

April 2021 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Suffolk criminal exploitation initiative extended after success

In March an additional £1.4million was awarded to extend a successful initiative that supports young people in or at risk of criminal exploitation. The Suffolk Against Gang Exploitation (SAGE) Team was established in 2018 as part of Suffolk's three-year work programme to tackle gangs and county lines and is funded by Suffolk Public Sector Leaders. During that time it has been delivering diversion, prevention, and early intervention work with young people in or at risk of gang violence and has also developed a practice framework, training courses and provided expertise and advice for practitioners across the county. A recent evaluation of SAGE showed positive results for the young people they are working with including equipping them to make better choices in future, improved attendance & completion of interventions, deeper level of awareness and understanding amongst practitioners and reported improved mental wellbeing. Building on this success, Suffolk Public Sector Leaders have pledged an additional £1.4million to tackle criminal exploitation in Suffolk. The new work programme will run from April 2021 until March 2024. The work being done by the SAGE team is of great importance in the battle against the exploitation of young people in Suffolk. I am pleased with the additional funding and the support from all partners. We must stop at nothing to drive out exploitation of young people on our own doorsteps. We are building on some of the success and good practice already achieved but the funding allows us to move our work to the next level. I was very pleased, as a member of the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders group, to support this bid to continue funding the excellent work being carried out by the SAGE team. Preventing our young people being groomed by the gangs and criminals involved in the illegal drugs business is crucial to Suffolk's future well-being. Helping young people make the right choices as they enter adulthood has a positive impact on us all.

100,000 trees planted as part of ambitious council scheme

On March 23 it was announced that 100,000 trees had been planted in just five months, since Suffolk County Council committed £228,000 from its Suffolk 2020 Fund to protect biodiversity. Located in the Little and Great Waldingfield area, the 100,000th tree, a field maple, is part of 6.4 miles of new hedgerow which the council has planted across a number of its farm holdings. The council has been working closely with the farm tenants, The Woodland Trust, Giles Landscapes, The Suffolk Tree Warden Initiative and local communities to ensure that a total of 102,586 saplings have been distributed and planted in the best possible places available over this last winter. Planting trees and restoring hedgerows on this scale, in such a short time period is an incredible achievement, particularly with the COVID-19 restrictions. The planting has taken place at a rate of nearly 4,500 each week. As part of this project, we are working with partners to ensure that these new plantings are managed and supported so that they can thrive for years to come. My genuine thanks go out to all who have been involved in making this happen – it's been a real team effort and shows how nature can be given a chance to flourish when we work together. I hope that communities of insects, animals and birds will benefit from all this activity, which in turn will benefit our local communities. Although this will contribute to offsetting some of the council's carbon emissions, our aim is still to eliminate emissions completely where we can as part of our commitment to our climate emergency declaration. Hedgerows are important features of Suffolk's agricultural landscape, providing a habitat for many species and 'corridors' for wildlife to move through them. All the planting stock being used is UK sourced and grown to reduce plant health risks and improve biosecurity. Local straw mulch is being used to reduce competition from weeds and to help retain moisture as the hedges become established. The tenant farmers will continue to maintain the hedgerows located on their land.

New campaign to stop people trying to recycle disposable nappies

It was announced in March that Suffolk Waste Partnership has joined forces with environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy and other local authorities across the country to launch a new campaign aimed at stopping the millions of disposable nappies that are contaminating recycling. The campaign comes after a new survey revealed that seven per cent of nappy users wrongly put their disposable nappies in with their recycling, which equates to more than one million people. Locally, around 150 tonnes of nappies end up in Suffolk recycling bins each year. This equates to approximately 3000 nappies needing to be removed from the recycling every day. This truly unpleasant job needs to be done by hand by staff at Suffolk's Material Recycling Facility (MRF) in Gt Blakenham. So, by keeping nappies out of our recycling bins, you are not only helping to get our recycling right but protecting staff at the MRF. The national survey, carried out by YouGov, also revealed that younger people, aged 18-24 were more likely to put them in their recycling bin (15%) and more than one in ten Londoners who used disposable nappies (11%) tried to recycle them. Now, the Suffolk Waste Partnership is trying to reach nappy users with a new campaign that has been tested with them and offers a clear message that disposable nappies should never go in their recycling. The campaign is fronted by 'Ted' and will be appearing on billboards around the country and on social media to drive the message home. In Suffolk, additional information will be shared on the Suffolk Waste Partnership's website, social media channels and newsletters.

Automatic number plate recognition camera project (ANPR)

Suffolk County Council in partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Constabulary (the Suffolk Roadsafe Partnership), will be trialling the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras to tackle speeding hot spots across the county. This pilot which is funded from SCC's 2020 fund will run for 2 years. The cameras will be used to help detect and deter speeding offences that have been highlighted in towns and villages, and educate drivers on the importance of road safety. An ANPR camera will be installed at a site where it has been identified by a local council, with support from their county councillor, that there is a problem with speeding and/or rat-running on roads with a 20 or 30mph speed limit. The devices will be moved between sites and will remain in situ for up to one week per site. There is the option of extending this period if needed. An ANPR device identifies a speeding vehicle by capturing an image of the number plate of the vehicle. Data will then be shared with the Police and the County Council. The County Council will write to the owner of the vehicle on behalf of both parties explaining that their vehicle has been registered as speeding. Repeat offences at a particular location could prompt the deployment of SafeCam (the Police's enforcement team) and the issuing of fines to those who breach the speed limit. I have sent information on how to apply to each Parish Clerk.

Healing woods and spaces to play an important role in Suffolk's mental health

On March 24 it was announced that 90% of respondents strongly support the idea of establishing 'healing woods' in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The creation of healing woods and spaces will give more people better access to the natural environment, offering dedicated places for peaceful reflection and offering a positive focus. Two in every three respondents to the survey, said that the pandemic had negatively impacted on their mental health and wellbeing. The council's healing woods project connects with the motion unanimously passed by the county's councillors (18 March 2021), to commit to developing mental health support in Suffolk. Since the survey, officers have been contacting organisations who expressed an interest in supporting the scheme, and the council is now appealing for communities to suggest sites where healing woods and spaces could be adopted or created. Suggestions can be made by contacting HealingWoods@suffolk.gov.uk.

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