



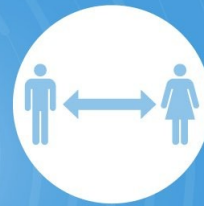
# March 2021 Monthly Parish Newsletter



**HANDS**



**FACE**



**SPACE**

**#StickWithItSuffolk**

Visit [suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus) for health advice, service changes, business support and schools' guidance.

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

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

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

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

Suffolk has long held ambitions to Create the Greenest County and the Suffolk 2020 fund, which is a programme of work all about investing in community projects, aims to support the council's climate emergency declaration and improve Suffolk for all residents in years to come.

A booking system was introduced at Suffolk's recycling centres in May 2020 when sites reopened following closure at the start of the first Covid-19 lockdown and saw 14,000 visits per week during the summer. This can rise up to 27,000 per week in normal times, without current social distancing rules.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Following approval of its annual budget, Suffolk County Council is increasing its planned spending once again in 2021/22 to £597.9million, some £41million (7.4%) more than 2020/21.

As part of this, the council will be spending £15.3million to address its ongoing Covid-19 costs, arising from the continuing local response to the pandemic. There are no proposed reductions in council services or personnel in 2021/22.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Throughout the business plan the Council presents its environmental thread demonstrating the range of projects and commitments in place as part of addressing the climate emergency that was declared in 2019. This includes details of the Council setting its Carbon Budget and the related work involved in achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

## **Highways doubles drainage budget following £27.2m announcement**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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