

March 2023 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

More funds confirmed for children's services, adult care and the environment

The £687.6m package was approved at a Full Council meeting on Thursday 9 February 2023, with a focus on children's services, adult care and the environment. In an online survey, Suffolk residents said that they would like to see more spent on adult services and children's services, and these areas will receive an additional £35.7m and £13.5m, respectively. In addition, the council's net zero carbon budget, which had previously been approved by Cabinet, sits alongside the financial budget. It is a report on how the organisation is progressing to its ambitious target of being net zero by 2030, enabling the council to measure its carbon emissions, monitor its environmental impact, and identify actions and costs needed to reduce those emissions. Despite the challenges in the national and international economy, and the significant increase in demand for our services, we have successfully delivered a balanced budget. We are protecting the services that people rely on the most and we will be able to continue caring for the most vulnerable in Suffolk. We have identified over £15m of savings across the organisation, but this will not see any reductions in services, and some areas will see investment. We are committed to always providing the best value for everyone in Suffolk. The council's budget will increase by nearly 10% (from £625.3m to £687.6m), the additional money largely generated by a 3.99% increase in the council's share of Council Tax, and more funds from the Government for adult and children's social care. The increase of 3.99% to Council Tax is made up of a 1.99% increase in general Council Tax and a 2.00% increase dedicated to funding adult care. This will see the council's share of a Band B property's bill rise by 86 pence per week, compared to last year.

Hundreds of illegal vapes seized in Suffolk

Suffolk Trading Standards has stopped the sale of dangerous vapes at premises in Ipswich, Felixstowe, and Lowestoft in their bid to tackle one of the top threats on the high street. Officers recently discovered over 370 vapes which did not meet the legal requirements, including some which offered as many as 10,000 puffs when a legal vape would offer around 600. Thanks to the tireless work of Suffolk Trading Standards, hundreds of potentially deadly vapes have been withdrawn from sale in our county. When 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, which can contain high levels of nicotine, contaminants, or banned ingredients such as taurine or caffeine. In addition, some retailers are increasingly selling vapes to underage children, who are often enticed by the colourful packaging and sweet flavours used by some vaping manufacturers. Consumers can protect themselves by looking out for the following to ensure the vape that they are purchasing is legal:

The tank of a vape is a maximum size of 2ml, and the largest refill bottle is 10ml in size or less
All liquids should come in childproof bottles displaying nicotine warnings and have an accompanying safety leaflet

Vapes should have a nicotine strength of no more than 20mg/ml or 2%

A maximum number of around 600 puffs is offered

Anyone who suspects that a shop is selling unsafe e-cigarettes and vaping liquids or making sales of age-restricted products to children can report this in confidence to Suffolk Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice Consumer helpline on 0808 223 1133.

New highways services arriving in Suffolk as multi-million-pound contract awarded

Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, has been awarded Suffolk's new highways services contract, which will begin on 1 October 2023. Following an extensive procurement exercise, Suffolk County Council has confirmed Milestone will be its new contract partner for up to 20 years. The new partnership, which is worth in the region of £800 million - £1 billion, will be delivering highway projects and improvements across Suffolk, including but not limited to maintaining roads, pavements and rights of way, drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting. When searching for its new highways partner, the county council worked with leading industry analysts to understand the different types of arrangements that other local authorities have in place, to look at which specialist providers are in the marketplace, and to find out what aspects of contract agreement may work best for Suffolk. The council wanted the new contract to focus on delivering greater social value, utilising local skills and talent, giving young people the opportunity to work in the sector as well as building on the council's commitment to carbon reduction and protecting the environment. A rigorous procurement exercise was carried out over many months, with various stages of discussions with service providers, to evolve their solutions to meet the various contractual requirements and deliver an effective and efficient highway service for Suffolk. Final submissions were evaluated and extensively moderated before the final winning contract was awarded. The search for a new contractor to deliver our highways services has finally come to completion, and I am delighted to welcome our new highway partner, Milestone, to Suffolk. "We wanted to find an organisation who could provide excellent services and value for our residents, whilst sharing our ambition and ideas to innovate in improving delivery of services, communicating more effectively with customers and sharing our commitment to reducing carbon use. Services related to our highways will in some way impact all those living, working or travelling in our county; this is why it was essential that we went through such a rigorous process to ensure we found the best possible fit for what we needed here in Suffolk.

Volunteering at Suffolk Archives

Suffolk Archives are looking for volunteers in their branches in Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft and Ipswich. Volunteers bring the archive to life for researchers and local communities, making more archives accessible and connecting people to the places they live. By volunteering you will develop new skills, make new friends and conserve Suffolk's history for the next generation.' – Suffolk Archives There are a range of roles available from remote volunteering to in-person. you would like to join the remote volunteer team at Suffolk Archives visit the Suffolk Archives website for more information. www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/volunteering/

Hosts for Ukraine

It has been over a year since the start of the war in Ukraine. Suffolk County Council is still in need of a wide range of host homes for Ukrainian refugees. Potential hosts can sign up directly with the County Council by emailing refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk.

For more information please visit:

www.suffolk.gov.uk/community-and-safety/communities/community-engagement/support-for-refugees/support-for-ukraine

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