only be spent once and do not represent a viable long term financial solution. This effective use of reserves is made possible because Suffolk County Council has maintained a consistent approach to managing its finances effectively for a number of years, holding a proportionate level of reserves for this exact situation.

In 2021/22, general Council Tax will rise by 1.99 per cent, which represents an increase of £26.68 for a Band D property, from £1,224.70 in 2020, to £1,251.38. There is also a 2% rise in the Social Care Precept for the forthcoming year as the council recognises the ongoing challenges with meeting the rising costs and rising demand for adult care services. This means a Band D property will see an overall rise of £53.55 this year for Suffolk County Council's element of their Council Tax bill, from £1,343.61 in 2020-21 to £1,397.16 in 2021-22.

It is fair to say that the pandemic this year has also significantly impacted the expected progress of the council's recognised transformation programmes, as it has been absolutely necessary to focus on community resilience. This has included redeploying staff into bespoke roles such as procuring personal protective equipment (PPE) to support Suffolk's care sector and adapting working practices for frontline staff to maintain effective social distancing measures. As a result, the council is expecting a shortfall of around £7.8 million in projected savings for 2021. Whilst this means that further work is needed to identify potential future programmes of work, many of the new ways of working adopted by the council during 2020 because of the pandemic may actually offer potential alternative transformation savings as the organisation continues to adapt and tailor the way it works to deliver services for Suffolk's communities.

As part of the meeting, the council's Business Plan for 2021/22 was approved which draws attention to the ambitions for the authority over the next 12 months and its commitment to four key priorities:

- Living with Covid-19 and Suffolk's recovery
- Inclusive Growth
- Health, Care and Wellbeing
- Efficient and Effective Public Services

Throughout the business plan the Council presents its environmental thread demonstrating the range of projects and commitments in place as part of addressing the climate emergency that was declared in 2019. This includes

details of the Council setting its Carbon Budget and the related work involved in achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

Highways doubles drainage budget following £27.2m announcement

On February 17 it was announced that Suffolk Highways allocated an extra £2m to support the fight against flooding.

Drainage and flooding, Rights of Way bridges and resurfacing of roads in Suffolk have been allocated extra funds for the 2021/22 financial year following Department for Transport's funding announcement.

Keen to progress more drainage schemes across Suffolk to support the fight against flooding, Suffolk Highways has allocated an extra £2m – double its current budget allocation – in order to help tackle the worsening flood problems being experienced across the county.

Suffolk Highways also looks set to bolster its resource to support in the repairing or replacement of seven Rights of Way bridges across the county with an additional £800k, whilst committing a further £3.4m to the county's surface dressing programme.

Although the budget is less than the 2020/21 allocation, Suffolk Highways prudently prepared for a decrease and allocated a tentative £21m for the 2021/22 financial year.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member responsible for Highways, Transport and Rural Affairs, said:

“Allocating funding for Suffolk's highway budget is a complex process and one we carefully consider ahead of receiving our allocation from the Department for Transport. It's important to ensure our funding is used to focus on current priority areas across the county.

“I am glad our allocation is more than we prepared for the 2021/22 financial year and

I am delighted that we will be able to progress on some much longed for drainage schemes, bridge repair projects, not to mention our bolstered road resurfacing programme – where we have committed to resurfacing a further 140 miles this year.

“Although this funding still represents a fall when compared with last year, we will continue to do what we can to spend this allocation appropriately and for the benefit of all Suffolk’s residents.”

Suffolk County Council pushes ahead to new levels of digital connectivity as it launches sensor "gateway" roll-out.

Suffolk County Council is launching a new initiative on Friday 19th February, deploying ‘gateways’ to build a network that covers all of Suffolk.

This will enable individuals or organisations to measure things like temperature, sound and movement via sensors linked to the Long Range Wide Area Network (LoRaWAN).

The network is being built in partnership with Norfolk County Council and funded by the New Anglia LEP. Once finished, the network will be made up of almost 100 ‘gateways’ or data receivers and transmitters fitted to public sector buildings across the county. This will make Suffolk's rollout part of the largest free to use LoRaWAN deployment in the UK. Norfolk County Council launched its part of the network last September.

Businesses and individuals can buy their own sensors, adapt them to measure different things like visitor numbers, weather data and temperature, and tap into the gateways for free.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council said:

"In today's increasingly technological and digital world, it is entirely right that as an authority we do all we can to support local businesses to access and use real time

data to help them succeed. This project has the potential to strengthen businesses, grow our local economy and help support the jobs and innovations of the future.

"I really do hope that as many people as possible come along to the launch event so that they can see how this technology could benefit their business."

16 new COVID-19 rapid testing centres to open in Suffolk

On the 19 January it was announced that a further 16 rapid testing centres for COVID-19 were to open in Suffolk, bringing the total number of centres to 28.

The sites are planned to open over the next two weeks in Beccles, Bungay, Halesworth, Southwold, Aldeburgh, Saxmundham, Debenham, Framlingham, Woodbridge, Eye, Holbrook, Needham Market, Elmswell, Hadleigh, Nayland and Brandon - serving more rural communities across the county.

The 28 centres use 'lateral flow' testing to identify people who may have coronavirus but who do not have symptoms. The tests are for people who do not have symptoms of coronavirus and cannot work from home.

It's because one in three people with coronavirus do not have symptoms so regular testing is vital in breaking the chain of infection and keeping Suffolk safe.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Suffolk County Council's leader and chair of the Suffolk Local Outbreak Engagement Board, said:

"Testing is a key weapon in the battle against COVID-19, so we are delighted to be able to open a further 16 sites in more rural communities across Suffolk.

"Whilst Suffolk's vaccine rollout programme rapidly picks up pace, we need people who can't work from home and who don't have symptoms to get tested twice a week. It's how we will break the chain of infections and protect vulnerable people.

"It takes just 15 minutes to get a test and you get the results within the hour. 12,780 tests have already been completed. Suffolk needs everyone to play their part."

All 28 centres are listed on Suffolk County Council's website, including their addresses and opening times. The testing sites are operated on behalf of Suffolk County Council (SCC). Tests should be booked online or by phone in advance.

Employers are being urged to encourage their staff to book regular testing.

There are already 12 facilities open, including at the University of Suffolk in Ipswich, the STEM Centre in Western Way at West Suffolk College, Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill Arts Centre, St Etheldreda's parish centre in Newmarket, and Kirkley & Pakefield FC in Lowestoft.

New hedgerow planted in Great Barton as part of Suffolk 2020 tree planting programme to increase biodiversity

On February 22, a new mixed-species hedgerow was planted in Great Barton as part of Suffolk County Council's Suffolk 2020 project.

This project seeks to plant 100,000 trees and 15 kilometres of hedgerow over the next 12 months. This will create new habitats and wildlife corridors in multiple areas of Suffolk to support local biodiversity. It is the first of six farms on the Council's County Farm estate to benefit from the planting of new hedgerows this winter.

Suffolk County Council is working closely with the Woodland Trust, the Suffolk Tree Warden Network, local landowners and contractors, and its County Farm tenants, to deliver this ambitious project. Giles Landscapes are undertaking the hedge planting during February and March, which will total around 10 Kilometres (just over six miles) of new hedgerow, consisting of around 50,000 plants of mixed native species

such as hawthorn, field maple, hazel and dogwood.

Hedgerows are important features of Suffolk's agricultural landscape, providing a habitat for many species and 'corridors' for wildlife to move through them. All the planting stock being used is UK sourced and grown to reduce plant health risks and improve biosecurity, with much of the stock being supplied by The Woodland Trust. 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. As part of the preparation for this project, 40 miles of existing hedges were surveyed with a drone and on foot by a local specialist company based in Suffolk, Hardy Woodlands and Forestry, utilising a range of mapping technology to provide data to the project team.

Graham Borley, tenant farmer at Great Barton said:

"I welcome the planting of these new hedgerows on the land I farm and I think Giles Landscaping have done an excellent job. I look forward to seeing them flourish over time and provide a home for a range of wildlife and other wild flowers and plants. I'm pleased to play a part in helping local biodiversity."

Councillor Richard Rout, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection at Suffolk County Council, said:

"I'm really pleased to see the first new hedgerow established as part of the Suffolk 2020 tree planting project. The team is now working its way across the county to plant similar areas of hedgerow.

"This project is directly linked to the motion I seconded at Full Council in December when I was very pleased to see all councillors who attended the meeting, offer their full support to increase Suffolk's biodiversity, halt the loss of habitats and species, and reintroduce declining species in suitable locations. The Council is committed to continuing to lead by example through the use of our land by adopting biodiversity-friendly land management practices where possible.

"I want to thank all partners involved in this project, it is a real Suffolk team effort and with the support of landowners, tenants, local communities and contractors, Tree Wardens and The Woodland Trust we are making a real difference. I hope our

efforts encourage more of Suffolk's farmers to invest in their hedges and conservation management.”

Suffolk County Council's cabinet confirms its support for Freeport East

On February 23, the cabinet of the county council confirmed its support for the creation of a new Freeport (Freeport East).

The Freeport would cover both the ports of Felixstowe and Harwich as part of the Government's aim to create a number of Freeports across the country to drive job creation, investment and international trade post Brexit.

A Freeport includes secure customs zones and tax sites where business can be carried out inside a country's land border, but where different tax and customs rules apply. These rules mean Freeports can potentially reduce administrative burdens and tariff controls, provide relief from duties, import taxes, and ease tax and planning regulations.

Freeport East has several unique aspects which make its bid for Freeport status particularly strong. This includes global and regional connectivity, with 36% of all the UK's container traffic passing through the Port of Felixstowe, unrivalled international connections, particularly with Asia, strong connectivity to the Midlands and the North, thereby supporting the government's “levelling up agenda” in these areas. The bid also stands out as supporting other national objectives such as the development of new technology and the push for clean energy. The Port of Felixstowe has recently won funding to trial a pilot 5G network and has strong research and development links with Cambridge and Essex Universities. There are also strong links with the energy sector and the emerging hydrogen economy.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council said:

"Suffolk County Council fully supports a bid for a Freeport in our county, this is especially true of Freeport East as so much of the bid is in line with the council's wider objectives around inclusive economic growth, job creation, regional investment and our commitments to the environment and decarbonisation.

"Freeport East is a fantastic opportunity for the Government to show that its commitment to levelling up the country is not just reserved for the Midlands and the North of England. To level up successfully the government must recognise the importance of investing in the foundations of growth and wider opportunities at both ends of the A14. This is especially true considering that many of the businesses based here are directly responsible for jobs and investment in the North of England, not to mention the reliance on the ports of Felixstowe and Harwich to export goods made in the North to the rest of the world.

"Whilst the final decision about Freeport designation rests with central government, I urge everyone in Suffolk, especially community and business leaders, to give this bid their wholehearted support."

The Government is due to make its final decision about Freeport status later this year after assessment of all bids received nationwide in March.