

Date; 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022

## **Annual Suffolk County Council Report 2021/22**

Dear All,

I am delighted to enclose my Annual Report for 2021/22. Since being elected last May I have been honoured to work as your county councillor and below are summaries of some of the work we have been doing.

In March this year I was delighted to be invited to join the Cabinet at Suffolk County Council and am now the cabinet member for Equality and Communities.

As always please email or telephone me if you have an issue that you would like my help with.

Best wishes,

Bobby Bennett

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### **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.

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

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.

### **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 gives our social work practitioners, occupational therapists and other front line professionals, new ways to support people to live better and independent lives.

### **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 will carry out an independent review into SEND provision.

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

## **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.

## **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.

The whole contract development process will take just over two years to complete.

## **Suffolk says thanks for going the extra mile**

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

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

## **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.

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.

## **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.

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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

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

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.

### **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](http://www.warmhomessuffolk.org).

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.

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

### **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.

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

Announced 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.

## 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.