

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – JANUARY 2021



Cllr Stephen Burroughes - Framlingham Division

- **AS OF MONDAY 4 JANUARY, SUFFOLK IS IN LINE WITH NATIONAL COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS – MOVING INTO & FOLLOWING A GOVT NATIONAL LOCKDOWN ORDER. TESTING CAPACITY HAS INCREASED IN RESPONSE TO DEMAND.**

More than one third of Suffolk's total confirmed coronavirus cases were recorded in the last two weeks, government data has shown. A total of 15,643 people have tested positive for the virus in the county as of January 2 – with 5,321 people testing positive from December 20 to January 2, making up 34% of all cases recorded in Suffolk by that point. While the figures show cases are significantly on the rise, testing has vastly increased in recent months when compared to the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic. Mobile testing has increased countywide, while a walk-in test centre has also opened at Portman Road, Ipswich, alongside the permanent test centre at Copdock.

Stuart Keeble, Suffolk's Director of Public Health, said:

"Suffolk is seeing a similar, sharp increase in positive cases in line with the regional picture, which is making more people ill and putting our hospitals under even more pressure. "The new variant of the virus spreads more easily, we must all limit contact with others wherever possible. Even though you may not have any symptoms, you may be giving Covid-19 to someone else without realising it. "We all need to maintain social distancing, continue washing our hands regularly, wearing a mask when appropriate and strictly following the government's guidance."

- **SUPPORT PAYMENTS AVAILABLE FOR THOSE TOLD TO SELF-ISOLATE ON LOW INCOMES**

As of the 24th December, more residents on low incomes or benefits can now get financial help if they are told to self-isolate due to COVID-19. Previously Test and Trace Support payments could only be given to people meeting certain criteria, including on benefits. Now Councils across Suffolk have extended this, using their discretion, to help those on low incomes but not on benefits. Councils across Suffolk are helping administer the Government grant scheme to help people remain at home and do their bit to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Details about the Test and Trace Support Payments can be found on District and Borough Council websites and how to apply for it (**see below**). This is part of a range of measures that councils across Suffolk have introduced to support communities and businesses during the coronavirus pandemic.

Those who are eligible will need to meet all the following criteria:

- You have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace on or after 28 September 2020.
- You have responded to your notification from the NHS Test and Trace and engaged with the service by providing the legally required information.
- You are employed or self-employed.
- You cannot work from home and will lose income as a result.
- You are currently receiving at least one of the following benefits: Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit, OR (under the new discretionary powers) you have a household income of less than £37,400 (couple or single parents) or £19,200 (single person) and have savings of less than £3,000.
- You made your application within 14 days of the last day of your NHS test and trace self-isolation period.

Applicants should ensure that they have the below information available before starting the application:

- NI number
- Your 8-digit test and trace ID number
- Your most recent bank statement, proof of self-employment or wage slips

Visit your District or Borough Council websites for details on how to apply for the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment:

- Babergh District Council: babergh.gov.uk/benefits/coronavirus-money-and-benefits-advice/
- Mid Suffolk District Councils midsuffolk.gov.uk/benefits/coronavirus-money-and-benefits-advice/
- East Suffolk Council <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/east-suffolk-test-and-trace-payment-scheme>
- Ipswich Borough Council <https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/content/self-isolation-support-payments>
- West Suffolk Council Test and Trace Support Payment westsuffolk.gov.uk

Additional help, including financial aid, is also available from Suffolk Support and Advice Service. This additional help is available for those facing financial difficulty or needing support – especially for those who have never asked for help before. On 1 October 2020, the Suffolk Support and Advice Service phonenumber was launched to help people across the county access information or support relating to debt, benefits, housing or employment. People can contact the Suffolk Support and Advice Service on 0800 068 3131 between 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday or go to: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/suffolk-advice-and-support-service/>

- **SUFFOLK 2020 FUND PROJECTS TO DELIVER OVER £2.5 MILLION IN NEW COMMUNITY-FOCUSED INITIATIVES ACROSS THE COUNTY**

On the 18th December, seven new projects were announced as part of the Suffolk 2020 fund to support residents and improve the county for years to come. As part of the council's investment in Suffolk's communities and its ongoing commitment to protecting the environment, the authority launched a special one-off fund in March with the aim of setting up and delivering a range of initiatives and projects that provide a positive, tangible impact in what has proven to be an extremely challenging year.

The announced initiatives and projects are as followed:

New booking system and automatic number plate recognition at Household Waste Recycling Centres – Improving the efficiency and customer experience across all 11 recycling centres by enhancing the online booking system using automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) and automated entry barriers.

Adult Digital Learning - Developing new virtual learning tools and techniques and setting up a laptop loan scheme to strengthen and extend access to the Adult Learning Service for those living in digital and/or rural isolation. This approach will enable people to enhance their knowledge and skills to secure employment. Building on the swift switch to virtual learning during lockdown, we will further develop virtual learning for adults across Suffolk and use new technologies to enrich and improve the quality of interaction and training, modernising the service's offer.

Youth Work - Developing and supporting growth of grass roots organisations to deliver accessible, high quality provision for youths across Suffolk. Includes creation of a virtual 'Centre of Excellence' to share best practice and provide a 'one stop shop' of support for youth groups across Suffolk.

Discovering Suffolk – raising awareness of Suffolk's countryside and the county's rights of way network, promoting local (Covid-safe) outdoor activities across all of Suffolk with the development of a smartphone outdoor app and QR codes to engage new audiences.

Automated Numberplate Recognition Speed Indicators – Devices will be installed at the roadside to tackle localised problems with speeding drivers. The devices will be periodically moved between sites of concern and the data will be forwarded to the Police to assist with targeted enforcement.

Virtual Reality therapy - Engagement and coproduction with people living with dementia and their carers to explore and develop interactive and therapeutic experiences to support wellbeing. These would be delivered through mobile virtual reality headsets and include bespoke content and interactions based around archive media of Suffolk.

Mobile Community ‘Care Hubs’ - Digitally equip and staff selected community vehicles accessing rural communities within Suffolk. This will support digital inclusion and provide a way to share information and provide help around the opportunities available with care technologies and other digital skills.

The work involved in setting up and enabling these projects will begin in early 2021, setting in motion a range of new community projects that will benefit people for years to come. The council’s agreement to move forwards with these exciting projects listed above follows the successful launch of the first three Suffolk 2020 projects that were announced over recent months:

EV Vehicle Charging Points – Making grants available to install around 100 vehicle charging points throughout the county. Particularly targeting rural areas and sites owned and managed by not-for-profit organisations such as Parish Councils, village halls, sports clubs, libraries and charities.

Tree Planting - Increasing tree cover, through rural and urban planting schemes, planting approximately 100,000 trees over the next 18 months, establishing ‘healing woodlands’ to remember those lost to Covid-19, and increasing biodiversity along roadside verges.

Quiet Lanes - Encouraging the use of non-motorised vehicles and more considerate driving at lower speeds along a range of the community’s self-selected rural lanes, with a view to adding 200 new lanes across Suffolk.

- **PROPOSED CHANGES TO SIZEWELL C APPLICATION ARE STEP IN RIGHT DIRECTION**

On the 18th December, Suffolk County Council welcomed EDF Energy’s movement towards reducing the number of additional heavy good vehicles on Suffolk’s roads. As part of its response to EDF Energy’s latest community consultation on its application for Sizewell C, Suffolk County Council has welcomed the energy provider’s movement towards reducing the number of additional heavy good vehicle movements on Suffolk’s roads and increasing the use of rail and marine freight deliveries during site construction. The Council has urged EDF Energy for many years to maximise freight deliveries by sea and rail and significantly, being of the view that the transport proposals were not sustainable, so it welcomes the proposals for an additional Beach Landing Facility on Sizewell Beach to bring construction materials in by sea, as well as an additional night-time rail delivery of materials to site.

In its response, the Council also reflects that many of the proposals offered still lack vital elements in detail and assessment at this stage – such as impacts of the proposals on the coastline or night-time disturbance of residents living close to railway lines. The Council would welcome the opportunity for further dialogue with SZC Co. to better understand details of the current proposals, and the evidence base which has led to them.

- **GREEN LIGHT FOR NEW PEDESTRIAN CROSSING NEAR LAUREATE COMMUNITY ACADEMY**

On the 17 December, the green light was given for a new pedestrian crossing to be installed near Laureate Community Academy. The move comes after widespread support and campaigning for a safe crossing on Exning Road to the primary school. Exning Road is a main route to Newmarket’s town centre and employment areas. It is also hoped that the new crossing will encourage more parents and pupils to walk, cycle and scoot to school. Suffolk County Council’s goal to be the greenest County relies on the success of such initiatives.

- **HELP SHAPE GUIDANCE FOR NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS IN SUFFOLK**

On the 17th December, Suffolk County Council launched the Suffolk Design: Streets Guide, and is asking members of public for feedback in shaping new residential developments (**details below**). The Streets Guide is part of the Suffolk Design initiative which is where District and Borough planning authorities and the County Council are working together to improve the design criteria and guidance for new developments across the county. The guide seeks to draw together national policies, guidance and other best practice and set within the Suffolk context. It covers more than just technical standards for roads, as requirements for footpaths, cycleways, utilities, sustainable drainage are also set out. The consultation is open until **5pm on Wednesday 10 February 2021**. Members of the public can take part by visiting, www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolkstreets.

- **SUFFOLK WINS THE MOST INNOVATIVE FAMILY INFORMATION SERVICE AWARD**

On the 16th December, Suffolk won the Most Innovative Family Information Service award at the National Association of Family Information Service Awards (NAFIS), 2020. The award highlights the work undertaken to adapt Suffolk's online Community Services Directory, **Suffolk InfoLink** (www.suffolk.gov.uk/infolink), to meet the public's rapidly changing needs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Community Information Team and teams across the children and young people's directorate worked together with thousands of community partners to collate and provide information to support to the public. Many service providers in the voluntary and community sector were quick to adapt their offer and were supported to use Suffolk InfoLink to promote these opportunities to the public.

There are 7000 community organisation records provided on InfoLink so this allowed teams to communicate information quickly to thousands of sector partners, and the voluntary sector, and report progress to relevant government departments. On a week-by-week basis Suffolk Infolink was updated to highlight which childcare providers were open for vulnerable children, and key workers such as NHS staff during the first National Lockdown which was an essential element of the Covid rapid response.

As well as helping key workers to find childcare, these developments also supported Suffolk's Track and Trace, Home but Not Alone and the Suffolk Advice and Support Service and provided 'easy to use' access to essential information including financial help and food banks.

- **GREEN LIGHT GIVEN FOR COUNCIL'S NEW HOUSING JOINT VENTURE COMPANY**

On the 9th December, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet gave the go ahead to create a joint venture company to lead new housing developments on some of its own land. Since 2019 the county council, as a major landowner in Suffolk (the 3rd biggest in the County), has been investigating how it can do more with its own assets to support district and borough councils in their role as strategic housing authorities, boost the supply of much needed housing in the county and ensure more of its land is being used to create social value within communities.

The decision follows months of detailed preparation, which saw strategic real estate advisor Avison Young and multinational law firm Pinsent Masons appointed by Concertus Design and Property Consultants Ltd; the Service Delivery Group of the council's Corporate Property Division. Their role was to consider delivery and viability options for a range of potential sites across the county with a view to consider how best to bring each forward for development.

As part of this appointment, and in accordance with the original decision of Cabinet in January, the newly appointed advisors also assessed the option of creating a new joint venture company to manage development of the largest potential sites. A business plan for the joint venture was presented to a meeting of Suffolk County Council's Cabinet on the 16th where it was agreed to proceed to the next phase.

- **NEW CYCLE PARKING INSTALLED THANKS TO GOVERNMENT'S EMERGENCY ACTIVE TRAVEL FUND – BURY ST EDMUNDS AND HAVERHILL**

On the 8th December, new cycle parking was installed in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill as a result of the Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund to help make cycling safer. One of the positives to come out of the COVID-19 crisis is the noticeable increase in people cycling. Whether that is for commuting to work to

avoid overcrowding the transport network, for leisure or as part of people's daily exercise. This has resulted in reduced congestion and improvements in air quality as well as supporting people's health and wellbeing. In Haverhill, the parking racks have been installed on the High Street and outside the Bus Station.

In Bury St Edmunds two cycle parking racks have been installed on St Andrew Street South.

The locations for the cycle parking were selected in partnership with West Suffolk Council and supports the vision for their town centre masterplans. A third cycle parking rack in Bury St Edmunds has been installed outside the parade of shops on Westgate Street. To keep up to date with how Suffolk County Council is making it safer and easier for residents to choose active and sustainable travel modes – visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/adviceontravel

• PROPOSAL FOR NEW RECYCLING CENTRE FOR HAVERHILL

On the 7th December, Suffolk County Council, FCC Environment and West Suffolk Council opted to investigate the feasibility of building a new recycling centre for Haverhill. The option of a site at Homefield Road could provide a bigger recycling centre with improved access which would lead to less congestion and queuing. The current Haverhill recycling centre site at Chalkstone Way has previously been identified as requiring improvements or relocation as part of the council's programme of recycling centre improvements. The current size and footprint of the site will not be sufficient for the forecast housing growth currently projected in the area.

Early plans for the new site involve designing out the need for steps, making it safer and easier for people to recycle their rubbish and also removing the need for the site to close for bin changes as the operational vehicles would be kept separate from the public.

• NEW PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT FOCUSES ON IMPROVING HEALTH FOR EVERYONE

On the 3rd December, a new report was published by the director of public health which set out a blueprint for improving health for Suffolk residents, following the coronavirus pandemic. The report, *A Time to Change: Working Towards Better Health for all in Suffolk* was published on the 3rd December and is available from www.healthysuffolk.org.uk. The report was procured alongside partner organisations, community member and volunteers. The independent report makes four key recommendations, calling on residents, local communities, and partner organisations with influence over health and wellbeing to act now to level the playing field and improve opportunities for everyone to live healthier lives:

1. Suffolk needs to **put health inequalities at the heart of what we do** and strengthen our approach to health outcomes for everyone in our community – finding ways to reduce the gaps, in a fair and balanced way.
2. The best way to reduce inequalities is by involving communities, and to always build in **active community participation**.
3. The way we collect, use and link relevant **data** about health inequalities needs to be improved in Suffolk to inform evidence-based approaches that will have an impact.
4. Managing health inequalities is continual, so we need to regularly **measure and review progress** and recognise the changes we are making need to be maintained for the long term.

For further information from my report or questions please contact me at:
stephen.burroughes@suffolk.gov.uk

Cllr Stephen Burroughes

County Councillor for the Framlingham Division

Suffolk County Council

Twitter @CllrStephenB