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Suffolk County Council Report November 2023

Dear All,

Please see below for your information.

Kind regards
Bobby

Council seeks your views for next year's budget

Suffolk County Council is keen to hear from Suffolk residents, businesses and local communities, as it decides how it will spend money next year.

[An online consultation](#) has been launched, and a number of focus groups will be held, to explain the council's current financial situation, along with the chance for Suffolk residents and businesses to have a say on Council Tax proposals.

The council's budget setting process will take into account the responses to the consultation, advice from council officers, elected members from political groups, businesses and partners in health and other public service organisations across Suffolk.

Results of the consultation will be included in the report considered by the council when agreeing the budget in February 2024.

The online consultation opens on 25 October and closes on 4 December 2023, and can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/budget. Focus groups are also being organised with local community groups and members of the public, details of which will be shared on the council's website and social media channels.

More than 200 properties flooded by Storm Babet

True number could be much higher as councils urge people to report all flooded premises and government funding available to those who report flooding.

Interim figures show more than 200 properties in Suffolk were flooded by Storm Babet.

The number of flooded premises, including businesses and homes, is expected to be higher as Suffolk councils and emergency planners work together to compile a full list.

On Wednesday, Communities Secretary Michael Gove and Environment Secretary Thérèse Coffey announced a number of financial measures to support those who have experienced exceptional localised flooding.

Under the measures announced:

- Flooded households in affected areas can apply for up to £500 to give cash quickly to help with immediate costs.
- Households and businesses significantly affected by recent flooding will be eligible for 100% council tax and business rates relief for at least three months.
- Small-to-medium-sized businesses in affected areas will be eligible for up to £2,500 from the Business Recovery Grant to help them return quickly to business as usual.
- Eligible flood-hit property owners will be able to apply for up to £5,000 to help make their homes and businesses more resilient to future flooding via the Property Flood Resilience Repair Grant Scheme.

The support will be made available through a scheme known as the Flood Recovery Framework, which is used in exceptional circumstances to support councils and communities following severe flooding.

The full details of the scheme are yet to be announced by the Government, including where residents can apply and who is eligible. Suffolk County Council will share updates once received.

To report a flood visit the [report a flood in Suffolk](#) page. Alternatively, you can call the customer service number on 0345 606 6171.

Suffolk Residents invited to help shape the future of library services

A public consultation has been launched today (Monday 30 October), encouraging Suffolk Residents to tell Suffolk County Council what they want from their library services in the future.

Suffolk County Council's contract with Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) Limited, the independent charity that runs the library service, comes to an end on 31 May 2025, with a new contract set to begin in June 2025. The Council is therefore seeking views from the public about what is important to them, ahead of awarding the new contract.

The 13-week consultation will be followed by a competitive Tender Process, before the new contract is awarded in November 2024.

To inform the consultation, the council has undertaken engagement with over 30 organisations including Suffolk's Libraries IPS Limited staff, key service users, schools and partner organisations.

A key focus of the consultation is the council's Library outreach services, which include three mobile library vehicles, serving more than 500 stops across rural parts of the county each month, for the pickup and exchange of books.

The mobile library vehicles are coming to the end of their life and the council therefore needs to consider the best way to continue to deliver these services to people in rural areas of the county going forward.

Library Outreach services also include Pop-up Libraries and a home library service, run by local volunteers, for Suffolk residents that find it difficult to access a library building or mobile library.

The consultation is made up of two parts. Part one gives residents an opportunity to tell the council what they value in their library service and what they would like to see more of in the future. Part two seeks views on how Library Outreach services could be run in the future.

The council is keen to hear from people who currently use library services and those who do not, to better understand the needs across the county. This feedback will help to inform the requirements for the future contract.

The value of the new contract will be £6.8m per year, increased from the previous contract value of £5.9m. The increase takes into account increased service costs, management of the Library Outreach service, and to allow for innovation in future years.

The term of the contract will be 6 years, with the option to extend for a further 6 years.

The consultation is open from today, Monday 30 October, until Friday 26 January.

Residents can have their say by visiting www.suffolk.gov.uk/LibraryConsultation

Alternative formats of the consultation are available on request, please email: Libraries.consultation@suffolk.gov.uk

Those who cannot access the consultation online can request a printed copy or assistance with completing the survey by calling 0345 603 1842.

The results of the consultation will be considered by Suffolk County Council at its meeting of the Cabinet in March 2024.

New highways services arrive in Suffolk as multi-million-pound partnership goes live

The new contract, which is worth in the region of £800 million - £1 billion, will deliver highway projects and improvements across Suffolk for up to 20 years, including maintaining roads, pavements and rights of way, improving drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting and much more.

Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, was awarded Suffolk's new highways services contract back in February and since then has been working with Suffolk County Council to mobilise the new contract ahead of it commencing on 1 October.

When seeking a new highways partner, the county council wanted a keener focus on delivering greater social value, building on the council's commitment to carbon reduction and protecting the environment, using local skills and talent, and giving young people the opportunity to work in the sector.

With this in mind, the new partnership was built around six key contract objectives, which will form the basis for all that Suffolk Highways delivers going forward. These objectives are:

- Collaboration and Partnership
- Social Value
- Environment and Net Zero Carbon
- Customer Communication and Engagement
- Commercialism and Enterprise
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

To read about the new Suffolk Streetlighting contract with McCann, visit: [Go Live! Suffolk County Council Street Lighting Services Contract Gets Underway - McCann \(mccann-ltd.co.uk\)](https://www.mccann-ltd.co.uk)

Developers risk "treating Suffolk communities with contempt" as the latest round of large-scale energy projects in Suffolk emerge

Energy developers who are bringing forward large-scale energy projects without speaking to councils or communities, were criticised heavily today (October 11th) by Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader of Suffolk County Council and Cabinet member for Finance and the Environment, following the latest publication of National Grid's Transmission Entry Capacity (TEC) Register.

The TEC Register is a list of projects, which often end up as large nationally significant infrastructure projects (called NSIPs), that have secured the right to connect to National Grid's network if they are consented, under the Planning Act 2008 by government, not local councils. These connection offers, which form a legally binding contract with National Grid, are routinely published and made, prior to the development and consenting of electricity generation or storage projects.

The current list of connection offers published by National Grid shows that new projects have been offered connections at National Grid's sites in Suffolk, at Bramford near Ipswich, and at Yaxley, near Eye, in north Suffolk. These new projects are large-scale solar panel and battery storage proposals in the same style as the recent SUNNICA scheme in West Suffolk, which is a proposal to create a 2500-acre Solar Farm on the Suffolk Cambridgeshire border.

Suffolk County Council, which is recognised by the Government as a centre of excellence when it comes to managing the impacts of big energy schemes, has previously outlined its concerns over the way large energy developers treat communities. In July this year, Cllr Rout wrote to the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, to outline the significant shortfalls of the West Suffolk SUNNICA application, described as "the worst example of what can go wrong" when developers mistreat local communities.

These projects can now be brought forward by the respective developers for consideration under the NSIP programme and, if they meet the criteria, will be considered by the planning inspectorate for approval in due course. Due to the size of these proposals being like the SUNNICA proposal, if they do come forward, their planning applications will be ultimately decided by central government, not local councils.

Trading Standards seize 2,500 illegal vapes in Ipswich

Devices that supplied hundreds more puffs than the legal limit are found in a shop storeroom.

Suffolk Trading Standards has seized more than 2,000 illegal vapes from a shop in Ipswich.

Approximately 2,500 vapes were found in a storeroom when officers visited the premises following a successful test purchase of illegal tobacco.

Used properly, vapes and e-cigarettes can be a successful way of helping people to stop smoking. But criminals are capitalising on this, leading to a rise in illegal vapes. In addition, some retailers are increasingly selling vapes to underage children, who are often enticed by the colourful packaging and sweet flavours.

The seized vapes are illegal because they supply over the number of puffs allowed under the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016.

The regulations state that vapes should provide a maximum of 600 puffs, but these devices indicate between 3,500 puffs to up to more than 10,000.

Investigations into the retailer continue.

Consumers can ensure the vape that they are purchasing is legal by checking the following:

- That the tank of a vape is a maximum size of 2ml, and the largest refill bottle is 10ml in size or less
- That all liquids come in childproof bottles displaying nicotine warnings and have an accompanying safety leaflet
- That vapes have a nicotine strength of no more than 20mg/ml, or 2%
- That a maximum number of around 600 puffs is offered

Anyone who suspects that a business is inappropriately selling vaping materials can report this in confidence to Suffolk Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice Consumer helpline on **0808 223 1133**.

New fund delivers digital boost for Suffolk

Almost £250,000 of funding was announced at an event today (October 25th), giving a boost to the county's ambitions to reduce the number of people excluded from the benefits of digital technology.

Suffolk County Council has contributed £100,000, with £143,000 coming from District and Borough Council funding, earmarked for digital inclusion projects.

Suffolk's Digital Inclusion Fund will be open to bidders from early November for initiatives that will support people of all ages, but particularly those who are at risk of being disadvantaged by being excluded from accessing digital support and information.

The fund has been created as a collaboration between Suffolk County Council, district and borough councils, voluntary and private sector partners and Suffolk Community Foundation. It is a direct result of Suffolk County Council's Policy Development Panel, held in 2022, which recommended a series of actions to reduce digital poverty and its effects in Suffolk.

The event called on key partners to support the new fund, making a further commitment to playing their part in the ambition for a digitally enabled Suffolk. Prospective bidders are encouraged to apply through Suffolk Community Foundation's website www.suffolkcf.org.uk

Evidence suggests that by not having the skills or the means to use online services – everything from online shopping, looking up important information and advice and using transactional services such as applying for bus passes – people are at risk of poorer health, reduced income and even a lower life expectancy.

In 2021, Healthwatch Suffolk, who participated in the event, co-produced principles for digital health and care. These principles provide important guidance for organisations intending to deliver health or social care services using digital to ensure people have a meaningful choice over how and when they access information and it is available to them in the format they need.

Speakers at the event included Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cllr Faircloth-Mutton, Stuart Keeble, Director of Public Health, Nick Khan, Strategic Director at East Suffolk Council and Andy Yacoub, Chief Executive of Healthwatch Suffolk, Melanie Craig, Chief Executive Officer of Suffolk Community Foundation and Tim Holder, Director of Development and Communications at Suffolk Community Foundation.

Healthwatch Suffolk's ***Digital Care and Health: Guiding principles for health and social care providers and commissioners planning or delivering digital care in Suffolk and north east Essex*** is available at www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk
