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**Suffolk County Council Report for Clare
Division February 2025**

Primary school application deadline approaches

Parents and carers have until Wednesday 15 January 2025 to submit an application to secure their child's place at a primary, infant or junior school for September 2025. Applications should be made for children born between 1 September 2020 and 31 August 2021 who are due to start primary school from September 2025.

An application for a full-time school place must be made even if a child is already attending a nursery class in an infant or primary school, a pre-school or a family hub next to a school site.

If you are planning to move house, or you think your circumstances may change before September, it is still essential to make an application on time using the child's current address. Further information to help parents and carers with this process is available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions.

Applications should be made online as this will mean parents and carers will receive a confirmation of their application. They can then log onto the online service on the National Offer Day (Wednesday 16 April 2025) to see their school place offer and they will also be sent an email to confirm this offer on the same day.

If a parent or carer is unable to apply online then they should complete a paper application (CAF1), however these cannot be acknowledged, so it is suggested parents and carers obtain proof of postage. For those who completed paper applications, offer letters will be sent out by second class post on the National Offer Day.

School Travel eligibility is based on a child attending their nearest suitable school that would have had a place available. This might not be the catchment area school. To find out more about SCC's school travel policy please visit www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel.

Applications can be made at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions, where further advice and guidance is also available. Alternatively, parents and carers can call 0345 600 0981 for a paper application (CAF1).

Last year, Suffolk County Council offered 96.5% of children a place at the primary school their parent or carer listed as their first preference when they applied on time. If parents and carers do not apply by the closing date, their application may not be dealt with until after places have been offered to those who applied on time.

Council's budget prioritises vulnerable residents and essential services

Suffolk County Council has unveiled its proposed budget for 2025/26, with a strong focus on supporting vulnerable residents across the county.

Under the proposals, the council's net budget would rise by 6.7%, from £752.9 million in 2024/25 to £803.7 million in 2025/26. Key allocations include:

- £18.1 million extra for children's services, ensuring continued support for young people and families in need
- £35.2 million extra for adult care, aimed at addressing the growing demand for social care services.

To help fund these essential services, the council is proposing a 4.99% rise in Council Tax. This would consist of a 2.99% increase in general Council Tax and an additional 2% specifically for adult care services.

This means the costs for a household would be:

- **Band B property:** £24.67 per week, a £1.17 increase from 2024-25 (Band B properties are the most common in Suffolk)
- **Band D property:** £31.72 per week, a £1.51 increase from 2024-25.

The council will also receive £12.1 million of the additional £880 million allocated by the government for adult and children's social care. It also expects to receive £2.2 million of the £263 million earmarked for a new Children's Services Prevention Grant.

To balance the books, the council has also identified £10.9 million in additional savings, building on the £17.5 million approved last year. This brings the total savings to £28.4 million for the 2025/26 financial year.

The budget proposals will be presented at a Scrutiny Meeting on Tuesday, 14 January 2025. The meeting will be live-streamed on [Suffolk County Council's YouTube channel](#), and relevant papers can be viewed on [the committee minutes page](#).

The final budget will be debated

Suffolk commits to devolution fast track

Following an invitation from ministers, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet today agreed to recommend Suffolk for inclusion in the government's Devolution Priority Programme (DPP), which would see the creation of a directly elected Mayor (likely covering Suffolk and Norfolk) and the replacement of existing council structures with a streamlined unitary council being set up.

The decision followed a debate and vote at a meeting of all county councillors.

The government's English Devolution White Paper outlines plans for broader and deeper devolution, coupled with a programme of coordinated local government reorganisation.

Key to these proposals is the restructuring of councils in two-tier areas like Suffolk, shifting from district, borough, and county councils to unitary councils. The government argues that unitary councils can deliver better outcomes for residents and save money that can be reinvested in public services.

Alongside reorganisation, the government is also proposing to create new Mayoral Authorities – with a single directly elected Mayor covering larger geographies (such as Norfolk and Suffolk) and with powers over strategic policy areas like transport infrastructure, health improvement and blue light services.

Suffolk County Council has now written to the government expressing its desire to be at the front of the queue for devolution and local government reorganisation. A decision is expected by the end of the month.

If Suffolk is approved as part of the DPP, more detailed proposals, engagement and Government-led consultation would follow.

Papers for the meetings can be viewed at <https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk>.

They are also available to watch back on the council's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/SuffolkCC>

Detailed report provides blueprint for changes to Suffolk's SEND services

A report has been published that provides the most detailed assessment of need for SEND services in Suffolk and will be used as a blueprint for immediate change.

The forensic 177-page document delves into current arrangements, future anticipated need and looks at gaps and challenges in SEND provision. This assessment highlights the increasing demand for SEND services, the challenges faced by families and professionals, and the importance of improving service provision to ensure equitable outcomes for all.

As a result of this analysis, a series of recommendations have been made to further shape improvements to SEND services. Known as the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Needs Assessment, the report will be discussed at the Health and Wellbeing Board on Thursday 16 January.

Some of the key findings and recommendations in the report include:

- A significant rise in demand for SEND services, with projections suggesting further increases in the coming years
- The importance of early intervention, timely diagnoses, and accessible services to address complex and multiple needs
- Strategic priorities emphasising communication, transition support, and whole system improvements to meet evolving demands.

The report also captures the voices of children and young people, parents, and practitioners to ensure lived experiences inform future strategies. The Suffolk Parent Carer Forum was involved in collating the report.

The report and the recommendations made, will become part of the Local Area Priority Action Plan for widescale SEND reform and improvement. This plan was a requirement following the Ofsted and CQC inspection in November 2023.

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.

Ten recommendations have been made as a result of this needs assessment. One of those includes addressing delays in assessment, diagnosis and treatment for a wide range of SEND needs. Another recommendation looks at the future planning for the provision of SEND services in Suffolk, noting that the needs and numbers of children and young people with SEND are likely to increase further in the coming years.

Helpful comparisons are also drawn between Suffolk figures, other councils and England averages throughout the report. One of those includes the average spend on each SEND child or young person in Suffolk, which was £155 in 2022/23 (East of England £95 and England £100). Figures also look at the percentage of children and young people assessed and issued with an education, health and care plan for the first time. In Suffolk in 2023 this percentage was 99% of children, compared with 94% across England and 93% with comparable councils.

The report can be found here: [Suffolk SEND Needs Assessment](#).

Council making net zero gains, but still work to do

Suffolk County Council continues to bring down its carbon emissions, with significant reductions from council-owned street lighting, vehicles and buildings, but there is still work to do to reach its ambitious target of net zero by 2030.

[A report going to the council's Cabinet](#) (28 January 2025) reviews progress since the declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019. The report finds that emissions across the areas within the council's direct control, such as energy consumption in council buildings and vehicles (categorised as Scope 1 & 2 emissions), have fallen by a further 8% over the past year, contributing to a 43% drop since 2019. When taking account of the council's switch to a renewable electricity tariff, this becomes a 75% reduction.

However, when calculating its overall net zero progress, the council also reports on many emissions where it has influence but less direct control. These are known as Scope 3 emissions. These include things like home to school transport, home-working, and staff commuting and travel for work in their own vehicles.

These make up 65% of the council's reported emissions, which the council is currently projecting will reduce by 48% by 2030 showing the scale of the remaining challenge.

Since 2019, when it declared a climate emergency, the council's carbon reduction successes include:

- Street and traffic lights down by 57%
- Diesel and petrol vehicles down by 50%
- Gas and oil use in buildings down by 37%
- Staff commuting down by 30%
- Electricity use in buildings down by 25%

Nationally, the council is making impressive strides with its own estate, standing out as one of the three leading county councils in England for reductions on Scope 1 & 2 emissions, according to analysis of published reports.

Make Your Health a Priority with an NHS Health Check

A column by Councillor Steve Wiles, Cabinet Member for Public Health.

It's always a great time to think about your health and well-being. One of the best decisions you can make is to prioritise your health by taking advantage of a simple, free, and potentially life-saving service: the NHS Health Check. This quick check-up could make a huge difference in your life by detecting early signs of serious health conditions before they become more severe.

The NHS Health Check is available to all adults aged 40 to 74 that aims to identify those at risk of developing serious, but potentially avoidable, conditions like heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and kidney disease. Many of these health issues can go unnoticed for years, silently building up risk factors such as high blood pressure, or high cholesterol. These conditions can lead to serious consequences if left untreated, but the good news is that they can be detected early through a simple, painless check-up.

I recently had my own NHS Health Check, and it was an easy and reassuring process. It gave me peace of mind and helped me take proactive steps to stay healthy. I highly encourage everyone who is eligible to take advantage of this free service.

When you book your appointment, you'll be asked about your family medical history, lifestyle, and habits such as your diet, exercise, and smoking. A healthcare professional will take a few basic tests, including checking your blood pressure, cholesterol levels, weight, and BMI. You'll also be assessed for your risk of certain conditions. If any concerns arise, you'll be guided on the next steps, whether that involves further tests, lifestyle changes, or referrals to specialists. You'll also receive advice on how to make healthier choices that can improve your health.

Many health conditions don't show symptoms in the early stages. For example, high blood pressure often doesn't present any signs until it's too late. The beauty of the NHS Health Check is that it gives you the chance to take control of your health, make changes, and prevent serious issues down the road. Even if the check-up shows no concerns, it serves as a great reminder to stay on top of your health and make better choices for your well-being.

In addition to empowering you to manage your health, the NHS Health Check helps the NHS prevent future, more expensive treatments by identifying issues early. This means better overall healthcare for everyone.

So, as you set your resolutions this New Year, make sure one of them is to take charge of your health by booking your NHS Health Check. It's simple, quick, and free. Just contact your GP surgery or visit www.suffolkfed.org.uk/healthcare-services/nhs-health-checks to arrange an appointment. Some areas even offer health checks at pharmacies or other community venues.

The NHS Health Check is an invaluable tool that could have a major impact on your health. Take the first step to a healthier future – book your check today for a longer, healthier life!

Suffolk County Council Collaborates with Ipswich Town Football Club to Launch Stop Smoking Campaign: 'Never Stop Trying'

Suffolk County Council, in association with Ipswich Town Football Club, is excited to launch a powerful new stop smoking campaign encouraging people to never stop trying on their journey to quit smoking.

The campaign highlights real-life stories of struggle, perseverance, and success, reminding people that while quitting smoking is difficult, the benefits of stopping are well worth it, no matter how many attempts it takes.

The campaign's theme of persistence is echoed through a compelling new video that features Eddy and James, two Suffolk residents who have faced the challenges of quitting smoking and are now sharing their personal experiences. Their stories emphasise that quitting may involve setbacks, but it's important to *keep trying*.

This message mirrors the journey of Ipswich Town Football Club, who spent 22 years fighting to return to the Premier League—a long and challenging journey, but one that proves that with perseverance, you *can* achieve your goal.

The campaign directs people who are thinking about quitting to Feel Good Suffolk – the county's stop smoking service – who are ready to help, whatever stage someone is at. NHS figures show that smokers are up to three times more likely to quit with support from their local service.

Cllr Steve Wiles, Cabinet Member for Public Health, said:

"I am proud to support this campaign, which is not just about quitting smoking, but about changing lives,"

"By sharing the stories of real people like Eddy and James we want to inspire others to take that crucial first step. This campaign is all about supporting people in their quitting journey and showing them that they can succeed in the end with the right support. It's also a great opportunity to promote the support that Feel Good Suffolk can provide, helping hundreds of Suffolk people with their journey to quit smoking.

Dan Palfrey, Director of Foundation at Ipswich Town said:

"We are proud to be part of this important campaign and to support our local community in making healthier choices. As a football club, we are committed to promoting well-being both on and off the pitch, and we encourage everyone who wants to quit smoking to seek the support they need."

The Never Stop trying campaign is part of the national goal to create a smoke-free generation, as outlined in the national strategy "Stopping the Start: Our New Plan to Create a Smokefree Generation". The aim is to reduce smoking rates in England to below 5% by 2030, ultimately building a healthier future for all.

Smoking is a key public health issue in Suffolk, contributing to nearly 1,000 deaths a year. Tobacco presents the single greatest risk for early deaths in Suffolk, which means that using smoked tobacco products poses a greater risk than other issues such as high blood pressure, obesity, alcohol, and air pollution. In 2024 alone, smoking cost Suffolk an estimated £703m in health and social care costs, lost productivity and smoking related fires.

Those seeking support on their quitting journey should visit [Feel Good Suffolk Stop Smoking](https://www.feelgoodsuffolk.co.uk/FeelGoodSuffolkStopSmoking/). The service offers various methods designed to assist people at every stage, whether it's one-on-one coaching, phone support, or digital tools.

Watch the campaign film at www.feelgoodsuffolk.co.uk/NeverStopTrying/ and follow Feel Good Suffolk on Facebook or Instagram.

Ageing well: Building Stronger, Healthier Communities for our Older Residents

A column by Councillor Steve Wiles, Cabinet Member for Public Health.

I'm proud to share the key findings and recommendations from this year's Annual Public Health Report, led by the Director of Public Health Stuart Keeble, which focuses on the vital theme of "Ageing Well." provides

a timely opportunity to reflect on how we can better support people as they age in Suffolk and create communities where everyone can live healthier, happier, and more fulfilling lives in later years.

Ageing is something that touches all our lives, whether we're growing older ourselves, caring for a loved one, or thinking ahead to what kind of life we want to lead in the future. In Suffolk, we are fortunate to have a growing population of older adults who bring tremendous value to our communities. Whether it's through volunteering, caregiving, or simply sharing their life experience, older adults are a cornerstone of our social fabric.

However, the way we think about ageing needs to evolve. Too often, older adults are seen through a narrow lens of decline and dependency. The reality is far more diverse. People experience ageing in profoundly different ways, influenced by their health, economic circumstances, and the opportunities available to them throughout their lives. Suffolk's 2024 Annual Public Health Report makes it clear that we need to challenge outdated stereotypes and work together to create environments that enable all older people to thrive.

The report highlights the importance of age-friendly communities—places that actively support older adults to live healthy, independent, and fulfilling lives. This means ensuring older people have access to good housing, transport, health services, and opportunities to connect socially. It also means addressing the barriers that older adults may face, such as digital exclusion, loneliness, or limited access to public spaces.

One of the key findings of the report is the impact of loneliness and isolation on health. We know that being socially connected is just as important for our wellbeing as being physically healthy, yet many older adults report feeling cut off from their communities. This is where local action can make a real difference. From befriending schemes to community centres and intergenerational activities, there are many ways we can build stronger connections and reduce loneliness.

To shape this year's report, Suffolk County Council worked closely with Healthwatch Suffolk, gathering insights directly from older residents about their experiences and aspirations. Their feedback paints a clear picture of what matters most to our older population: maintaining independence, staying active, and feeling valued by their communities.

The Integrated Care Academy also conducted three Ageing Well Challenge Labs, bringing together experts, stakeholders, and community leaders to explore innovative ways of supporting healthy ageing. These collaborative sessions highlighted practical solutions, such as improving access to physical activity programs, tackling ageism in the workplace, and ensuring people can navigate health and social care systems with ease.

As a council, we are committed to turning the recommendations from this report into meaningful action. This includes working with our partners in health, housing, transport, and the voluntary sector to ensure older people can access the support they need. For example, initiatives like the Warm Homes Suffolk scheme are helping older adults stay safe and healthy during the winter months, while our focus on active travel is ensuring that people of all ages can move around their communities safely and confidently.

But this isn't just about services—it's about attitudes, too. We all have a role to play in making Suffolk a place where ageing is celebrated and supported. That means challenging ageist attitudes, valuing the contributions of older people, and creating opportunities for all generations to connect and learn from one another.

As we look to the future, the challenge of supporting an ageing population is one we must embrace together. I encourage everyone to read the full 2024 Annual Public Health Report and think about how you

can play a part in making Suffolk an age-friendly county. Whether you're a local business, a community group, or simply a neighbour, there's so much we can do to support the wellbeing of our older residents.

Ageing is a journey we all share, and by working together, we can ensure that Suffolk is a place where everyone, regardless of age, can live their best life.

For more information, or to access the full report, visit the Healthy Suffolk website at www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/jsna