



February 2019 Monthly Parish Newsletter

County Council announces timescale to progress the Ipswich Northern Route project

On 27 February, the Leader of Suffolk County Council, Matthew Hicks, announced the timescale to progress the Ipswich Northern Route project.

Cllr Hicks has outlined the next steps in producing the Strategic Outline Business Case, which will examine and ultimately clarify the feasibility of an Ipswich northern route.

Discussions about an Ipswich northern route have been well documented over the years. This announcement confirms the County Council's commitment to explore these formally with a public consultation which will inform the Strategic Outline Business Case to be put to government and published later in the year.

The timescale for moving the project forward is:

- The stage one study and report into possible highways options was completed in 2017
- The options assessment and development commissioned in May 2018 is currently being evaluated and prepared for shortlisting, prior to consultation.
- Public consultation on the route details, alignment options and junction options with the A14 and A12 - to begin in the Summer 2019
- Completion of the Strategic Outline Business Case to be shared with government, local MPs and the public - Autumn 2019.

The options assessment, that forms a key part of the Strategic Outline Business Case, is required to look at all other viable transport and traffic mitigation options. This will confirm whether the road alignments published in 2017 are indeed the best solution for the county. After carefully considering the assessment and developing these options further, the next stage is public consultation to begin in summer 2019.

The initial study, options assessment and the results of the public consultation inform the Strategic Outline Business Case, which will provide clarity on the feasibility of the project and will determine whether the project can proceed to the next stage. That will be shared publicly for consideration in the Autumn of 2019.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

“A project of this scale can only proceed by ensuring all partners are fully committed to each stage. Today, all councils have agreed the next steps for the creation of the business case.

“The public consultation will start in Summer 2019 to allow everyone to have their say and help assess the feasibility of taking this project forward to government and then onto the next stage.

“This realistic timeline clearly shows the level of commitment from across Suffolk to take this to the next step, with a public consultation to allow the strategic outline business case to inform the decision-making process.

“I’m committed to keeping residents and businesses informed as we progress through the next steps.”

Suffolk County Council has been working with District and Borough Councils to develop the project and will continue to do so in the future.

Suffolk County Council 2019/20 budget approved

On 14 February, Suffolk County Council concluded its budget setting process for this coming financial year (2019/2020).

From 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, Suffolk County Council will spend almost £10 million a week across all its services following approval of this budget of £519.3 million.

Over the period 2011-12 to 2018-19 the Council has made over £260 million of savings in response to reductions in funding from Central Government and increasing demand for services. For 2019/20 the Council has proposed a range of savings totalling around £13 million. These savings are required to help balance the budget - something that the Council must do by law.

Recognising the unrelenting rise in demand and the complexity of support required by vulnerable children and adults in Suffolk, the Council are significantly increasing spending in these two top priority areas.

The net budget for Adult and Community Services (ACS) will rise to £243m and the net budget for Health, Wellbeing and Children’s Services (HWCS) will rise to £147m. This is an increase of just over £14 million for ACS and HWCS. ACS and HWCS will account for 75% of the total spend in 2019/2020 – three in every four pounds the Council spends.

General council tax will rise by 2.99% this year. The Council are also applying the final 1% of the six per cent Social Care precept allowed over the years 2017/18 to 2019/20. The overall increase in council tax is one per cent less than for 2018/19.

The four-year investment in surface-dressing our roads continues into its third year and the Council will treat 1,000 miles of Suffolk's roads by the end of 2020 as promised. The Council has also maintained Suffolk Fire and Rescue's budget and protected Suffolk's Library services.

The Council is looking to maximise the financial contribution from its medium-term programmes, which focus on transforming how the Council delivers its services and works with other authorities and public sector partners. The Council's transformation programmes have saved over £12 million in 2018/19 and £12-£13 million of savings are planned for 2019/20.

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Cllr Richard Smith, said:

"There are no easy choices at this point. Every call we have to make on where to find savings is tough at this point, but we must balance the budget by law and it is right to focus our efforts on our highest priority areas to protect and support our most vulnerable residents.

"I accept that in order to protect these services that represent such a large part of our overall spend each year, we must find savings across the remaining service areas. This does mean that we are proposing a number of savings from the Council's highways budget and further staff reductions. This is the stark reality as we continue to experience significant financial challenges in the public sector."

Cllr Smith added:

"We are doing our best to set a fair budget for everybody in Suffolk. I think we have done that, and I am proud of what we have achieved.

"We will work hard over the next 12 months to bring that budget into reality and we will work hard with our many partners across Suffolk to deliver our pledges."

Funding agreed for Citizens Advice in Suffolk

On 11 February, it was reported that Citizens Advice in Suffolk will no longer see any difference in their funding for 2019/20. This is due to a collaboration between Suffolk County Council, NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group,

Suffolk County Council proposes to reduce the funding given to Citizens Advice by 50% (£187k), in 2019/20. Under the joint agreement now in place with the CCGs, a

total of £187k will be provided by NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk and NHS West Suffolk CCGs. So, funding for Citizens Advice in 2019/20 will remain the same as the previous year (£374k).

Doctor Ed Garratt, Chief Officer for Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG and West Suffolk CCG, said:

“By working together with our colleagues at the Council, we have been able to identify future funding for Citizens Advice. This is a great example of Suffolk’s authorities supporting each other to find solutions.

“We are delighted that we have been able to make this joint announcement before the Council approves its budget for this coming financial year, as all parties recognise the positive contributions made by our local Citizens Advice, including to the health and wellbeing of people across Suffolk.”

The Council has continued to work with Citizens Advice representatives throughout this process, most recently carrying out a public consultation to understand the equality impacts there may be as a result of proposed funding changes, and how these might be mitigated.

This consultation recognised that the Council has been supporting Citizens Advice to mitigate the funding reduction, whilst also facing its own financial constraints and increasing pressures to provide social care and many other services to vulnerable people.

Suffolk Family Information Service celebrates 20th anniversary

In 1999, the Council launched an impartial information service to provide childcare advice to families.

Suffolk Family Information Service specialises in helping parents find childcare and early education, and provides information, advice and assistance to families of children from birth to 20 years (25 for young people with a disability or special need). The Service also provides advice to Suffolk based childcare providers including day nurseries, childminders, pre-school playgroups and school-based childcare.

Like many Family Information Services, service planning began in 1998 in response to the government’s green paper 'Meeting the Childcare Challenge'.

Originally most parents phoned a helpline for help to find childcare, now families search for childcare on the [Suffolk InfoLink website](#). This is an online directory including a comprehensive list of Ofsted registered childcare and early education providers, and Local Offer information and services for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities.

Have your say on the future of the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is asking the public for views on how it manages the risks it faces across the county, as well as five different areas of its work, from how it responds to automatic fire alarms, to firefighters' shift patterns.

This eight-week consultation is part of a statutory process, with information feeding into the fire service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for the next three years (2019 to 2022); essentially a plan for how it provides its services.

The fire service regularly assesses all foreseeable risks that could affect its operations. This includes considering one-off type events such as countywide flooding and terrorist attacks, in addition to the more usual responses to fires, animal rescues and road traffic collisions.

A key part of this review is to invite the public to share their views through this consultation and at a number of events around the county. The particular areas which the fire service is seeking feedback on are:

- Automatic Fire Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals
- Response to Road Traffic Collisions
- Shift Patterns
- Specialist Rescue Capabilities
- Speed of Response to Emergency Incidents – Performance Measures.

Mark Hardingham, Suffolk's Chief Fire Officer, said:

"By constantly reviewing our service, we can ensure a balance of our Prevention, Protection and Emergency Response services to communities across Suffolk, keeping residents safe.

"This has helped Suffolk to largely reflect the national trend amongst fire services, with an overall reduction in the number of 999 calls, fire deaths and injuries in recent years.

"When we put together our last IRMP three years ago, input from the public positively affected and influenced its content. I would again encourage people to get involved with their fire service by sharing their thoughts on the five areas we have highlighted."

The consultation will run from Monday 11 February to Sunday 7 April 2019. The draft IRMP, supporting documents and online consultation are available at www.suffolk.gov.uk

Staff from the fire service will be making visits around Suffolk, so people can find out more about their work and the consultation. All visits are from 10am to midday.

Upcoming dates are:

- **4 March:** Bury St Edmunds: Sainsburys, Bedingfield Way
- **14 March:** Haverhill: Sainsburys, Haycocks Road
- **21 March:** Newmarket: Tesco, Fordham Road

Important Information: Suffolk School Travel Changes from September 2019

Suffolk County Council (SCC) is implementing changes to its School Travel Policy from September 2019. The Council has already written to all schools and Town and Parish Councils with information about the policy changes and how they may affect families in their area.

Statutory School Age School Travel Policy

Children living in Suffolk who will be starting at a new school in September 2019 will be eligible for SCC funded school travel when they are over 2 miles (under 8 years old) or 3 miles (aged 8 or over) walking distance from their nearest suitable school that would have had a place available for them. This would be whether or not an application was made for a place at that school. Full details about SCC funded school travel, including additional arrangements for low income families and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), can be found at www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel

New pupils

In the first year of change the new school travel policy will only impact on those starting or moving school with effect from September 2019.

- For those starting at secondary/upper schools, parents will be informed if their child is eligible by 30 April 2019.
- For those starting at primary/middle schools in September 2019, parents will be informed if their child is eligible for SCC funded travel by 14 May 2019.
- If parents do not hear from the Council by the date shown above and believe their child is eligible for SCC funded school travel, they should contact the Customer Service Team on 0345 606 6173 or email them at customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk. Information about those who are eligible to SCC funded travel will be provided to the child's current and receiving school.

Returning pupils

The new policy is being phased in. This means that children who receive SCC funded school travel in the 2018/2019 school year will continue to receive this whilst

they continue to attend the same school, unless they turn 8 years of age and live between 2 and 3 miles from their current school, or move house - at which time eligibility would be reassessed.

To opt-in (apply) for SCC funded school travel

For transport in September 2019 and all future years, families whose child/ren are eligible for SCC funded school travel will need to opt-in to receive their transport. This is a change from previous years.

The opt-in process for those pupils who are eligible for SCC funded school travel for the 2019/2020 school year opens on **1 March 2019** with a deadline of **31 May 2019**. SCC will be using various communications channels to cascade the opt-in message to parents/families.

This important change means that parents whose children are eligible will have to opt-in by 31 May **each year** for school travel to be provided in the following school year as this will no longer be provided automatically.

This includes:

- Those currently eligible and who have SCC funded school travel under the old policy arrangements because they will be in Year 1 to Year 6, or Year 8 to Year 11 in September 2019 (and have not moved address) or
- are eligible under the new travel policy.

Recent research has shown that some families, although eligible to SCC funded school travel, do not use their seat(s). Suffolk County Council consequently is funding seats which are unused and therefore, SCC are asking families to opt-in.

Post-16 Travel Policy Statement for September 2019:

The Post-16 Policy has not changed other than agreed increases to the cost of a seat until the charge equals the average cost. For September 2019/2020 school year the charge will be £750 per annum.

The financial contribution for students with SEND for 2019/2020 school year will be £690.

Suffolk Brokerage Service:

If any school or local community would like to access capacity building support to assist them in running travel arrangements themselves, they can contact customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk.

For more information on how Town and Parish Councils can get involved see the Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy at www.suffolkonboard.com/smot

Plug In Suffolk - UK's First 'Fully Open' Electric Vehicle Charging Network

[EO Charging](#), one of the UK's leading electric vehicle (EV) charging manufacturers, has launched '[Plug In Suffolk](#)' in partnership with Suffolk County Council and renewable energy provider Bulb.

This is the country's first 'fully open' public fast charging network for electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles, meaning EV drivers simply pay by contactless payment with no need to register with networks or become members of organisations.

On 6 February, the first 'Plug in Suffolk' charging location was unveiled at [Urban Jungle Plant Nursery and Cafe](#) in Beccles. The company offer two 7kW EO chargers alongside the EO Pay kiosk, allowing members of the public and employees to charge their electric vehicles.

'Plug In Suffolk' will see the installation of electric vehicle charging stations (up to 400 individual sockets) across the county at 100 key locations and business addresses. Once completed the charging network will be available for all plug-in vehicle drivers with each charging location listed on www.pluginsuffolk.org or searchable via [Zap Map](#) and Google Maps.

The 'Plug In Suffolk' charging network forms part of Suffolk County Council's ambition of Creating the Greenest County in the UK.

EO Charging has also partnered with [Bulb](#), Britain's biggest green energy supplier, to offer Suffolk businesses the opportunity to switch to 100% renewable electricity. Businesses that become a part of the 'Plug In Suffolk' network will be able to switch to Bulb, who provide affordable renewable energy at prices on average 15% lower than standard energy tariffs offered by the 'Big Six'.

Suffolk businesses can apply to become part of the 'Plug In Suffolk' network, by completing a simple application form at www.pluginsuffolk.org.

Businesses that install the 'EO Pay' unit and become part of the 'Plug In Suffolk' network, will be able to charge visitors to charge their electric vehicle. Host businesses have the option to pay upfront for the chargers or alternatively can spread the cost through EO Charging's new pay per day funding model – 'Charging-as-a-Service'.

EO Charging is currently in discussion with a number of other counties and local authorities across the UK to launch similar projects to support the growing popularity for electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles.

For further information or to apply to join the 'Plug In Suffolk' network head to www.pluginsuffolk.org.

Bury Leisure Centre awarded first county-wide Exercise Referral quality standard

On 4 February, it was announced that Bury Leisure Centre has become the first Exercise Referral Scheme in Suffolk to be awarded a new county-wide quality standard.

The new quality standard has been developed by Suffolk County Council Public Health, and county wide partners, for Exercise Referral Schemes (ERS) operating within the county. Suffolk is the first authority in the country to develop a county-wide quality standard of this kind.

Exercise referral schemes enable GPs and health professionals to refer patients with long term health conditions to a fitness programme based within the community, to increase their physical activity levels as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Research by Suffolk County Council's Public Health team has found that current Exercise Referral Schemes are not widely used in Suffolk by referrers. Reasons given for this have been a lack of awareness among GPs of referral schemes, variations in referral protocols and an uncertainty as to whether schemes are operating in line with recommended National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines.

The new quality standard for exercise referral in Suffolk has been developed with input from operators, GPs and health professionals, alongside QUEST, the Sport England recommended Continuous Improvement Tool for leisure facilities, to address these issues.

Dr Chris Rufford, Physical Activity Champion, Public Health England, said:

“It is very reassuring for health care professionals to know that the exercise referral schemes that they are sending their underactive patients with chronic disease to are of an accredited standard and are able to supervise a structured exercise programme in a safe environment according to National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines.”

To be accredited with the new standard, an ERS will be recognised via an independent quality assessment against a set of criteria developed by the Suffolk Exercise Referral Quality Standard and schemes will be monitored on a regular basis as part of this process. Schemes can apply for accreditation via the QUEST Accreditation scheme at questnbs.org