

Cllr Karen Soons

07864 601 887

karen.soons@suffolk.gov.uk

February 2024 Parish Newsletter

Contents

[Page 3 – One Network](#)

A reminder about the platform one.network which updates residents about upcoming roadworks, events and other activities on the highway.

[Page 3 – The best of Suffolk shone bright throughout another tough year](#)

A column by Cllr Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council.

[Page 5 - More public money for adult and children’s care, but difficult decisions are needed to balance the books](#)

In the next two years, Suffolk County Council needs to pump almost £74 million extra into protecting the county’s most vulnerable residents.

[Page 7 - Suffolk DVD counterfeiter receives suspended sentence](#)

More than 40,000 pirate DVDs of classic TV shows and films were recovered by Trading Standards officers from the home of John Williams.

[Page 9 - A response to our budget proposals for Art and Museum sector organisations](#)

A column by Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader of Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment.

[Page 10 - Council to ensure Sizewell C delivers for Suffolk as construction begins](#)

Suffolk County Council will help ensure that Sizewell C delivers the best opportunities for the county’s residents, following formal notification that construction is to get underway.

[Page 11 - Visitor attractions invited to join ‘Good Journey’ scheme](#)

Visitor attractions in Suffolk are invited to sign up for a new scheme promoting car-free days out in the county.

[Page 12 - Fake university website shut down by Suffolk Trading Standards](#)

A bogus website for a non-existent college in Suffolk offering fake courses costing thousands of pounds is closed down by Trading Standards.

[Page 13 - Could you be a parent and child foster carer?](#)

A column by Councillor Stephen Burroughes, Deputy Cabinet Member for Fostering and Adoption.

[Page 14 - How Suffolk can reuse and repair to boost items' lifespans](#)

A column by Councillor Richard Smith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Transport Strategy and Waste.

[Page 15 - 1,400-year-old Anglo-Saxon artefacts now on display in West Suffolk](#)

Archaeological finds from a popular exhibition at the National Trust’s Sutton Hoo, are now on display at the West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Museum.

[Page 16 - Accessible cycling scheme launched in Stowmarket](#)

The Way to Go Sustainable Travel team at Suffolk County Council has launched a new accessible cycling scheme at Leading Lives Stowmarket Hub.

Page 17 - Council to propose new funding for arts & heritage in Suffolk

Suffolk County Council is today announcing its intention to create a new funding pot open to all arts and heritage organisations in the county.

Page 18 - Trading Standards seize 2,007 illegal vapes in Ipswich

Nicotine vapes over the legal limit for the number of puffs allowed are seized by Suffolk Trading Standards.

Page 19 - Suffolk local area partnership commits to urgent improvements to SEND services and apologises to families

The Ofsted and CQC Inspection Report, published January 30th, finds significant concerns with SEND Services.

Page 22 - New funding for arts, but difficult decisions remain

A column by Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader of Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment.

One Network

This is a quick reminder about the website one.network. It is a free-to-view website, with large-ranging sources of roadworks and traffic disruption information in the UK.

The one.network map enables highway authorities to communicate authoritative up-to-date information about roadworks, events and other activities on the highway.

Users can register for email alerts about upcoming roadworks affecting their area. This is particularly useful for informing residents on future works.

The best of Suffolk shone bright throughout another tough year

A column by Cllr Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council.

It is always important to pause and thank those who do so much for our county particularly as we end another year.

As we all tucked into our turkey and Christmas pudding yesterday, there were many across Suffolk who were working to keep vital services going.

From those in our NHS, our care workers, our blue light services and those in the haulage industry keeping our shelves stocked – my thanks go out to them all.

As we enter 2024 today, it is also a time for reflection. 2023, like the several before it, has not been an easy year. Although we had the good news last week that the government's plan is working and inflation continues to fall, we are still suffering the aftershock of the pandemic and Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine. These things have had an impact on the bills we as individuals pay and the cost of putting food on our tables – we all will have noticed that the Christmas shop was more expensive than in 2022. The same is true for local councils - the cost of providing vital services has only gone in one direction for us too.

Last year we also saw, in the aftermath of Storm Babet, yet again how well Suffolk pulls together. After 24 hours which brought chaos and destruction to many in our towns and villages, I was in awe of the kindness shown by so many in our communities and the lengths they went to to help others in their time of need.

In farmers picking up school children to take them back to worried parents, through staff at local schools and leisure centres stepping up to provide emergency rest centres, strangers helping to tow cars and our blue light services and highways team going above and beyond – we saw the very best of our county.

The hard work to see Suffolk recover from the Storm continues. As a County Council we have committed almost £1 million to bring in additional flood investigation specialists and we recently published details of the Government's Property Flood Resilience (PFR) grant, which will provide eligible households with £5,000 of support including £500 towards the required survey. My thoughts go out to all those who spent Christmas away from their home due to the damage done by the storm and we will continue to do all we can to support those impacted.

Suffolk continues to host those displaced by the war in Ukraine. As of the end of September 1,407 sponsorship visas had been granted to those coming to our county. The way Suffolk has stood with Ukraine – and continues to stand with them – is inspiring. At the end of November, our Homes for Ukraine team visited the monthly ‘Stand with Ukraine’ gathering on Angel Hill in Bury St Edmunds. This group of local guests, hosts and supporters meets monthly to highlight the ongoing war and plight of the Ukrainian people. Events like these are so important and although the eyes of the world are rightly turned to the tragedy unfolding in the middle east, we must not forget that once again many Ukrainians will be spending this Christmas season away from their homes and loved ones.

I’m so proud of Suffolk’s response to the war and the support we continue to give.

As a County Council, we continue to prioritise those residents most in need and in 2023 we saw our staff and teams recognised for their achievements and skills by being shortlisted at the Social Worker of the Year Awards, a national award ceremony which uses these awards to improve the awareness, understanding and reputation of the social care sector. In addition, following a period of intense inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Suffolk County Council was one of the first councils nationwide to achieve a rating of “Good” for the quality of its Adult Social Care Services.

Like all county councils, we are facing financial challenges as the need for our key services grows faster than the funding available to us. However, as leader, I will always strive to ensure that our focus and support goes to those who need it most and that we improve in key areas, like Special Educational Needs.

My thanks to all those who work in these vital sectors, particularly over this Christmas period.

May I wish everyone in Suffolk a healthy and happy 2024.

More public money for adult and children’s care, but difficult decisions are needed to balance the books

In the next two years, Suffolk County Council needs to pump almost £74 million extra into protecting the county’s most vulnerable residents.

- £74 million extra needed to protect the most vulnerable over two years
- £64.7 million savings to be made over two years
- Council set to reduce workforce, services and use savings

As part of financial plans to prioritise those in greatest need, an additional £42.7 million for children’s services and £29.9 million for adult care are being proposed.

Along with local authorities up and down the country, the council has been hit hard by inflation and rising demand for services such as children’s care, special educational needs and disabilities and home to school transport. It means having to make difficult decisions about the services it provides, including £64.7 million of savings in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

The two-year savings proposals, which have been [published on the council’s website](#) today, include:

- £11 million of staffing costs through changing the way services are delivered and restructuring across the council.

- £30.6 million of additional savings from an extension of the council’s hugely successful Adult Social Care Transformation programme, which has focused on reducing demand for more expensive social care options by boosting people’s independence and ability to stay well for longer through innovative methods including cutting edge care technology. This transformation programme has already saved £30.7 million over the last six years
- £0.5 million of savings by stopping core funding to Art and Museum sector organisations. To assist with the transition, £528,000 of COVID recovery money will be made available to Arts and Museum sector organisations for 2024/25 which will fully cover the funding reduction for one year.
- £140,000 of savings by centralising Suffolk Archives to The Hold and closing the branches in West and East Suffolk. In February 2023, the council committed £3.4m to relocate the West Suffolk Archives branch to the proposed Western Way development. Remaining at its current location would have required over £5 million to protect the historic records and meet modern archive standards. West Suffolk Council has since decided not to progress with the Western Way development, ending that opportunity. Centralising the three branches into one brings Suffolk in line with the majority of archive services across the country and is better value for taxpayers' money.
- £15.9 million of reserves will be used to balance the 2024/25 budget.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:

“This is the most challenging budget-setting process the council has faced for many years. But once again, we are putting adult and children’s care at the heart of our plans.

“However, in order to ensure appropriate levels of funding for these key services, and those most in need in Suffolk, we must make difficult decisions about all the other services we deliver, and how we deliver them.

“This is necessary because the demand on council services for those most in need in Suffolk is at an all-time high. The cost of providing many of those services is significant, but the funding that we need is not keeping up. Across the country, councils are having to make similar tough choices.

“Our proposed budget next year will be around £752 million, of which £105m alone is down to these cost pressures from inflation and increased demand.

“We are a well-run council and over the last five years, we have saved £66 million by working smarter and leaner. But we now need to go even further.

“We have spent months scrutinising all the council’s spending. There is competition for every pound across all our services, and I understand that each service means something to someone.”

Following the recent funding announcement from the Government, Suffolk County Council will not receive enough funding to keep pace with inflation or the level of demand for services. The council has joined national calls for additional funding and lobbied the Chancellor of the Exchequer directly.

[Full details of Suffolk County Council’s financial plans for 2024/25](#) will be presented to its Scrutiny Committee meeting on 11 January.

The proposals would give the council a budget of around £752 million for 2024/25, made up of funding coming from Government, business rates, charges for services and council tax. The proposed budget would require a 4.99% increase in council tax in next year. This would be made up of a 2.99% increase in general council tax and a 2% increase dedicated to funding adult care.

This means the costs for a household would be:

- Band B property: £23.50 per week (£1.12 per week increase from 2023/24)
(Band B properties are the most common in Suffolk)
- Band D property: £30.21 per week (£1.43 per week increase from 2023/24)

Cllr Rout continues:

"We understand the financial pressure facing the Government with public services everywhere asking for more money. This is money that simply isn't available at the moment, especially after the vital financial support made available during and following the pandemic. This means it is up to local authorities like us to find savings to balance the books.

"I would like to thank the record number of people who completed our online budget consultation, and those who took part in our focus groups.

"Although the majority of people said that they would rather not see council tax being increased next year, I hope they can understand why - for the first time in years - we must ask for the maximum amount possible to help support those most in need.

"Our commitment to make the best possible use of every pound of public money made available to us is absolute."

[The budget proposals](#) will be discussed at the council's Scrutiny Committee and then presented at the Cabinet meeting on 30 January. At the Full Council meeting on 15 February, the proposals will be debated, with a vote taking place on the budget for 2024/25 – the first year of the two-year budget proposals.

The Scrutiny Committee meeting will be available to stream on [Suffolk County Council's YouTube channel](#), and public questions can be submitted in advance, details available at www.suffolk.gov.uk

Suffolk DVD counterfeiter receives suspended sentence

A man who made thousands of pounds from pirating DVDs of films and TV shows has been given a suspended prison sentence following a case brought by Suffolk County Council's Trading Standards team.

John Williams received a 16-month term, suspended for two years, plus a fine of £7,500 after pleading guilty to two offences related to the sale, supply and manufacture of counterfeit DVDs.

Williams, 72, of Pot Kiln Road, Great Cornard, Suffolk, was also ordered by Ipswich Crown Court to pay a Proceeds of Crime Order of £77,182, as the criminal benefit he made from the sales of counterfeit discs, plus pay prosecution costs of £42,870.

Suffolk Trading Standards began investigating after receiving a report of fake cult and classic DVDs being sold online.

Test purchases were carried out and the discs analysed, which confirmed them to be counterfeit.

Titles examined included Wonder Woman 1984, Shazam, X Men Apocalypse and TV programmes The Strange World of Gurney Slade and Dial 999.

More than 40,000 copied DVDs were seized from his home in October 2021 along with computers, disc burners, a colour photocopier with print outs of DVD box paper insert sleeves, and address label stickers.

Analysis of the seized computers found Williams had sold fake DVDs when attending film and TV fairs, mainly in London, making up to £1,500 per fair, and that he had a wide network of customers in the UK and abroad.

Williams pleaded guilty to one offence under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1998 and one under the Trademark Act 1994.

Graham Crisp, Head of Suffolk Trading Standards, said the original complainant, a UK company called Network Distributing Ltd of London, would purchase copyright licencing rights and restore and remaster the content of classic TV and films for DVD.

However, the company ceased trading in June last year with the loss of nearly 30 jobs.

Mr Crisp said:

“Williams, and those that supply counterfeit discs, contributed to Networks’ demise and have now actually limited the amount of cult TV and film available to purchase because these titles now remain in the archives and may never become available to the public.

“We found correspondence from Williams where he said that trading standards were only concerned with large-scale counterfeiters connected to organised crime and did not have the resources or time to come after people like him – he was wrong. When we find evidence of criminal activity we will always act.”

Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection, & Communities, said:

“There is no such thing as a victimless crime and the greedy and selfish activities of this man contributed to the end of a company legitimately making cult films and TV shows available to the public.

“I applaud Suffolk Trading Standards for its hard work in bringing this totally unacceptable operation to a close.”

Anyone wanting to report the sale of illegal goods should contact Trading Standards via Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.

A response to our budget proposals for Art and Museum sector organisations

A column by Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment.

There have been some very emotive words said about the County Council's budget proposals, in particular our decision to stop annual funding for the arts.

I fully understand - I know how important they are to many people, whether that's for the enjoyment they bring, the employment they create or the support they provide to people in our community. I love them myself. I met my fiancée, Caroline, when she was playing Titania in a production of A Midsummer Night's Dream in the Abbey Gardens. One of my closest friends got married in the Theatre Royal. Panto was a childhood staple. I feel strongly though that in the debate, some of the reasons for this decision have been lost.

First, I want people to understand that this is not a decision we want to make. We are forced to make difficult decisions because of the financial challenges facing public services right now. Demand is at an all-time high and shows little sign of abating. We must make choices, the toughest for years, about what we spend. We make no apology for prioritising the protection of adults and children. This is why we're spending an additional £74 million on these services, but having to make £65 million of savings too.

What's involved in these services might come as a shock. We're talking about some of the most challenging and life-critical public services that people often don't consider until they need them. When they do, they are vital. I'm talking about protecting children and adults from neglect or abuse, providing education for young people with special educational needs and disabilities, supporting teenage parents, supporting disabled people or adults with dementia to live independently and providing care for the elderly. Some of us take for granted that we can get up in the morning, use the toilet, dress and feed ourselves and even make a cup of tea. But there are more and more people who can't do these basic things, and need our help. This is where councils step in and do life-changing work for people who need it most.

£528k, which is the amount we need to remove from annual arts grants, could for example pay for one of the following:

- 12 elderly people to be in residential care for a year
- Home care for 35 people who need extra help for a year
- 23 children in foster care for a year

Let us be clear, I'm not (and I repeat not) pitting the arts against these services. What I am saying is that Suffolk County Council must focus on what it is fundamentally and legally here to do, and ensure the limited resources it has available are spent directly supporting those most in need. For now, annual arts grants are not something we can do if it means vulnerable residents going without support from us.

Some have said this is a short-term decision, that it ignores the myriad of benefits the arts bring to Suffolk. I do not dispute the benefit both social and economic that the arts bring. But when we are faced with children that need to be removed from abusive families and taken into care, or getting those with special educational needs to and from school, or keeping a vulnerable resident in their own home - we must act.

In many senses, these aren't even choices. We have a legal duty to provide these services and are held to account on their quality. We must focus on what we are directly responsible for. What we need to spend on children's services has gone up by 28% in the last 12 months alone.

We lobby the Government hard for more funding alongside other councils, the county's MPs and directly. However, we have to face the fact that local government is only one of many public services in need of money. The Government provided a financial lifeline to residents and businesses during COVID and the cost of living challenges. That money is not available right now, so councils like ours must make difficult decisions.

The decisions we now face are not wilful acts, they are born out of necessity and the need to make finely balanced prioritisation decisions in the full glare of public scrutiny. We know they are painful – we're feeling it too with £11 million of staff savings. None of this is easy but it's our job. Transparency is fundamental in public services, which is why we have published these proposals, I am talking about them here and they will now be subject to scrutiny and decision making in public. Our commitment to make the best possible use of every pound of public money made available to us remains absolute.

Council to ensure Sizewell C delivers for Suffolk as construction begins

Sizewell C today (15th January 2024) triggered its Development Consent Order, meaning that work can begin to build the new 3.2GW nuclear power station on the Suffolk coast.

Suffolk County Council played a key role to get significant improvements made to the plans during the project's examination by the Planning Inspectorate.

As a result, Suffolk will now see around £250 million made available to its communities, by way of mitigating the impact on residents, businesses, the environment, and infrastructure.

The council was also influential in ensuring that a far greater quantity of construction materials will be delivered by rail and sea, reducing the number of lorries on the county's rural roads.

Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader of Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:

“Despite a number of concerns during the planning process, this council has worked hard to ensure that should Sizewell C go ahead, Suffolk will be suitably compensated.

“Now that the project is officially underway, we will hold Sizewell C to account and make sure it meets its commitments to support local communities, mitigates its impact on them, and listens to ongoing concerns and issues from residents and businesses.

“We are looking forward to making the most of the economic opportunities for Suffolk which will come from this project, in particular our role coordinating skills and education to create opportunities locally.

“We have always put on record our support for guaranteeing the nation's energy security, and a future of low carbon energy.”

During the construction of Sizewell C, Suffolk County Council will have a number of responsibilities, including:

- Discharge requirements (equivalent to planning conditions) to maintain control over highways, archaeology and flooding
- An important role in project governance over the construction period, in particular chairing the Transport Review Group
- Administering a significant proportion of funding negotiated during the examination and secured through the Deed of Obligation

The Deed of Obligation is a legal agreement between Sizewell C, Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council for the scheme to limit its impact on local communities during construction.

More information about [Suffolk County Council's role in Sizewell C](#) can be found on its website.

Visitor attractions invited to join 'Good Journey' scheme

Suffolk Growth Partnership and Suffolk County Council have teamed up with the national organisation 'Good Journey' – the UK experts in car-free leisure – in a push to cut carbon emissions and widen access to our leisure, culture and nature for more people.

The initiative, launching in March 2024, supports Suffolk's Greenest County journey towards a carbon net zero visitor economy and will welcome car-free visitors to an array of attractions across Suffolk.

Around 25 local tourism and visitor attractions are now invited to join the Suffolk Good Journey scheme offering residents and visitors discounts and incentives to leave the car at home and explore more of the county on foot, by bike or using public transport. Suffolk visitor attractions participating will be supported and feature on goodjourney.org.uk – providing easy travel information and discounts to domestic and international visitors.

Visitor attractions participating in the Suffolk Good Journey scheme will also form part of a marketing campaign showcasing sustainable tourism visits to Suffolk, offering adventures by train, bus, bike and foot to suit all ages and tastes – from exploring the towns, coast and countryside, and local food and drink delicacies to discovering the cultural and heritage attractions and film locations.

Visitor attractions and venues interested in joining Suffolk Good Journey county can find out more details by contacting Loretta Jones at Good Journey on loretta@goodjourney.org.uk or info@suffolkgrowth.co.uk

CLlr Alexander Nicoll, Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy at Suffolk County Council, said:

“Being without a car should not preclude access to Suffolk's nature, culture and heritage, which is why Suffolk County Council is pleased to be working with our partners to develop sustainable, car-free tourism in our county. The benefits of this scheme are obvious. By creating easier access to local attractions by foot, bicycle and public transport, we are strengthening our local visitor economy, supporting residents to live independent and healthy lives, and helping Suffolk on its journey to creating the Greenest County.”

Fake university website shut down by Suffolk Trading Standards

A website for a fake university aiming to scam money from overseas students has been shut down by Suffolk Trading Standards.

Calling itself the College of Suffolk, the website claimed the university had been founded in 1990 and was located on Queen Street in Ipswich.

Quoting yearly fees ranging from £3,500 to £8,900, it claimed to offer courses in acting, musical theatre, dance and performance.

The site used images of the real University of Suffolk and even had a page promoting the county, saying how it was home to its own breed of horses, breweries and famous celebrities such as singer Ed Sheeran.

A foreword by college 'President' Dr Stephen Spinks talked of how it provides "exciting learning opportunities in business, human resources, accountancy, finance, musician (sic) and art – all critical areas for the world of work."

It is the second time such a fake college has been foiled by Trading Standards – an identical scam using the same name and information was closed down in 2019.

The website was being run from Hong Kong and while Suffolk Trading Standards have had no reports of victims in the UK there may be some overseas.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection, & Communities, said:

"A degree from a British college or university is an enticing prospect for an overseas student and those behind this scam were trying to exploit that.

"Thankfully the vigilance of Suffolk Trading Standards has prevented this website from trying to pick up where it would appear to have previously left off and will not be conning people into paying for non-existent courses."

Trading Standards says anyone considering applying for a college course can beat degree fraud through the Higher Education Degree Datacheck (HEDD) website <https://hedd.ac.uk/> where people can:

- Check whether a university or college is an official degree awarding body by using the look-up service
- Download free toolkits allowing employers, universities and colleges to tackle degree fraud
- Check original degree certificates with the issuing university

Degree fraud can be reported to the HEDD fraud team on 020 8148 2400.

If you have concerns about a website, please report it to Trading Standards via 0808 223 1133.

Could you be a parent and child foster carer?

A column by Councillor Stephen Burroughes, Deputy Cabinet Member for Fostering and Adoption.

In this week's column, we are exploring parent and child fostering. It's a lesser known but incredibly impactful type of fostering and we need more people to consider if they could become parent and child foster carers.

Parent and child fostering involves offering support and guidance to young parents, often mothers, who are facing challenges in caring for their children. This unique form of fostering aims to create a safe environment for both the parent and child, facilitating learning, growth, and the development of essential parenting skills.

This week we are shining a light on Sam and Matt's personal journey with parent and child fostering, the challenges, the triumphs and why they would encourage others to become foster carers.

In 2009, Sam and Matt, parents of five, decided to start their fostering journey as they wanted to provide a loving home for children in need. A friend introduced them to fostering and they began doing short break placements, but their path eventually led them to parent and child fostering.

Sam, inspired by her own struggles as a young mother at 17, sought to extend a helping hand to those in similar situations. The lack of support during her early parenting years fuelled her desire to help parents that don't have anyone else.

Sam and Matt started by caring for a 16-year-old mum and her baby. Despite the hurdles, including an unsafe relationship, the mum thrived under their guidance. She became a part of the family and they have stayed in touch with her even though she has now moved on to live independently.

Over the years, Sam and Matt have navigated many more diverse placements, from supporting a mum with learning disabilities to guiding a dad struggling with his parenting skills. Each placement presented unique challenges, which is the diverse nature of parent and child fostering.

Despite the challenges, Sam and Matt say that fostering has brought great experiences and invaluable life lessons to their family. As a family they have formed genuine relationships with young parents and children from different backgrounds which has taught them and their children empathy, compassion, and the importance of supporting others through difficult times. The challenges posed by fostering has brought the family closer together and made them more resilient.

Sam and Matt would wholeheartedly recommend parent and child foster care to others due to the difference you can make to both the young parents and the children involved. Despite difficult times, witnessing small successes and progress in the families they've supported has been immensely rewarding for Sam and Matt.

They feel that by providing guidance and empathy you have the potential to create a lasting influence on both the lives of the parents and the children whilst breaking generational patterns.

We need more people to come forward to become parent and child foster carers.

Foster carers must possess a blend of parenting knowledge, life experience, empathy, and strength. They must set boundaries, have honest communication, and a commitment to the parents and children in their care.

Training courses, staying updated on guidelines, and access to peer support are provided to our carers. This helps foster carers through the fostering process, ensuring that foster parents are well-prepared to provide a safe and nurturing environment for both parent and child.

If you are interested in becoming a foster carer, please visit www.fosterandadopt.suffolk.gov.uk or call us on 01473 264800.

How Suffolk can reuse and repair to boost items' lifespans

A column by Councillor Richard Smith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Transport Strategy and Waste.

Are you looking to live more sustainably and save some money in 2024?

You may find some inspiration in a new campaign from the charity Keep Britain Tidy this January called Buy Nothing New Month. The campaign challenges us to avoid new clothing, electronics, furniture, and other items that contribute to the cycle of production, consumption, and disposal.

Of course, there are some caveats to this challenge. We all have some essential purchases we must make, such as food and medicines, so we may not be able to abstain completely from buying new items. Equally, we must not discount the excellent and innovative efforts by many Suffolk businesses to operate sustainably, to reduce waste and to source materials responsibly. These businesses will always deserve our support.

However, the campaign does encourage us to be mindful of how we consume – to make intentional purchases. It is a chance to reflect on your purchasing habits and to think about the benefits of buying pre-loved items, borrowing and swapping, and reusing or repairing products that we already own.

As Cabinet Member for Waste at Suffolk County Council, I know only too well the common, linear lifecycle of things – they are made, used, and then discarded. Yes, it is good that many of the things we use can be recycled, but better still is to extend the lifespan of existing products. What if we reused and regenerated products and materials rather than making something new? This would support a circular economy in which items do not become waste when we're finished with them.

The further good news is that, not only does reducing the number of items we buy new reduce our environmental impact, but it is also usually easier on our wallets!

So, what are the alternatives to buying new?

The first and easiest thing you can do is to use what you already own. Have a look in your cupboards and loft. You may be surprised at the useful things you find that could be repurposed. For example, rather than shopping the January sales for new outfits, could you “shop your wardrobe” and revive items of clothing you haven't worn for a while?

You may find that some items need some repair. Fortunately, there are tutorials online for how to repair all kinds of things – but for those occasions when you need a helping hand, there are a number of Repair Café events happening around Suffolk this January and throughout the year. These community-run groups are free to attend and a great way to meet people who can help you fix your broken items. Visit suffolkrecycling.org.uk to learn where to find your nearest Repair Café.

You can also visit the Re-use Shops at Foxhall and Bury St Edmunds Recycling Centres and give a product a new lease of life. A range of items are available for purchase, including small furniture, toys, garden equipment, power tools, electronics, bicycles, bric-a-brac and homewares. You can also donate your own reusable items. The added benefit is that the Re-use Shops raise funds for The Benjamin Foundation, a charity that works with young people and families in need of support across Suffolk. And, of course, there are also local charity shops on our high streets offering many second-hand items for sale.

You can also arrange to swap or borrow items with friends and neighbours. Perhaps you need something to complete a DIY job around the house. Rather than buying a new tool or piece of equipment, could you borrow it from someone in your community? There are also apps, such as OLIO, which help you find things available to borrow locally.

So, while it may not be a one-size-fits-all resolution, campaigns such as this are helpful in challenging us to think about whether we need to buy an item new and what value we place on the things we own already.

1,400-year-old Anglo-Saxon artefacts now on display in West Suffolk

Archaeological finds from a popular exhibition at the National Trust's Sutton Hoo, are now on display at the West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Museum.

Rendlesham Revealed: The Heart of a Kingdom AD 400-800 will be on display until 23 July 2024. Over 50 archaeological finds from the original exhibition are on public view, including gold jewellery, coinage, and food remains.

The display focuses on the main story of royal Rendlesham at its height when it was the power centre of the early East Anglian kingdom 1,400 years ago.

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service is curating the display to celebrate the "Rendlesham Revealed" community archaeology project funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, made possible thanks to National Lottery players.

Councillor Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Cabinet Member for Protected Landscapes and Archaeology, said:

"It's wonderful to be able to share this display at West Stow, after the previous exhibition at Sutton Hoo was so well received. Local people in the west of the county will now have the opportunity to see these beautiful objects on their doorstep.

"I'd like to thank West Suffolk Council, West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Museum and Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, for supporting this exhibition, as well as the many partners, the local landowners and farmers for their support, and National Lottery players, without whom, funding for this project would not have been made possible."

The objects are on loan from Colchester and Ipswich Museums and from Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service, some of those on display include:

- Gold and garnet dress accessories and weaponry fittings, used by the highest levels of society, such as warriors and royalty
 - A copper-alloy gilt horse-harness fitting, with garnet and shell centre inlay with a zoomorphic interlace design
 - A gold-and-garnet pyramid mount used on sword scabbards
- Gold, silver and copper-alloy coinage. More coinage of the 6th to 8th centuries has been found at Rendlesham than anywhere else in England, suggesting that Rendlesham played a crucial role in encouraging trade and the use of money across south-east Suffolk and beyond
- Imported objects from across Europe suggests long-distance contacts, gift giving and trade
 - A gold circular pendant made of impressed gold sheet of a form which originated in southern Scandinavia in the 5th century
 - An unusual silver brooch in the form of a horse-and-rider, similar to examples found in modern-day France and the Netherlands in the later 5th century
- Objects representing the ordinary population of farmers and craftworkers, including belt buckles, pins and weaving items
- Animal bone, the rubbish from butchery, cooking and eating, which tells us about farming practices and feasting

The temporary display is now open at West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Museum until 23 July 2024. Entry to see the display is included in the normal admission charge to the museum.

A virtual interactive tour of the original exhibition at Sutton Hoo is also planned in the coming months, including video interviews with the archaeologists themselves.

To find out more about the Rendlesham Revealed project visit: heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham

Accessible cycling scheme launched in Stowmarket

The Way to Go Sustainable Travel team at Suffolk County Council (SCC) has launched a new accessible cycling scheme at Leading Lives Stowmarket Hub. A number of community groups from across the county were invited to attend the launch and see for themselves the range of accessible bikes on offer.

Up to twelve adult bikes are available to loan for free, which is all part of SCC's drive to encourage residents to travel sustainably, especially for shorter journeys. This follows a survey conducted earlier in the year which asked community groups and their members for feedback on whether they would use accessible bikes. The responses were overwhelmingly positive and the scheme will now give community groups the opportunity to hire the bikes up to three times a week for free.

The 12 bikes - which include 4-wheelers, balance-supported bikes, a tandem option as well as a 2-seater with the seats positioned next to each other - will be stored in Stowmarket and are funded through the Capability & Ambition Fund from Active Travel England, an executive agency of the Dept. for Transport. The team hope that community groups will book the bikes and introduce regular cycle rides for their members and carers.

Cllr Alexander Nicoll, Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy at Suffolk County Council, said:

“We know that cycling is beneficial to physical and mental health, and this new scheme not only promotes sustainable travel but also makes cycling a more inclusive activity, giving more residents the opportunity to enjoy the freedom of cycling.

“I would encourage anyone who feels they need some additional support to cycle - perhaps those with a visual impairment, for example - to contact their local community group and arrange to loan one of the bikes.”

Council to propose new funding for arts & heritage in Suffolk

Suffolk County Council is today (26th January) announcing its intention to create a new funding pot open to all arts and heritage organisations in the county.

- Core funding for nine arts and heritage organisations still to cease after 2024/25
- New £500,000 funding pot proposed from 2025/26, open to all arts and heritage organisations in Suffolk
- Proposal to be tabled at Cabinet meeting on 30 January

Following this week’s announcement from government that £600 million of further funding will be available to local councils, the council intends to propose a new £500,000 project fund to which all Suffolk’s arts and heritage organisations can apply.

However, this does not alter the difficult financial decisions the council is having to make so that it can prioritise spending on services like SEND, home to school transport and children in care. An extra £74 million is still needed over the next two years to protect the county’s most vulnerable adults and children.

Proposals to end the core funding of £528,000 of nine arts and heritage organisations after the 2024/25 financial year, are still in place. This funding will be replaced with the new £500,000 project funding pot, open to all arts and heritage organisations, from April 2025.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:

“The announcement from government just a couple of days ago is absolutely welcome, and is a credit to our MPs, our own council, and councils across the country for the lobbying which has paid off. We estimate that Suffolk will see around £7.2 million as a result of this extra investment.

“This successful lobbying enables us to make today’s welcome proposal of new project funding for Suffolk’s arts and heritage organisations.

“However, given the wider pressures we face caring for the most vulnerable individuals in Suffolk, we must still take a considerable amount of money from our reserves to balance our budget. That simply cannot continue.

“On top of this, there are still millions of pounds that we need to save in the coming years. Like all county councils with responsibilities for key services that look after those most in need, we are not out of the financial woods, significant challenges and difficult decisions still remain.”

Cllr Bobby Bennett, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities, said:

“We have been adamant since starting our budget proposals that we would seek opportunities to support the arts and heritage sector. The recent government announcement has presented us with such an opportunity. As I am, people across Suffolk are rightly proud of our cultural organisations and I’m pleased we have been able to make this proposal to continue to fund the sector.

“There are many diverse and exciting arts and heritage groups in the county, delivering amazing work in their local communities who would all have an equal opportunity to bid to help fund their projects. Together, we would enable more early interventions for Suffolk people who might need some support.

“Should this proposal get the green light, we will continue to work with organisations across the sector to help us shape how the fund is set up.”

The new £500,000 fund would contribute to delivering on the council’s ambitions such as looking after the health and wellbeing of Suffolk’s residents, particularly those most in need of extra support to live as safely, independently, and healthily as possible.

The impact of the government announcement for further funding for councils will be discussed at Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Meeting on 30 January 2024, where proposals will be explored.

Trading Standards seize 2,007 illegal vapes in Ipswich

Suffolk Trading Standards has seized more than 2,000 illegal nicotine vapes from shops in Ipswich.

The devices were recovered from three shops in the borough by trading standards officers checking for compliance on advice issued after previous visits.

The businesses will now be subject to further investigation to consider whether they should face further action, which could include prosecution.

The legal UK limit on nicotine content in disposable electronic cigarettes is no more than 2% (20mg/ml) and must not exceed 2ml in capacity (around 600 puffs).

The disposable products seized contained oversized tanks, giving between 3,500 to up to more than 10,000 puffs.

The seizures saw 964 found at one shop, 867 in the second and 176 in the third.

Last November a total of 1,913 vapes were seized from shops in Lowestoft, Felixstowe, and Ipswich, while a further 2,500 were recovered in September from a shop in Ipswich. Investigations into these seizures continue.

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 market for illegal vapes. In addition, some retailers sell vapes to underage children by using colourful packaging and sweet flavours.

The Government [announced on Monday January 29](#) that it intends to ban disposable vapes to tackle the rising number of young people taking up vaping. It will also bring in measures to prevent vapes being marketed at children and to target underage sales.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, said:

"Vaping plays a big part in helping smokers to quit, especially when used in conjunction with specialist support from a stop smoking service.

"However, devices such as these are simply trying to cash in on the problem of inappropriate vaping.

"This is excellent work by Suffolk Trading Standards, who are working continuously to tackle this problem."

Consumers can ensure the nicotine vape that they are purchasing is legal by checking the following:

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

Always buy vaping products from a reputable supplier such as a specialist vape shop, pharmacy, supermarket or a UK-based online retailer so they are covered by UK safety and quality regulations.

Anyone who suspects that a business is inappropriately selling vaping materials can report this in confidence to Suffolk Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice Consumer helpline on 0808 223 1133.

Suffolk local area partnership commits to urgent improvements to SEND services and apologises to families

The partnership responsible for overseeing and delivering services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Suffolk have apologised to families and commits to urgent action to strengthen and accelerate improvement plans following an inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission.

- Ofsted and CQC Inspection Report finds significant concerns with SEND services
- The Local Area Partnership promise urgent action to accelerate and strengthen improvement plans
- Senior leaders offer joint apology to Suffolk families

The inspection, which took place in November, highlighted that 'there are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns' about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND. The report can be read [here](#).

The local area partnership which delivers SEND services is made up of Suffolk County Council, the NHS Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB.

The inspection report, published January 30th, identifies two priority actions as follows:

1. The partnership should work more collaboratively and effectively to improve strategic planning. This needs to deliver systems with measurable impact that will create better experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
2. Leaders should cooperate to take urgent action to improve the timeliness and quality of the statutory Education Health Care plan process, Education Health Care plan needs assessments and Education Health Care plans and annual reviews. This should ensure that plans meaningfully capture the views and aspirations of children and young people with SEND and their families, so that they get the right support at the right time.

The local area partnership is now implementing a number of urgent actions. These include the proposed investment of £4.4 million into SEND services next year by Suffolk County Council (subject to Full Council agreement on February 15), and the establishment of a Suffolk SEND Improvement Board, which will be chaired by an Independent Chair, to oversee the improvement plan and actions needed. A new SEND Strategy is also in the process of being co-produced with parents and carers to set the strategic direction.

Nicola Beach, Chief Executive of Suffolk County Council, said:

“We accept that our improvement work has not yet had the positive impact on the experience of children and young people with SEND and their families in Suffolk.

“This is not good enough and I apologise to children and young people and their families.

“We accept the findings of the report and we must now go further and faster as a partnership to deliver the urgent improvements needed.

“Our SEND staff work with passion and conviction every day to make children's lives better and it is important to recognise this and thank them for their ongoing hard work and commitment. I understand the challenges that colleagues face and that is why I will continue to work with senior leaders from the NHS to strengthen changes to make a difference.”

Ed Garratt, Chief Executive of NHS Suffolk & East Essex ICB, said:

“Children in Suffolk with special educational needs and disabilities deserve the very best support available, and it is deeply disappointing that as a system we have still not been able to deliver this for them.

“Despite the very great challenges around demand and funding, the ICB is absolutely committed to working with its system partners to ensure the required improvements to services are achieved as speedily as possible.

“We have already identified ways we can reduce the current long waiting times for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) assessment and diagnoses and a recovery plan is being implemented and has been shared with the Ofsted and CQC inspectors.

“The ICB has also invested £700,000 in recurring funding in the voluntary and community sector to provide support for families waiting for these diagnoses, as well as co-producing a new parent resource pack as part of the Suffolk Local Offer. This is in addition to £1.2m invested recently in our Childrens Mental Health Services.

“The inspectors provided positive feedback about our crisis mental health support and peripatetic service, which is an excellent collaboration with our voluntary and community sector partners.”

Tracey Bleakley, Chief Executive, NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB, said:

“We recognise that special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services in the Waveney area of Suffolk have not met the high standards which our children and young people need and deserve.

“We acknowledge that waits to access some support are still too long and the ICB is committed to working with system partners including families to continue to listen and respond to feedback with respect to the need to reduce waits and meet needs earlier.

“We have invested in a number of significant transformation programmes of work, including implementation of a successful keyworker service, known locally as Care Navigators for children and young people with learning disabilities and/or autism, and improved speech and language provision for children with education, health and care plans in Waveney, reducing wait times from two years to eight months.

“We have also delivered a waiting list initiative for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)/ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) assessments in response to increased pathway waits, to be expanded in 2024/25, and improved the support offer for children and young people with eating disorders and disordered eating.

“By working collaboratively with partners we are confident that we can make the necessary improvements to SEND services to ensure that children, young people and their families and carers can access the support they need, when they need it.”

Rachel Hood, Cabinet Member for Education, SEND and Skills, at Suffolk County Council said:

“We are sorry that experiences and outcomes of some children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are not as good as they should be, and as we want them to be.

“The report has confirmed that we already know where our problems are and we will continue with our programme of significant investment and reform so that improvements are felt by all.

“There are more than 21,000 children and young people identified in Suffolk schools as having SEND. This number has increased by 30% since 2019. We are aware we have struggled to keep up with this demand.

“Sadly, we are not alone in the challenges we face and, alongside our Suffolk MPs, we continue to lobby Government for greater support. Nationally, the Government accepts that SEND provision is not working well and published its improvement plan in March 2023, which promises widespread reform and help for local partners. “In the meantime, we will continue to bolster and increase the pace of our improvement.”

Alongside key priorities, the report identifies a number of areas where the partnership is working well. These include:

- In some areas, the local area partnership has worked successfully to improve services
- Strong levels of capital investment have increased the availability of special school places

- Initiatives to equip professionals in schools, such as the online tool to support schools, Valuing SEND or VSEND, are showing early signs of impact
- Several health teams support families sensitively and successfully, including the neonatal physiotherapy service
- Social care teams are effective. Social work assessments and reviews are comprehensive and helpful.
- Many providers, such as schools and colleges, praise their relationship with the local area partnership

As a result of this inspection, a monitoring inspection will be carried out within approximately 18 months. The local area partnership is now required to prepare and submit a priority action plan to address the identified areas for priority action.

The Ofsted and CQC report follows two years of significant investment into the way SEND services are delivered in Suffolk. Reform progress has been monitored by the Department for Education, who reported [in March 2023](#), that progress was ‘reassuring’ and noted ‘the leadership’s commitment to improvement in a wide range of areas’.

Significant pieces of reform include:

- Investment of more than £55 million to create more than 1,250 additional places in specialist and mainstream schools
- Creation of specialist SEND support teams and training for all Suffolk schools to support them to meet the additional needs of children in mainstream schools
- Proposed investment of £4.4m in 2024/25 and £3.4m in 2025/26 to expand our statutory SEND teams and secure sufficient educational psychology resource to improve the quality and timeliness of Education Health and Care assessments and reviews
- The ICB has invested £700,000 in recurring funding in the voluntary and community sector to provide support for families waiting for these diagnoses, as well as co-producing a new parent resource pack as part of the Suffolk Local Offer

New funding for arts, but difficult decisions remain

A column by Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader of Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment.

The next couple of weeks are an incredibly busy and important time at Suffolk County Council, and will impact everyone in Suffolk.

On 15 February at the full council meeting, councillors will debate our proposals for how we spend the council’s budget from April onwards.

The meeting will determine how much council tax you and I will have to pay, and how much money is spent on the services that many people rely on – particularly to help support those adults and children who need it most.

It’s a process we’re very familiar with, it happens every year. However, this year feels very different. I’ve said on many occasions that this is the most difficult budget the council has had to work on.

We've all been feeling the inflationary pressures driven first by Covid and then the war in Ukraine. Whether it's filling your shopping basket or running your business, many of us are having to make sacrifices and prioritise what we can and can't spend money on. I know for many it's also highlighted the importance of having some money put away for a rainy day.

Suffolk County Council is in the same position – although a large organisation, we don't have an endless supply of money. We are also having to make really difficult decisions about what we can and can't spend money on, and we really value those 'rainy day savings' – the reserves we've built up over the years. The council can draw down on these reserves, but they can only be used once.

The need for our key services is increasing at such a rate, that our funding isn't keeping pace. Over the last year alone, what we need to spend on children's services has increased by 28% and on adult care by 14%. Without additional funding, this means difficult decisions have to be made, so we can prioritise these services.

We continue to lobby the government for more funding and last week it recognised the pressures that local authorities were under, and announced a further £600m to share across the country's councils. Of course, any additional funding is good news – and we absolutely welcome it. I have no doubt this wouldn't have been possible without our efforts to lobby government, alongside Suffolk's MPs and county councils around the country.

As a result of this, we plan to suggest providing a new £500,000 fund for our arts and heritage organisations around the county.

We've always stated our support for the arts in Suffolk, and pledged to take up any opportunity to continue that support. We understand the value of the sector's work, and how it helps support the council's ambition of looking after the health and wellbeing of Suffolk's residents.

We still propose to end the £528,000 core funding to nine organisations at the end of March 2025, at which point the new fund will start. But importantly, this new fund will be open to all arts and heritage organisations, ending the funding disparity that favoured some towns and organisations over others. We'll work with the sector to ensure this new pot is straightforward to apply for and that the funded projects meets the council's priorities.

However, I'm afraid this positive result cannot mask the significant financial pressures that the council continues to face. The funding we receive from government still does not solve the situation that many councils around the country, like Suffolk, find themselves in.

Over the next two years, we must put £74 million towards caring for adults and children who need support. We need to make savings of £65 million, which includes £11 million of staff savings. And even after the further funding from the government, we will still need to take many millions from our reserves to help balance our budgets. This is not sustainable and fundamental reform of how children's services and adult social care is funded is needed to ensure councils like us remain on a secure financial footing.

To support those most in need, we are proposing to ask you to contribute more this year through your council tax. We don't do this lightly. 77p in every £1 of this will go to supporting those who need it most in Suffolk. If that's not you, or anyone in your family, there is someone out there who absolutely needs that support. The remaining 23p of every pound that you contribute will go

towards everything else that we do, from running the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service to maintaining our roads and footpaths.

You will be able to follow our Cabinet meeting (30 January) and Full Council meeting (15 February) live on the Suffolk County Council YouTube channel.