

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – JUNE 2023



Cllr Stephen Burroughes - Framlingham Division

• **SUPPORT FOR UKRAINIAN REFUGEES MOVING TO PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION**

Suffolk County Council has announced a one-off £2,000 support grant for Ukrainian refugees moving on from their host into their own accommodation. The Independent Living Payment will be available to Ukrainian Refugees, who are moving into private rented accommodation after 1st April 2023. Guests must have been living in Suffolk for a minimum of two months and be registered on the Suffolk Homes for Ukraine scheme to be eligible for the payment. The funding can be used for any associated housing costs, including furniture, moving costs or travel to work. The support can be used towards accommodation which is furnished or unfurnished, and accommodation can be in Suffolk or out of county as long as a copy of the new tenancy agreement is provided. Ukrainian guests can apply for the Independent Living Payment by visiting www.suffolk.gov.uk/ukraine and completing the application form. Application forms can also be requested by emailing refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk

Suffolk Refugee Support can provide general advice and support for any Ukrainian Refugees looking to live independently in Suffolk, such as help with education, employment, access to immigration advice, housing, utilities, welfare benefits and more. Visit <https://suffolkrefugee.org.uk/> for more information. Suffolk continues to be in need of new sponsors to support Ukrainian families who are not yet ready to leave sponsorship. If you think you can help, or know of anybody who could, please get in touch. You can register with Suffolk County Council at www.suffolk.gov.uk/ukraine.

• **REVISED POLICY AGREED TO PROTECT SUFFOLK'S WATER SUPPLIES**

Suffolk County Council Cabinet agreed on 16th May to a revised infrastructure policy to support water security in the region. As part of its focus on adapting to a changing climate, Cabinet members agreed a revision to the Energy Infrastructure Policy to cover future projects needed to protect and maintain water resources, including reservoirs, pipelines, and water recycling plants.

This new policy addition lays out how future water infrastructure projects will be managed and the council's role with stakeholders, such as the water companies, Ofwat and the Environment Agency. It also sets out how the council will recover the money it has to spend in the planning process for infrastructure projects. To reflect the changes, the policy has been renamed the Energy and Climate Adaptive Infrastructure Policy.

In February 2021, the Cabinet of Suffolk County Council adopted an Energy Infrastructure Policy, that set out the Council's approach to major infrastructure projects for energy generation and transmission, with a particular focus on those consented under the Planning Act 2008, known as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. As part of that decision, it was agreed that the policy would be revised after two years.

• **LIBRARY SERVICES PROTECTED AS SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL APPROVES ADDITIONAL FUNDING**

Suffolk County Council has underlined its commitment to library services in Suffolk, as it approved plans to increase its funding to Suffolk Libraries, to enable the service to continue operating at its current level, until the end of the contract in July 2024. Suffolk Libraries currently receives £5.9m per year from Suffolk County Council, however the service is forecasting a deficit of £60k per month from April 2023. The service has cited increases in service costs, a reduction in income opportunities following the Coronavirus Pandemic and rising inflation, as causes of the deficit. This means it is no longer possible for the service to continue operating at its current level of service, within its current contract value.

At Suffolk County Council's Cabinet meeting, the council has approved plans to absorb this cost pressure, funding Suffolk Libraries an additional £720k per year, through to the end of the current contract in July 2024. This additional funding will support Suffolk Libraries to continue delivering its highly valued services to Suffolk Residents.

The council has previously made a commitment to continue to support Suffolk Libraries. At Suffolk County Council's full council meeting in February, the council agreed to fund an additional £250k in the first quarter of the 2023/24 financial year to help with the increased costs Highlighted by Suffolk Libraries. This £250k for the first quarter of the year is included within the overall figure agreed by Cabinet, of an additional £720k for the 2023/24 financial year. The council also supported Suffolk Libraries with £155,000 for initiatives to support residents with Cost of Living and support for Digital Inclusion in the 2022/23 financial year. In addition, the Council continues to successfully access Section 106 funding to support ongoing building developments required to ensure buildings are fit for purpose and support service delivery.

• **COMPETITION TO CREATE VIRTUAL REALITY FILMS FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA**

Suffolk County Council is supported Dementia Action Week with a competition to produce virtual reality films for people living with the condition. The competition was part of a nationwide initiative called VR Challenge UK and was launched at a recent virtual event in the Metaverse. It was being run by Suffolk County Council in conjunction with Spark Emerging Technologies Ltd as part of the council's recently awarded contract to develop a new, bespoke virtual reality (VR) app to deliver therapeutic experiences to people living with dementia across all Suffolk care settings.

Young people and adults from across the UK were invited to get involved with this opportunity to create meaningful and stimulating VR films for people living with dementia. It is hoped nursing and residential homes, day centres, as well as Further Education Colleges, universities, and charitable organisations from across the UK will grab this opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of people with dementia. In the first round of the competition, entrants will simply be invited to submit a brief storyboard of their proposed film for one of the following six categories:

- Suffolk
- Nostalgia
- Nature
- Leisure
- Computer Generated Imagery (CGI)
- Carer content

The deadline for the submission of storyboards will be Friday 30th June. Shortlisted candidates will then proceed to the second round of the competition where they will receive exclusive support from Spark to go on and plan, film and produce their proposed films by the deadline of Thursday 31st August.

The final VR films will be evaluated by people living with dementia before being judged by a specialist panel. The winning films will be showcased at an awards ceremony in mid-October.

Winners in each tier of the competition will have the opportunity of choosing from three prizes: a brand new Insta360 X3 360 camera kit; a top of the range Oculus Meta Quest 2 VR Headset; or to gift a year's subscription to the new VR app with all the required hardware to a care setting of their choice. More details can be found on the competition website at <https://vrchallengeuk.co.uk>

• **SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL WELCOMES £7.9 MILLION ACTIVE TRAVEL FUNDING**

A £7.9 million government funding package for Suffolk to promote active travel schemes has been welcomed by Suffolk County Council. The money has come from Active Travel England (ATE) and will be spent on seven projects encouraging cycling and walking through measures such as cycle lanes, shared-use paths, and improved crossing points on roads. It forms part of a £200 million package for England announced in May and first unveiled in March this year. The £7.9m for Suffolk is the fifth highest in England and the most for a county council.

The full list of schemes is:

- Woodbridge (Town Centre) - £4,005,000

- Grange Road Felixstowe- £1,318,000
- Ipswich Hospital to University of Suffolk - £ 1,227,950
- Woodbridge (South) - £1,125,000
- Ipswich - £105,149 to be spent on developing 12 schemes including the east-west Ipswich town centre route, Crown Street to Ipswich Waterfront and general travel to school in the borough
- Developing Bury St Edmunds East/West Route - £105,149
- Developing Capel St Mary to Copdock route - £46, 967

Some of the schemes, such as Ipswich Hospital to the University, have previously had improvements made under previous ATE funding rounds but this new money will link up and enhance that previous work. The council will now launch public engagement schemes throughout 2023 with a view to starting work on all schemes in 2024.

• **SUFFOLK RESIDENTS URGED TO #SHAKEITOUT WHEN RECYCLING**

A new campaign by Suffolk Waste Partnership is encouraging people to empty plastic bags and not throw them in recycling. The #ShakeltOut campaign has been launched by the Suffolk Waste Partnership to encourage households in Suffolk to help improve recycling rates across the county by making sure black bin bags and other plastic sacks are not thrown in with recyclable materials.

#ShakeltOut is encouraging people to shake out plastic bags and keep recycling clean, dry, and loose.

The Partnership, which comprises Babergh District Council, East Suffolk Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Suffolk County Council, and West Suffolk Council, says more than a quarter (26%) of the materials in Suffolk's recycling bins in 2022/23 were not able to be processed as they were spoiled.

Items that contributed to spoiled recycling collections included:

- Materials that were not clean and dry, or contained food and drink residue
- Rubbish sacks or plastic bags containing recycling
- Non-recyclable items, such as nappies and food waste

Plastic bags and rubbish sacks are a particular problem – recycling handlers can't see what's inside them and they are often full of rubbish or other non-recyclable items. This means bags are removed during the sorting process to avoid spoiling other good recycling. Any removed bags are then sent for disposal. The Suffolk Waste Partnership has also released a new animation as part of the wider campaign to promote the #ShakeltOut message.

The animation aims to remind households across the country of the simple measures they can take to help improve recycling: <https://youtu.be/iBKOUFWxXdQ> To find out more about the #ShakeltOut campaign and for more information on recycling in Suffolk, visit www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk/shake-it-out

• **GRATEFUL TO BE SHARING AKI'S STORY ABOUT WHAT FOSTERING MEANT TO HIM**

Councillor Stephen Burroughes, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children & Young Peoples Services with responsibility for Fostering and Adoption, in celebration of Fostering Fortnight which ran from 15th to 26th May, handed over his EADT column to Aki. Aki will be sharing his experiences of being fostered in Suffolk. Fostering plays a crucial role in our society, providing children who are unable to live with their birth families with a safe and nurturing environment. It is a lifeline for many children who have had a difficult start in life. It offers stability, love, and support to children who need it the most, and can change the trajectory of their lives.

Aki's story is an inspiration, and I am grateful to him for sharing his journey with us. He offers a unique perspective into the life of a fostered child and highlights the importance of this essential service. So, let's hear from Aki and learn more about his experiences;

How did it feel for being cared by Tracey?

The feeling of being cared for by Tracey is irreplaceable, since the first time I came to the house, she welcomed me into the family and treated me like one of her own sons. If it wasn't for this wonderful woman, I wouldn't be where I am today. Tracey is the reason why I got into college, she is the reason why I didn't get permanently excluded from my school and she is the real reason why I took the right path in life. Throughout my whole journey with Tracey, she has made me feel safe, at ease and wanted.

How do you describe your experience of being fostered?

My experience being fostered is very hard to describe, there have been ups and there have been downs. The best advice I have is, be grateful for what you have and stay strong.

What was the best part of being cared for by Tracey?

There is no best part of being cared for by Tracey because every moment I'm with her is the best. Even when I'm at university, she checks up on me daily and makes sure I'm okay. Knowing that I'm always part of the family, wanted and being cared for will always be the best.

How were you welcomed into the family?

When I first came to Tracey, even though I was very difficult to handle, we always knew I'd be here for a long time. She introduced me to her family in the most comfortable way, she told me where everything I needed was, she explained the house rules and she even let me pick which room I wanted. Still to this day if I meet her new friends, she introduces me as her son. Next year will be a decade that I have been with her so there's a lot to remember.

How were you supported while living with Tracey?

While I was living with Tracey I was supported in every single way. She always supported my education, making sure I was up to date with my work and was attending lessons. She made sure I had everything a normal kid would have like paying for my phone bill and taking me and my friends out for fun activities. She has always supported my feelings, asking if I'm okay checking up on me and respecting my space. She supported me financially, she has supported my dreams, and she has supported my health, making sure I'm up to date with dentists and eye appointments etc

How does it feel to be at university?

It feels like a great achievement to be at university, but it does not stop there, the journey continues.

What would you say to someone who is worried about being fostered?

Coming from a man that has been in the foster system since a toddler, I would always say "be proud of who you are, even if you are different to other children, it's good to be different, it is what makes you stand out to other people. There will be ups and downs, but people still care for you.

To find out more about Fostering with Suffolk: visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/fostering

call us on: 01473 264800 or email fosterandadopt@suffolk.gov.uk to register your interest.

• SPOTLIGHT ON IMPROVING AIR QUALITY AS COUNTY-WIDE STRATEGY LAUNCHED

Suffolk County Council has set out its plan for improving air quality in Suffolk following results from a recent air quality survey, as its county-wide Air Quality Strategy is published. Air quality continues to be an important public health issue and a driver of health inequalities which disproportionately affects some of our most vulnerable residents in Suffolk. The county council recently engaged with Suffolk's residents about their thoughts on the impact poor air quality has on their quality of life. The survey received 338 responses and had a particular focus on Ipswich residents, because Ipswich makes up four of Suffolk's eight Air Quality

Management Areas (AQMA). AQMA are areas where national target levels of Nitrogen Dioxide are being exceeded.

Some of the results of the survey showed that there is a need to increase awareness about how residents can reduce pollution by reducing indoor burning of wood and coal, encouraging businesses to replace their fleet with low-emission or electric vehicles, reducing short journeys by car and considering more sustainable forms of transport such as walking, bike or bus. Vehicle idling when stationary is also a contributor to high levels of air pollution, an area the strategy will focus on going forward.

A key element of the Air Quality Strategy is a public engagement plan which is being developed to increase public awareness of the health impacts of air quality in Suffolk, enabling individuals to make choices that protect both their health and the health of others from the harmful effects of pollution. The delivery of the strategy will be closely monitored by the council to ensure it is accomplishing what it has set out to do. The strategy will also feed into the collective work of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

• **£10 MILLION NEW FUNDING TO FIX RESIDENTIAL ROADS**

Local road surfaces in villages and residential areas in Suffolk should be blitzed as part of a new £10 million programme, Suffolk County Council has announced. The extra funding will nearly double Suffolk Highways' £11 million annual roads maintenance budget, but be targeted at smaller residential streets which are typically maintained less frequently than busier A and B roads. The funding is subject to a formal Suffolk County Council Cabinet decision later in 2023. At the same time, it was also reiterated that the council's commitment to improving services for children with special educational needs and disabilities, including £55 million to create 1,275 new SEND school places by 2025. Highways and SEND will be areas of particular focus for Suffolk County Council over the next two years. There was also reaffirmed commitments to deliver:

- The Gull Wing bridge in Lowestoft
- New homes on SCC land
- Further help for Ukrainian refugees
- A new highways contractor Milestone
- Hundreds more EV charging points
- A £20 million flood prevention and footpath improvement programme.

To coincide with the annual general meeting, Suffolk County Council has published a list of its top 50 achievements since 2021, including:

- Our Cassius Digital Care work and innovation is going from strength to strength
- An extra £2.5m for mental health services
- 300 miles of road now designated as quiet lanes
- New household waste sites in Ipswich and Haverhill
- £13 million in funding secured for active travel
- 3,000 environmentally friendly homes being delivered on SCC land
- 250,000 trees planted
- Over 100 new EV charging points
- A new Highways Contract with Milestone starting in October
- 43,400 streetlights converted to LED.

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

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Cllr Stephen Burroughes

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Deputy Cabinet Member for Children & Young Peoples Services