



ALDEBURGH TOWN COUNCIL
MOOT HALL, MARKET CROSS PLACE
ALDEBURGH, SUFFOLK, IP15 5DS
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To members of the Town Council

Cllr Bond
Cllr Fellowes
Cllr Fox

Cllr Haworth
Cllr Haworth-Culf
Cllr Howard-Dobson

Cllr Jones
Cllr Lumpkin
Cllr Langley

Cllr Webster

You are hereby summoned to **attend the Meeting of the Town Council** to be held at the **Moot Hall** on **Monday 11th March 2024 at 7pm.**

Kim Puttock
Town Clerk
6th March 2024

THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

AGENDA

79. Apologies

80. Declarations of interest

To receive any declarations of interest and to consider requests for dispensations from Members on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, other registerable or non-registerable interest.

81. Suffolk County Council (SCC) Councillors Report and Correspondence

82. East Suffolk Council (ESC) Councillors Report and Correspondence

83. Public Forum (15 minutes)

For the public to ask questions of the Council or raise issues for consideration at a future meeting of the Council.

84. To approve the draft minutes of the meeting of the Town Council held on 12th February 2024.

85. Property and Finance Committee:

85.1. To approve the draft minutes of the Property and Finance Committee meeting held on 26th February 2024.

85.2. Report from the Chair of the Property and Finance Committee.

85.3. **RESOLUTION to APPROVE** proceeding with the Scribe financial accounting package as outlined in the proposal and to sign up with effect from 31st March 2024 and the Town Clerk giving the appropriate notice to the current supplier.

85.4. **RESOLUTION to APPROVE** appointing Elsom Associates with a view to marketing the Tractor Shed and finding a suitable tenant.

- 85.5. **RESOLUTION to APPROVE** approving the recommended works to the Moot Hall by Hoggs Builders.
- 85.6. **RESOLUTION to APPROVE** commissioning Devlin Plummer Stained Glass Ltd to inspect the windows and produce a report with recommendations for any further works that may be required. Proposed to take forward to Council by Cllr Fellowes and seconded by Cllr Haworth-Culf.
- 85.7. **RESOLUTION to APPROVE** obtaining the services of Hutton and Rostron to assess the heating and ventilation issues and to recommend solutions.
- 85.8. To approve the Income list for February 2024 and the Payments list for March 2024.

86. Services Committee

- 86.1. To approve the draft minutes of the Services Committee meeting held on 26th February 2024.
- 86.2. Report from the Chair of the Services Committee.
- 86.3. **RESOLUTION to APPROVE** giving the Town Clerk delegated authority to place the order for the Town Board once approval of the grant has been received.

87. Planning Committee

- 87.1. To approve the draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 26th February 2024.
- 87.2. Report from the Chair of the Planning Committee.

88. Grants and Requests Committee

- 88.1. To approve the draft minutes of the Grants and Requests Committee held on 26th February 2024.
- 88.2. **RESOLUTION to APPROVE** to approve the cost of £1,070 to hire activities for the Annual Fun Day on 15th June 2024.

89. Reports from Members appointed to Outside Bodies

Members appointed to represent the Town Council on outside bodies to provide an update for their respective areas of responsibility.

90. Gifts and/or Hospitality received by Councillors

91. Town Clerk

- 91.1. **RESOLUTION to APPROVE** the draft Safeguarding Policy.

92. Correspondence

93. Mayor's Report

94. Closure

Suffolk County Council Councillors Report - March 2024

National Grid Ventures

<https://www.suffolknews.co.uk/southwold/national-grid-announces-chosen-infrastructure-sites-and-rout-9355908/>

“NG received over 1,300 responses. Every comment received matters to us and has helped to further inform and refine our proposals. To summarise our response to the consultation, we have produced a Supplementary Non-Statutory Consultation Report.

The purpose of the report is to:

- capture the feedback received from the public on the options presented, including the alternative options
- provide our response to key themes that emerged in the feedback
- share our cable route, landfall and converter site emerging preferences and how these have been identified by taking account of feedback received.

A copy of the report and the executive summary has been attached for your interest and can also be found on our website: nationalgrid.com/lionlink. If you would like to receive a hard copy version, please request this via the contact details provided below.

We have also submitted our Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Report to the Planning Inspectorate. This process will assist us in establishing the precise scope of the environmental assessment that will be undertaken.

Please contact us via email info@lionlink.nationalgrid.com or call us on 0800 083 1787 if you have any questions on the report or on the LionLink project. We would also be happy to hold a virtual or in person meeting to discuss the latest developments, please do contact us should you wish to arrange this.

We are also planning to hold public webinars after the Easter break to discuss the report and the EIA. Further details of these will be circulated to residents and stakeholders in the coming weeks.

Kind Regards, LionLink Project Team”

Suffolk County Council considers LionLink proposals unacceptable and unfair

Suffolk County Council believes that the failure of two National Grid offshore projects to coordinate with each other, will cause irreversible damage to important landscapes in the county.

The council considers that the proposed LionLink and Sea Link projects could share infrastructure and the absence of coordination between the Sea Link and LionLink projects will, if they are consented, result in over 10 miles of some of the most sensitive and important landscapes in the UK being dug up to create more trenches for more cabling.

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

LionLink is an interconnector being proposed by National Grid Ventures. Sea Link is an electrical cabling and infrastructure project being proposed by National Grid Electricity Transmission – a different member of the National Grid family. “The high handed and process driven approach by National Grid Ventures is totally unacceptable. They are showing a complete lack of respect to Suffolk and its coastal communities.

“The absence of coordination between the Sea Link and LionLink projects will, if they are consented, result in over 10 miles of some of the most sensitive and important landscapes in the UK being dug up to create more trenches for more cabling. This additional and unnecessary destruction of the Suffolk countryside and natural environment could be wholly avoided, if there was project coordination – something we have been calling for, for years. If LionLink has to make landfall in Suffolk, it must do all it can to minimise harm to our local communities and landscapes. The public, the Planning Inspectorate, and ultimately the Secretary of State at the Department of Energy and Net Zero, must have the opportunity to fully consider coordination with the Sea Link project as an alternative to Southwold or Walberswick. This would make for a much fairer process for all, and a better understanding for everyone concerned.”

Parents can now opt-in for Suffolk County Council funded school travel for 2024/2025

Parents can now opt-in for Suffolk County Council funded (SCC) school travel for the 2024/2025 school year.

If parents have a child who is already receiving SCC funded school travel, they must opt-in by 31 May 2024 to continue to receive it.

Families of children starting secondary school in September 2024 will receive an e-mail by the end of March if they are eligible for SCC funded school travel.

If parents have a child starting primary school in September 2024, they should not opt-in until they receive the offer of a school place. If they are eligible for SCC funded school travel they will be contacted by 10 May 2024.

It is important that parents opt-in for SCC funded school travel by 31 May 2024 to ensure that transport is in place for the start of the new school year. If your child is starting secondary school in September, we will contact you by the end of March to let you know if they are eligible. If your child already receives SCC funded school travel, you must opt in every year to continue to receive it.

If a child is not eligible for SCC funded school travel but their parents wish to purchase a spare seat, they may do so from 1 July 2024.

To opt-in or for more information on the SCC school travel policy please visit: www.suffolkonboard.com/opt-in

98% of pupils receive a place at one of their preferred Secondary Schools on National Offer Day

This year parents and carers of 98% of children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of their three preferred schools and 93% were offered a place at their first preference school.

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Suffolk County Council received 7,867 applications from parents and carers indicating which secondary school they would prefer their child to transfer to in September 2024.

Families who applied online can log in to the online service from today to see the school their child has been offered. They will also receive an email to confirm this offer, unless they have indicated that they do not wish to. Letters will be sent to parents who made a paper application by second class post today (1 March 2024).

It is great to see that the majority of families have been offered a place at one of their preferred secondary schools. We do appreciate that not all families will have received a place at their preferred school. If this is the case and a parent or carer's preference for a Suffolk school has been refused, their child's name will automatically be added to the waiting list for that school. Parents and carers will also be advised how to lodge an appeal should they wish to do so.

Published criteria were used to decide which children had priority for school places to ensure that the process was fair and clear. Once school places have been confirmed, parents and carers need to consider how their child will get to and from school. If their child is eligible for Suffolk County Council funded school travel, they will receive an email by the end of March 2024 with details of how to opt-in.

Further information on secondary school admissions can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions.

New Suffolk campaign urges drivers to switch their engines off

A new campaign urging Suffolk's drivers to switch off their engines when parked has launched today (1 March 2024). The campaign against Idling particularly focuses on turning off engines outside schools to protect children's growing lungs from unnecessary pollution.



Pupils and staff at Castle Hill Infant and Junior School support Suffolk Idling Action campaign

Idling engines, where a car is stationary with its engine on, cause peaks in harmful pollutants which when breathed in overtime can lead to asthma, heart disease, cancer and stunt children's growing lungs.

Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of pollution because their height puts them closer to exhaust fumes, they breathe more rapidly than adults and so absorb more pollutants and because their developing organs are more easily damaged.

Children living in highly polluted areas are four times more likely to have reduced lung function in adulthood, improving air quality for children has been shown to halt and reverse this effect.

A study published in January 2024, found that hospital admissions among children were "significantly associated" with exposure to higher levels of air pollution over a two-week period and that only around half of them would have needed hospital care if pollution had been within legal limits.

Research shows that idling engines produce up to twice the amount of exhaust emissions compared to when a vehicle is moving. In a survey carried out in Suffolk at the end of 2022, 35% of respondents said they never switch their engine off when parked or stationary.

The evidence is there, pollution is damaging our health and damaging the environment. Switching our engines off when parked is a simple action we can all take and it's been proven to make a huge difference to air quality, particularly outside schools. This campaign is just one of the actions Suffolk County Council and its partners are taking, through our joint Air Quality Strategy work, to improve air quality in the county for residents and visitors alike.

Councillor Paul West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding

Suffolk County Council has joined forces with schools across the County along with Babergh and Mid Suffolk, East Suffolk, Ipswich and West Suffolk Councils to deliver the campaign.

For more information visit www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/airquality. To request materials, email: ph.widerdeterminants@suffolk.gov.uk.

Public consultation on Suffolk County Council's proposed devolution deal starts on 18th March

A 10-week public consultation on our proposed devolution deal with the Government will start on 18th March and run through until 26th May. The consultation will be in two main parts – an open survey, hosted by Suffolk County Council, that any residents can complete and a sample survey of 1000 Suffolk residents conducted independently by Ipsos Mori. The consultation will be available through our website www.suffolk.gov.uk/devolution and social media. There will also be media coverage highlighting the consultation.

New Cabinet structure will strengthen SEND reform

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

In recent weeks, readers will no doubt have seen a lot of news stories about SEND services in Suffolk, following the latest inspection report published by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). This week I have taken decisive action to strengthen my cabinet in a reshuffle – including creating a much greater focus on improving SEND.

Experienced cabinet member Cllr Andrew Reid will take the role of cabinet member for SEND and education. The role previously included oversight of skills, but to enable more political focus and accountability on urgent improvements on SEND services, this has now been moved to Cllr Richard Smith to sit alongside his existing responsibilities for economic development, transport strategy and waste. Cllr Debbie Richards will support Cllr Reid as deputy cabinet member for SEND. Working with the DfE, we are also establishing a new SEND Improvement Board, with an independent chair. This is a requirement following the Ofsted/CQC inspection.

Continuing the changes to children and young people (CYP) leadership, serving cabinet member Cllr Bobby Bennett has been appointed as cabinet member for CYP services. Two deputy cabinet members have been promoted to cabinet roles – Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton is now cabinet member for equality and communities and Cllr Craig Rivett is cabinet member for public health and public protection.

Alongside these changes, further new faces come in as deputy cabinet members. Cllr Nadia Cenci becomes deputy cabinet member for property and county farms, Cllr David Roach becomes deputy cabinet member for fostering and adoption and Cllr Heike Sowa joins as deputy cabinet member for transformation.

I am confident in the determination and tenacity of both Andrew and Debbie to help council officers drive those improvements forward. As a cabinet, we have a collective mission - we must see real and lasting improvement in SEND services and deliver on the wider ambitions of this council. The people of Suffolk deserve nothing less.

Separately, there has also been change at a senior officer level within SEND services, with two senior leaders having left the organisation late last year and interim leadership in place.

A new executive director of children and young people is in the process of being recruited. The application window closed last week. This will be a key executive role and we are specifically looking for someone who understands SEND, knows what success looks like and who can deliver the much-needed cultural change that is needed and that Suffolk children and their families deserve.

I am sorry and deeply disappointed that the speed of change has been too slow and am determined to deliver improvements through leadership change, investments and culture change. Most importantly, I want the experience of children and families to be far better, emotionally sensitive and timely.

Getting this right for the children and young people in Suffolk is my top priority – a commitment shared by councillors and senior leadership team. This is not an empty pledge. We remain steadfast and resolved to go further and faster with our reforms.

Driving forward SEND reform will be paramount. Our job will be to build on the good work that is already underway, including investing more than £55 million to create more than 1,250 additional places in specialist and mainstream schools and the 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. If approved by councillors next week, we are also proposing the additional 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. This investment comes at a time when Suffolk County Council is facing its most challenging budget.

Despite this challenge, it is right that we continue to invest in those who need it most and improve our service for the children, young people, and families in Suffolk.

Dragon Patcher lands in Suffolk to bolster response to rural potholes

Suffolk Highways has welcomed the new pothole-repairing machine to help fix the growing number of potholes experienced nationally during the winter season, with a trial set to initially target defects in rural Suffolk.

The Dragon Patcher is a machine that releases compressed air which cleans the surface of the road, before heating the surface to a temperature that enables repair material to bond effectively with the road surface, allowing the pothole to be repaired with an aggregate and hot bitumen material.

Compared with the traditional approach of repairing potholes, the Dragon Patcher can work five times faster. This trial is in addition to the potholes being repaired around the clock as part of our routine repair programme, during the past two months Suffolk Highways has repaired 2,851 potholes across Suffolk.

Fuelled by the biodiesel, HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil), the patcher reduces raw material use and creates zero waste and has shown to provide significant carbon savings when compared to traditional patching techniques.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways, and Flooding, said:

“The recent cold and wet weather has expectedly brought a huge spike in the number of potholes appearing across our roads and we are working around the clock to tackle the current levels we are seeing.

“The arrival of the Dragon Patcher in Suffolk will help bolster our efforts in getting these defects repaired, especially focusing on rural roads where we can repair higher numbers, in a fraction of the time.

“This new piece of kit is one way in which our new highways contract strives to provide better value for Suffolk’s taxpayers and works to reduce impact on the environment.”

Once the trial ends in Suffolk, a decision will be taken on whether to roll out the technology across the county.

Councils’ loft insulation offer for Suffolk homes

Suffolk’s Public Sector Leaders have launched a Suffolk Loft Insulation offer, teaming up with builders' merchant Travis Perkins to offer Suffolk residents a significant reduction on loft insulation.

There are four product options available, and residents will receive a 50% discount off their purchase (up to £200), with free delivery.

According to The Energy Saving Trust, it is estimated that an uninsulated home loses a quarter of its heat through its roof. An effective way to reduce this heat loss, and heating bills, is to insulate your loft, attic or flat roof. Correctly installed insulation should pay for itself many times over in its 40-year lifetime.

Councillor Gerald Kelly, Chair of the Suffolk Environment Cabinet Members group, said:

“Good insulation is a simple addition to immediately improve the warmth and comfort of your home. This should mean you have to put the heating on less, which will save you money and also be making a positive contribution to climate change.

“Suffolk Public Sector Leaders are continually looking for ways like the Loft Insulation Grant to support Suffolk residents to have more energy efficient homes, and drive down the county’s carbon emissions for a more sustainable future.”

Andrew Hunt, Account Manager at Travis Perkins has said:

“Travis Perkins is thrilled to be working with Suffolk’s councils to offer this fantastic support for Suffolk residents. With energy prices still high and an ambition to reduce Suffolk’s carbon emissions, we’re delighted to offer a discount which will benefit and reach many.”

The offer is open to anyone and will close once the allocated funding has been spent. To find out more visit www.greensuffolk.org/at-home/grants/. Simply fill out the online order form and Travis Perkins will be in touch to arrange payment and delivery.

The Loft Insulation Grant is being funded by Suffolk’s Public Sector Leaders and Travis Perkins and will help contribute to Suffolk’s Climate Emergency Plan and our vision for Suffolk to become Carbon Neutral by 2030.

Have your say on Suffolk’s local transport plan

Residents are invited to share their views on how they travel to help inform Suffolk’s Local Transport Plan.

The plan sets out a long-term vision for transport in Suffolk and covers key themes such as decarbonisation of transport, strengthening the local economy, promoting health, wellbeing and social inclusion, and creating better-connected places that encourage a range of transport choices.

Suffolk County Council is asking for feedback on the key themes proposed for the fourth version of the plan, which will cover the period until 2040 and respond to long-term transport opportunities and challenges facing Suffolk and the UK as a whole. A link to the survey can be found at <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/ltp4>. The consultation will run for eight weeks until 8 April 2024.

Feedback from the consultation will be collated and inform the production of the draft local transport plan. The full draft document will then be subject to further consultation later in the year.

Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Skills, Transport Strategy and Waste, said:

“A lot has changed since we wrote our last Local Transport Plan. Many people’s travel habits have changed permanently since the pandemic and so it is important that we hear from residents to take this into account.

“This consultation has been designed to seek your feedback at an early stage and to help us to develop a transport plan that reflects the needs and aspirations of as much of the local community as possible.”

Your Suffolk Wedding website launched

Suffolk Registration Service has launched a new website for couples looking to book weddings or Civil Partnerships in the county.

The website is designed to help couples plan their perfect day, whether they are looking for a small and intimate ceremony at a Register Office, a bespoke ceremony at one of over 130 approved wedding venues or a bespoke ceremony at their own home or at an unlicensed venue.

Featuring a comprehensive guide to the different wedding options, the website also addresses the legal requirements and fees and includes a step-by-step guide on how to organise a wedding, if couples are unsure where to start.

The website showcases the more than 130 venues licensed by the Registration Service, where couples can get legally married, as well as the Register Service’s own ceremony rooms.

Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton, Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities, said:

“We are delighted to launch our new website, which is a one-stop shop for everything related to weddings and Civil Partnerships in Suffolk. “We want to make it easy and convenient for couples to find the information they need and to book their wedding with

us. The website highlights our different wedding options for every budget and preference, and really showcases Suffolk as a wedding destination.”

Couples interested in booking a wedding can visit the website, www.weddings.suffolk.gov.uk and fill out an online enquiry form.

Alternatively, contact the Registration Service by phone or email:

Bury St Edmunds 0345 607 2060 bury.registrars@suffolk.gov.uk

Ipswich 0345 607 2050 ipswich.registrars@suffolk.gov.uk

Lowestoft 0345 607 2070 lowestoft.registrars@suffolk.gov.uk

Sudbury 0345 607 2080 stowmarketsudbury.registrars@suffolk.gov.uk

Stowmarket 0345 607 2080 stowmarketsudbury.registrars@suffolk.gov.uk

Woodbridge 0345 607 2090 woodbridge.registrars@suffolk.gov.uk

Council to review weed control for roads and pavements

In February 2022, the council agreed to stop using glyphosate in its routine weed treatment programmes, to find more natural alternatives to help protect the local environment.

However, the alternative products proved unable to meet requirements, which was further exacerbated by exceptional growing conditions. Multiple applications were sometimes needed which could introduce other negative environmental impacts.

It has proved a challenge to reduce high performing treatments, whilst significantly mitigating the environmental impact. Other local authorities locally have experienced a similar situation.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Ipswich, operational highways and flooding, said:

“It is important that we trial different methods to maintain weeds on our highway network, and strike a balance between spending taxpayers’ money carefully, protecting the environment and considering public safety on our roads and pavements.

“Part of that balance is making sure that whatever treatment we apply, it is effective – and that includes looking to reintroduce glyphosate to some of our operations for the best possible performance.

“We’ve monitored the work that we’ve done since moving away from glyphosate on our roads and pavements and listened to feedback from residents. Some were pleased that we were using less chemicals, but others thought that weeds had thrived too much. We agree that the different treatments haven’t worked as well as we’d hoped.”

Regular weed treatment on our highway network will continue using a variety of methods, with plans for glyphosate being considered only when appropriate – the ambition still remains to reduce the use of glyphosate as far as possible.

Teams will continue to monitor and research the different approaches being used to remove weeds on our roads and pavements. Where needed, glyphosate would be used responsibly as it is one of the most cost-effective and long-lasting solutions.

£4.4 million to be spent on additional staff to strengthen SEND reform

Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet confirmed today that 60 new members of staff will be recruited to drive forward important reform to the way special educational needs and disability (SEND) services are delivered in Suffolk.

New Cabinet Member for Education and SEND, Andrew Reid, today reaffirmed Suffolk County Council’s commitment to ensuring improvements to the SEND service go further and faster. This includes an increase in permanent SEND staff of nearly 15%. These new posts will support the improvement of the quality and timeliness of assessments, plans, reviews, and communications with families.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Education and SEND, said:

“We must continue to invest in this service to bring about wide scale improvement. This includes investing in staff resources, so we have the capacity to deliver change. We continue to focus on this priority – we owe it to Suffolk’s children and young people.”

In January, a report by Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) found significant concerns with the way SEND services are delivered by the NHS and Suffolk County Council. In response to this, the Local Area Partnership, made up of Suffolk County Council, the NHS Suffolk and Northeast Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB, must submit a Priority Action Plan by March 7 outlining the improvement programme. In order to support this improvement programme, an additional £4.4million was signed off during the budget discussions at Full Council on February 15. Of this, £3.4million will provide 46 new full-time posts – a increase of 14.76% in current staffing levels. An additional £1million will be spent in 2024/25 to fund 14 temporary posts. Cabinet today agreed to delegate authority to approve the priority action plan to be submitted to Ofsted and CQC on March 7 to the statutory director of children’s services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and SEND. The priority action plan is also being approved at the Suffolk and North-East Essex ICB Executive and the Norfolk and Waveney ICB Executive on 4 March 2024.

Suffolk’s wettest ever winter breaks highway response records

Storm Babet saw nearly two months’ worth of rain fall in 24 hours, the subsequent storms and severe weather events saw more sustained rainfall, leading up to what Met Office described as the fifth wettest February on record since 1836 with several days still to go.

As a result of the extreme weather, Suffolk Highways has seen an 82% increase in requests for action on the highway - 18,000 additional customers reports so far during the 2023/24 financial year.

The number of drainage and flooding issues have increased by a staggering 364% in the last five months when compared to the same period in 2022/23. Suffolk Highways has also responded to 2,117 emergency incidents in the same period, which represents a 64% increase on last year.

The increased wet weather coupled with occasional freezing temperatures this time of year results in a sharp rise in pothole breakouts. Despite these challenges, highways has completed 34% more repairs to potholes in 2023/24 when compared with the previous year.

To help keep up with this unparalleled increase in demand, Suffolk County Council is investing more resource and trialing new ways of working, including:

- Increased highway funding allocated to fix potholes, resurface roads and repair drainage
- 70% increase in highway crews to maintain and repair the roads
- Launching a trial of new 'Dragon Patcher' equipment – a pothole-repairing machine which can repair potholes up to five times faster than traditional methods
- Trialing a 'Road Mender' – a patching machine used in urban areas which will help boost productivity and present more environmental benefits

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Ipswich, operational highways and flooding, said: "The extremes of weather we have witnessed across the county since October is like nothing we have experienced before. The rainfall has been heavy, relentless and unforgiving.

"Much like other local authorities up and down the country, this weather has presented us with some unprecedented challenges, especially when it comes to maintaining the highway network – despite this, Suffolk is rising to the challenge.

"It is clear from the statistics that highways teams are doing more than ever before, working harder and faster, resulting in more pothole repairs and more drainage issues resolved. Unfortunately, the demand outweighs the progress we are making so there continues to be much to do.

"I want to reassure Suffolk's residents that we are doing everything we can to ensure the highway network is being maintained to a safe standard, however during this time I ask that residents take extra care when travelling and report any issues you spot to us. I also want to thank residents for their patience and understanding during this time."

Applications open for new Suffolk Business Board

Inspirational and influential local businesspeople are sought to form the board, which will represent the local business community and will help steer the local economic strategy to create a stronger and higher-skilled economy for Suffolk.

The board will meet 4-6 times a year to help shape economic strategy and priorities for Suffolk, to oversee delivery of funded programmes such as business support and skills training for Suffolk, and to work closely with partners such as District councils, neighbouring counties, and national economic and trade bodies.

The county council is seeking candidates who represent the diversity of Suffolk's people and economy, whether that be sector, geography, or business type.

Expressions of interest should be emailed to businessboard@suffolk.gov.uk by Friday 22 March, with a short biography or CV and a brief cover letter outlining your interest in the opportunity and what area(s) of expertise you feel you could bring.

Board membership is a voluntary position and terms are for up to three years from the date of appointment. The Business Board will be supported by a dedicated team of council officers.

Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Skills, Transport Strategy and Waste, said:

“The new Suffolk Business Board will be a forum for business, education and local political leaders to shape a compelling economic strategy and identity for Suffolk, attract new investment and act as an advocate for Suffolk's economy at a national level.

“Successful candidates will be the voice of business in Suffolk, and their knowledge and experience will be invaluable in creating a stronger economy and better jobs for our county.”

The establishment of the Business Board follows the Government's announcement in 2023 that Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) would be integrated into upper tier local authorities. The Suffolk Business Board will succeed the existing New Anglia LEP Board which ceases on 31 March 2024.

Next Sizewell C forum. Once again, if you have any written questions etc that you would like considered for the next forum please do let me know. Please email any through at least one week before the meeting. This is a standing offer going forward.

Best wishes

TJ

February 2024 Parish Report
East Suffolk Council GLI Group – Councillor Update

Council hosts first-ever 'Model District Council' for schools

More than 50 young delegates from seven East Suffolk schools took over the Council Chamber as youth 'councillors' for the day.

Pupils from schools from across the district were invited to take their seats for a first-ever simulation of East Suffolk Council, and to debate a motion on intergenerational political equality in East Suffolk.

The Chair of Council, Cllr Dr Anthony Specca, developed and oversaw the 'Model District Council' event as a centrepiece of his Chairship. He was joined on the day by Vice-Chair Cllr John Fisher, Leader of the Council Cllr Caroline Topping, and Leader of the Labour Group Cllr Peter Byatt.

A total of 52 pupils from Benjamin Britten Academy, Bungay High School, Castle EAST School, East Coast College, Pakefield High School, The Ashley School and Thomas Mills High School took part in the Model District Council, which was an all-day educational event.

Pupils were each assigned a ward and political party, and they were offered an experience that mirrored the real Council as closely as possible.

Supported by officers from Democratic Services and Communities teams, they first met in their political groups to consider the issue of how best to ensure that the youth voice is heard in East Suffolk. They then came together for a formal 'Full Council' meeting, with the Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent (GLI) group proposing a substantive motion, just like in the real Council.

Following robust debate and well-considered amendments from pupils in all the political groups, the youth 'councillors' then unanimously approved a motion to establish a permanent East Suffolk Youth Council.

Cllr Dr Specca said:

"As Chair of Council, and as an educator, I believe it's vital to engage youth in politics.

"The better future that we're trying to help shape here at East Suffolk Council belongs especially to the youth of our District. It's only fair that we listen to them, and our democracy will be stronger for it. It's now up to us to respond to the call for a permanent East Suffolk Youth Council, and I for one am keen to get to work on it."

The Model District Council also included a keynote speech by Rhammel Afflick BEM, Head of Advocacy and Communications for the British Youth Council, public-speaking tips from Beth Derks, founder of the 'Future Leaders' programme at the University of East Anglia, a 'marketplace' event featuring information about careers and apprenticeships with East Suffolk Council, and an 'Any Questions?'-style Q&A session with Group Leaders Cllrs Topping and Byatt.

Local Council Leaders warn of 'catastrophic effect' of Suffolk County Council Budget plans

The Leaders of Suffolk's district and borough councils have warned of "a catastrophic effect on hundreds of Suffolk's most vulnerable residents" should proposals contained within Suffolk County Council's Budget for 2024/25 be agreed.

Cllr John Ward (Babergh), Cllr Caroline Topping (East Suffolk), Cllr Neil MacDonald (Ipswich), Cllr Andrew Mellen (Mid Suffolk) and Cllr Cliff Waterman (West Suffolk) have written to the County Council, expressing their grave concern with the proposed changes to Housing Related Support (HRS); a temporary housing scheme which assists people in the care of Suffolk's Social and Children's Services. HRS is a model which helps individuals learn the skills needed to live independently prior to rehousing by district and borough councils, and it is a vital part of the pathway to prevent or relieve homelessness. However, Suffolk County Council now intends to remove all funding, and decommission the scheme by March 2025, having signed a five-year contract with support providers only just over a year ago.

In the letter sent to Suffolk County Council, the Leaders have urged the authority to work with district and boroughs, and to reverse this decision, which they believe does not consider the longer-term impacts - not just on the county's most vulnerable people, but on the budgets that this approach will supposedly relieve. They wrote:

"The Housing Related Support service provides over 700 accommodation places, delivered through multiple specialist providers. These specialist providers, many of whom are charities, provide support to tenants to help them live independently. This service is not available via any other route, and we understand that there is a waiting list of around 400 people.

"The client groups for Housing Related Support are amongst the most vulnerable in Suffolk. They include 16- and 17-year-olds who have no family with whom to live, 18-year-old care-leavers and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. They also include young people who are also parents. Without your supported accommodation, many of these children and young people will add further pressure to your Children and Young People Services budget.

"Clients also include adults with mental health conditions or learning disabilities, a history of drug or alcohol dependency, or those being released from prison. It's likely that the lack of supported housing for these individuals will place additional pressure on your other Adult and Community Services budgets.

"If people who previously qualified for Housing Related Support, are left without accommodation then rough sleeping will increase. We know that this will impact on these vulnerable people's health, that they are more likely to begin or continue substance misuse, and to suffer from mental health issues. The impact of this will increase demand on other County Council services which are already stretched.

"We recognise that times are tough and that difficult decisions need to be made. But we believe that a decision to end Housing Related Support is short-sighted and will haunt Suffolk County Council in years to come as the implications come to fruition."

Statement on proposals for Suffolk arts and heritage funding

A statement from Cllr Sarah Whitelock and Cllr Katie Graham; East Suffolk's cabinet member and deputy cabinet member for Communities, Leisure and Tourism, regarding Suffolk County Council's proposals for arts and heritage funding in the county.

“At East Suffolk Council, we remain alarmed by the regressive proposals for arts and heritage funding at Suffolk County Council, affecting much-loved arts organisations and residents in our district.

“Following a public and media outcry over a proposed total cut to the arts and heritage sector, providing a savings of only 0.58% to the council's finances, a further announcement of additional government funding led to suggestions that the council could now make a U-turn. On closer inspection, however, there is no U-turn but a renewed commitment from the council to remove core funding of arts and heritage from its budget. A smaller pot of money, as yet for 2025-2026 only, has now been allocated to the sector for which organisations need to compete against each other for individual projects that ‘meet the council's priorities.’

“This is not a good situation for our museums and arts organisations which contribute so much to our residents. As many have attested, the financial security that the council's core funding provides is essential to their operation. To remove this funding is to remove a financial security that allows them to plan ahead, and in many cases, means they are at risk of scaling back on projects that offer enormous value to those within our community.

“The council's statement that this model opens up the funding stream to organisations that might otherwise have been overlooked is one that communicates a lack of confidence in the organisations that were already being supported. A further pot of money to attract fledgling initiatives would be a sound investment; removing existing funding to do this is only damaging.

“Art and culture play a vital role in our communities, especially when times are hard. We believe it is the responsibility of any government to uphold their value not just in words but actions. We appeal to the county council to consider not only the practical harm brought about by this removal of core funding, but the broader and longer-term damage that such a lack of commitment communicates to our residents.”

Ease the Squeeze on cost of living

Are you, or someone you know, worried about the increasing cost of living?

We understand the pressures faced by many people today and we are working closely with key partners to ensure support is available to help ease the squeeze for households in East Suffolk.

To make it as easy as possible for you to access the services and support available, locally and nationally, we have gathered information about them in one place:

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/squeeze/

For the most up to date information regarding East Suffolk Council, please visit:

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk