

October 2024 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Suffolk adults urged to take up potential life-saving opportunity

People across Suffolk aged between 40 and 74, who don't have a pre-existing health condition, are being encouraged to take-up a potentially life-saving opportunity. The call to action comes after Suffolk GP Federation were awarded a contract to deliver over 23,000 NHS Health Checks in the county annually. SCC have also become one of 45 local authorities in England to receive funding from the government as part of the national Workplace Cardiovascular Disease Health Check Pilot. Working with Suffolk GP Federation 2,000 additional NHS Health Checks will be delivered in workplaces in the county by March 2025. NHS Health Checks play a really important role in preventing disease and helping people live healthier lives for longer. They can be lifesaving as they help spot increased risk of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and dementia early, before the conditions develop. They also give people an opportunity to talk to a health care professional about how to reduce their risk. NHS Health Checks are an important tool in spotting health conditions early and helping people become more aware of what they can do to improve their health and wellbeing in the future. Prevention is always better than cure and I encourage residents who are invited for a free health check to make an appointment as soon as possible. I am also delighted we received additional funding to provide workplace checks. This will help us to gather evidence on the feasibility and impact of delivering health checks in targeted workplaces and, in doing so, help more people live well for longer. For more information about the Suffolk NHS Health Check Service visit [the Suffolk GP Federation website](#).

£500 million investment in Suffolk scrapped by Government

Suffolk's proposed in principle devolution deal, which would bring more than £500 million to the county over 30 years, has been scrapped by the Government. The additional funding – which would come with new local decision-making powers over areas including housing, transport, adult education and regeneration – is no longer being offered to Suffolk. The deal would mean local people who know and love Suffolk would be empowered to make more decisions about the county's future, rather than people in Whitehall. Key aspects of the deal included:

Control of a new investment fund worth £480m over the next thirty years

Local control of the Adult Education Budget each year (worth £9.4m in 2025/26)

£5.8m one-off funding to prepare brownfield sites for development

Multi-year transport funding plus an additional £500,000 over two years to finalise Suffolk's Local Transport Plan

The leader of Suffolk County Council would be directly elected by the people of Suffolk – rather than by county councillors.

Most people who responded to an independent survey, run by Ipsos, were in favour of the proposed deal. 63% of people supported or strongly supported it while 7% disagreed. 21% of people were unsure. In a separate but linked poll run by Suffolk County Council, 49% of people who responded supported or strongly supported the deal, whilst 40% did not and 11% were unsure. SCC Councillors were expected to vote on the deal after the General Election in July. [This feels like a real slap in the face for Suffolk from a Government that won't listen to what local people are saying.](#) First, they waved through the Sunnica application, showing little regard for the communities affected. Then, they scrapped the winter fuel payments, which will adversely affect older people living in rural areas. Now, our proposed devolution deal – which has widespread public support – is in the bin.

"Governments of any colour should be pro devolution because councils know how best to serve local people. Local councillors have now been stripped of the opportunity to support or reject the proposed deal which is a sad day for democracy by any measure.

Window now open to apply for primary and secondary school places

Parents and carers can now apply for a place in the normal year of entry at a primary (including infant and junior) school and secondary school for September 2025. The deadline for applications to secure a place at a secondary school is Thursday 31 October 2024 and for primary school places, including infant and junior schools, the deadline is Wednesday 15 January 2025. All applications received by the relevant closing date are processed at the same time using the schools' oversubscription criteria to prioritise applications when necessary. Late applications are processed after all of those received on time. Last year, SCC received just under 15,000 on time applications for pupils wishing to start at a primary or infant school, or to transfer to a junior school, or into Year 7 at a secondary school from September 2024. 94.7% of applicants received offers for their first preference school and 98.5% of applicants received an offer for one of their top three preferred schools. Parents and carers need to carefully consider which schools to apply for on behalf of their child. To make sure they have the best chance of getting a place at one of their preferred schools, they need to make sure they complete and submit their application by the relevant closing date. We recommend that parents and carers apply for more than one school, and they can list up to three schools on their application. I would strongly advise that parents and carers think about how their child will travel to school before they apply for a school place. It is important that parents and carers check which is their child's nearest suitable school on our Nearest School Checker because this might not be their catchment area school. This can be found at <http://nearestschool.suffolk.gov.uk/>." Further information on SCC's School Travel Policy visit www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel. Parents and carers should apply online at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions as they will receive confirmation that their application has been received. If for any reason they are unable to apply online they should apply on a paper application (CAF1). SCC is unable to acknowledge receipt of paper applications and therefore suggest that proof of posting is obtained. If families are planning to move house or think their circumstances may change before next September, it is still important to make an application on time using the current address. Advice and guidance about this process is available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions. Families who apply online will be able to log on to the Online Service on the National Offer Day, which is Monday 3 March 2025 for secondary school places and Wednesday 16 April 2025 for primary school places, to see their offer of a school place, and they will receive an email to confirm this offer on the same day. Offer letters will be sent by second class post to applicants who made a paper application.

Uncertainty looms for 177,000 Suffolk residents currently eligible for winter fuel payments

As many as 177,000 Suffolk residents are currently eligible for winter fuel payments and should be protected from Government plans to cut the allowance, Suffolk County Council has warned. According to 2023 mid-year population estimates from the ONS, around 177,000 people over the age of 66 in Suffolk are eligible for these crucial payments, leaving them potentially vulnerable if they are withdrawn. The council is particularly concerned that rural areas, like much of Suffolk, will be disproportionately affected due to reliance on expensive oil heating and the added burden of rural deprivation. Rural homes are statistically less energy efficient compared to urban homes, meaning they require more energy to maintain a healthy temperature. Furthermore, many rural homes are not connected to mains gas, forcing households to rely on more costly heating sources like wood, canister gas, or oil. The price of heating oil has now risen to 66p per litre, a 12p increase since 2020. The removal of winter fuel payments will have a devastating impact on many of our residents, particularly those living in rural areas. With homes in these locations often being less energy efficient and lacking access to mains gas, they rely on expensive alternatives like oil and wood. This, combined with the rising cost of heating oil, is putting increased financial pressure on households. Winter fuel payments provide a lifeline for many, and we urge Suffolk MPs to vote against any changes that would leave our most vulnerable without this crucial support.

Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division

Tel : 01728 628176 Mob : 07824 474741 E-mail : matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk