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Suffolk County Council Report for Clare Division May 2024

Suffolk County Council welcomes Swedish Social Care Delegation

There will be a distinctly continental feel to Social Care teams in Suffolk as the county plays host to a delegation of Social Care professionals from Sweden.

The visit by the Association of Directors of Swedish Social Services, which will be hosted jointly by both Adult Social Care and Children and Young People's services at Suffolk County Council, will be spread over three days from Wednesday 10th April to Friday 12th April, and will look to facilitate mutual knowledge-sharing and learning between all those taking part. There will be a real focus on understanding the different approaches, processes and policies employed in both countries which effectively deal with the universal challenge of delivering good social care.

The visit will include overviews of team and service structures, discussions around how people access services in the UK compared to Sweden including a trip out to meet the Rural Coffee Caravan, how services communicate the challenges of social care to the public, and discussions about the importance of Safeguarding and how people are kept safe. There will also be some time for the visitors to experience the beauty and unique cultural heritage of Suffolk.

Funding will help more people switch on to electric vehicles

A column by Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment.

There are now over 1 million fully electric vehicles (EVs) on Britain's roads as government works towards 100% of new cars sold in Great Britain, to be zero emission by 2035. I've certainly noticed more and more EVs on the road as I've travelled around Suffolk.

Now I fully appreciate that, currently, an EV might not be for everyone. And I'm not going to use this column to try and convert you or convince you about the benefits, or otherwise, of EVs.

However, I do want to share what Suffolk County Council is doing to help improve the county's charging infrastructure, to support existing EV drivers, attract new ones, and help make some aspects of EV ownership more accessible to you.

I'll be honest, when driving an EV I have had frustrations, albeit rare, about the availability and reliability of public charging around the country, when I've needed a top-up. But, on the whole, it has been a convenient and simple experience.

We understand that Suffolk needs a much wider and varied charging network – a mixture of on-street charging, community charging hubs and charging stations. We know this as we commissioned the

'EV:Ready Report' on behalf of all local authorities in Suffolk. It suggests a need for 2,000 standard chargers and 40 to 60 rapid charging stations in Suffolk by 2030, to meet the demand.

Now the county council isn't solely responsible for Suffolk's charging network. Town, parish, borough and district councils are contributing, as well as private enterprises, supermarkets, car parks and other businesses.

But we do have a significant role to play, which is why we recently secured £7.3 million from the government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund to boost the EV charging network in Suffolk.

We'll be using this money to significantly expand the number of kerbside charging points, community charging hubs, car park charging points, and improve existing fast and rapid charging point infrastructure.

This is where you can help. We want you to nominate locations where you would like to see on-street charging, to help make your experience better, or help make that move easier from a petrol or diesel car. We can't guarantee that every suggestion will have a charge point installed, but it will give us a great idea of where the demand is.

You can make your nomination at www.suffolk.gov.uk/pluginsuffolk

All this EV work isn't to say that electrification is going to solve our challenges around a changing climate, or be the solution to more sustainable travel. We of course promote walking, cycling and using public transport where possible. But there will still be vehicles on our roads, and we want to help where we can, to make them EVs. It is an important culture to embrace, as it positively impacts so much from climate change, to our health, to our local tourism economy. We have an ambition to protect and enhance our environment, and EVs play their part in that.

We have also been changing our ways in-house at the council. Earlier this year, our pool car fleet became entirely electric. Staff are always encouraged to consider if car journeys are necessary, but where they are (for example for our social care workers) then all journeys are now made with zero emissions.

I'm also excited to be opening EVEX24 on 11 April - an 'Electric Vehicle Experience Day' which is returning to Trinity Park in Ipswich, and sponsored by Suffolk County Council. Organised by EV Driver, this has been an extremely popular event for members of the public and local businesses to understand more about EVs, meet suppliers and most excitingly, get behind the wheel of dozens of EVs. Tickets have been selling fast, but are still available from www.evdriver.co.uk

Over 400 Suffolk roads set for upgrade as largest ever surfacing project gets underway

Residents across Suffolk are set to benefit from 421 newly surfaced roads this year - almost doubling the number of roads completed last year, as Suffolk Highways' largest ever resurfacing programmes get underway.

With the start of the surface dressing programme beginning this week, 102 roads will be surface dressed, whilst a further 319 sites will benefit from a full machine resurfacing during the year.

Surface dressing is an efficient, sustainable and cost-effective maintenance treatment that prolongs the life of a road surface – it restores skid resistance and seals the road surface from water, whilst removing potholes and improving level differences of the road.

The surface dressing project sits alongside the programmes for reactively repairing potholes and machine resurfacing roads, all complementing one another. During the past six months, Suffolk Highways has

repaired over 9,000 potholes and resurfaced 41 roads, with a further 278 roads planned for resurfacing in this financial year.

New for this year, Suffolk Highways' supply chain partner, Hazell & Jefferies, has invested in new vehicles which allow the new surface to be laid in a safer and more efficient way. For example, the new vehicles eliminate the risk of hitting overhead cables or structures.

- For more information on surface dressing and to view this year's programme, please visit: [Surface dressing](#)
- For more information on machine resurfacing and to view this year's programme, please visit: [Road Resurfacing](#)

99% of pupils receive a preferred primary school on National Offer Day

99.36% of children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of their three preferred primary schools and 96.52% were offered a place at their first preference school.

Suffolk County Council received 6,844 applications from parents and carers indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join 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 (16 April 2024).

Once school places have been confirmed, parents 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 10 May 2024 with details of how to opt-in.

Any parents or carers with a child born between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020 who have not yet applied for a school place should make an application immediately. Information on how to make an application can be found on the [School Admission pages](#) or by contacting Suffolk County Council on **0345 600 0981**.

For further information on how to view your offer online and guidance on what to do if you have not received your preferred offer, please read the [School admissions FAQ page](#).

New Independent Chair appointed to drive forward SEND reform

Suffolk County Council can announce that Kathryn Boulton has been appointed as the new independent chair of the Local Area Partnership's SEND Improvement Board.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision is delivered by the Local Area Partnership in Suffolk, which includes Suffolk County Council, NHS Suffolk and North-East Essex Integrated Care Board and NHS Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board.

The SEND Improvement Board was set up in response to the inspection of SEND services in Suffolk in November last year by Ofsted and CQC and is a requirement of the Improvement Notice that will be issued to Suffolk by the Department for Education. Made up of senior leaders from the council and NHS, board members will oversee the implementation and review of plans and services aimed at improving the way SEND services are delivered in Suffolk. It will also ensure the successful delivery of the Priority Action Plan,

which was co-produced following the inspection and has been agreed by the Department for Education. [You can read this plan online.](#)

The new chair of the board, Kathryn, has 37 years of experience across children's services. With an education background and success in several senior leadership roles, Kathryn has significant experience of transforming SEND services in local authorities and ensuring the voices and experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families are central to the design and delivery of SEND services.

In addition to Kathryn's appointment, the Local Area Partnership will receive an Improvement Notice from the Department for Education. This was an expected outcome after the Ofsted and CQC inspection. It means that advisors from the Department for Education and NHS England will work with the Local Area Partnership to support and monitor improvement plans until further notice.

More Suffolk homes eligible for energy improvements

More Suffolk households can access free home improvements to make them warmer, healthier and cheaper to run, thanks to Warm Homes Suffolk.

Residents and landlords of eligible properties can apply for energy efficient measures such as insulation, solar panels or heat pumps.

Average funding of £18,000 is available for homeowners, and £12,000 for landlords and their tenants.

Warm Homes Suffolk is administered by Suffolk County Council, and delivered by East Suffolk Council, on behalf of all councils in Suffolk. It has been funding home energy efficiency improvements for two years, with funding from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

To be eligible, both of these conditions must be met:

- Homes must have an EPC rating of D, or below
- Homes are not heated by mains gas

And then either of the following conditions:

- Households have a combined pre-tax income of under £36,000 (this was previously £31,000)
- Homes are in a certain postcode (a [pre-qualified postcode checker](#) has been launched), which includes parts of:
 - Beccles, Bungay, Bury St. Edmunds, Felixstowe, Great Cornard, Haverhill, Ipswich, Kessingland, Lowestoft, Mildenhall, Newmarket, Rushmere St Andrew, Saxmundham, Sudbury

Once these conditions have been approved, an assessment of your home will identify which measures are best suited to your property. These will then be installed by trusted contactors, for free.

Landlords and tenants are also eligible to apply, with qualifying rental properties getting up to two-thirds of costs, as an average grant of up to £12,000. Landlords must have fewer than five rental properties and their tenants must meet the eligibility criteria.

Through the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan, the county's authorities have a collective ambition to be net zero by 2030, towards which Warm Homes Suffolk is contributing.

If you think you are eligible, or to find out more about how Warm Homes Suffolk could help you, visit www.warmhomessuffolk.org or call the team on 03456 037 686.

Share your thoughts on the importance of nature in Suffolk

A new survey has been launched to find out which aspects of nature in Suffolk are most important to you.

Your responses will feed into Suffolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy, a plan to help reverse the decline in nature across the county, and to connect and expand existing areas that are important for wildlife and the landscape.

- Nationwide, wildlife species have declined by 19% since 1970 ([State of Nature report](#))
- One in six species in Great Britain are at risk of extinction ([State of Nature report](#))
- Up to 70% of Suffolk's 22,000 ponds are neglected or abandoned ([Suffolk Wildlife Trust](#))
- Norfolk and Suffolk have over three times less ancient woodland than the national average ([Natural Capital Evidence Compendium for Norfolk and Suffolk](#))

To address this decline and to help nature recover, government has introduced legally-binding commitments. There are 48 of these Local Nature Recovery Strategies across the country, led in Suffolk by Suffolk County Council.

Together, they will form a national 'nature network', proposing actions such as the creation of wetlands, restoration of peatlands, planting of trees and hedgerows, and more sustainable management of existing woodlands and other habitats like grasslands.

Members of the public are invited to share their favourite nature spots to visit, what access is like, which habitats and species should be protected, and so on. You don't have to be a wildlife expert, but your thoughts will help the work to reverse the decline of nature in Suffolk.

Farmers, landowners and land managers are also encouraged to submit practical, achievable proposals to support nature conservation, as well as sharing how land is currently managed and any challenges faced applying for government funding schemes.

All responses will help build a picture across Suffolk to help protect and enhance our environment.

You can share your thoughts in the Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy Survey by visiting <https://www.nsnrp.org/get-involved>, which closes on 30 June 2024.