



# January 2021 Monthly Parish Newsletter



Visit [suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus) for health advice, service changes, business support and schools' guidance.

Keep up to date on the latest guidance on Covid-19 from central government here: [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

## Have your say on the Post-16 Travel policy for 2021/2022

On 7 January, the council announced it is seeking views on its proposed Post-16 Travel Policy for the 2021/2022 school year.

The consultation will be open until the 15 February 2021 for people to have their say on the proposed changes. The amendments are designed to ensure that the policy is clearer for parents/carers and students to understand what travel options there are for travelling to sixth form, college or Post-16 education.

The council's proposals for the policy are currently:

1. Make the annual increase to the charge of Post-16 travel and the cost of a spare seat as previously agreed by Suffolk County Council's (SCC) Cabinet on 19 June 2018.
2. Consider how we might align the Post-16 policy to the School Travel (5-16) policy to support students to attend their nearest Suffolk school sixth form even when they live nearer to a school sixth form outside of the county.
3. Enable a student to continue to attend their Transport Priority Area School when transport had been protected under the School Travel Policy for 5-16 year olds in September 2019 assuming that they meet the necessary criteria.
4. Clarify Suffolk County Council's Independent Travel Training scheme.

**Councillor Mary Evans, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills said:**

"I would like to encourage parents, carers and students themselves to take part in the consultation and have their say on the proposed Post-16 Travel Policy. The consultation will be open until the 15 February and we want to hear from as many people as possible during this time."

## **Coronavirus rapid testing centre opens at University of Suffolk**

On the 13 January A new Covid-19 rapid testing centre has opened at University of Suffolk for people without symptoms in Suffolk.

The centre, based at the former Profiles gym at the University of Suffolk in Ipswich, provides lateral flow testing, with results delivered in under an hour.

The tests (LFTs) are most useful at identifying people who are infectious on the day of the test but not showing symptoms.

The centre has been opened by Suffolk County Council (SCC) in partnership with the University of Suffolk. Testing is for anyone working in the town who cannot work from home.

Also targeted are employers and organisations in Ipswich whose staff cannot work from home. They are being urged to block-book their workforce in for tests.

However, people showing symptoms of Covid-19, or have been in close contact with someone who has, should not visit the centre – instead they should ring 119 or go to the NHS website to book a test at one of the 12 symptomatic testing sites in Suffolk.

The centre began operating on January 4 testing teachers, university students, school pupils and support staff.

The test involves taking a swab from the throat and nose to see whether coronavirus is present in the body. The person tested will then receive a text message giving the result within an hour.

Anyone giving a:

- **positive test** will be told to self-isolate and advised on what to do next, including the need for further testing.
- **negative result** is invited back to carry out a further test after a few days. This is in case levels of the virus in a person at the earlier test were too low to be detected at that time.

The testing is being run by contractors Commisceo on behalf of SCC through government funding.

**Councillor Matthew Hicks, chair of the Local Outbreak Board said:**

“The test is another important tool in tackling the virus whilst the vaccine is being rolled out as it can help prevent the spread from people who are infected but do not have symptoms.

“This is important as up to 1 in 3 people who have coronavirus never show any symptoms but may still be infectious.”

## New vehicle banners encourage Suffolk to be food and freezer savvy

On January 18, it was announced that Waste and recycling vehicles in Suffolk will help to deliver the food savvy message and cut food waste across the county.

Over 50,000 tonnes of food is thrown away in Suffolk every year, and an estimated average of £730 of edible food goes to waste per household each year.

The fleet of 24 vehicles display the new banners, which have three simple messages with easy advice for people to follow.

- Bananas – one of the most commonly wasted food items across the UK. You can bake with them or blend them rather than throw them in the bin.
- Bread – another of the most commonly wasted food items. You can freeze or toast bread to prevent it from being wasted.
- Freezing - food storage is key to preventing food waste. Check the dates on your food and remember to freeze it when it is nearly out of date. Bread, bananas, cheese and even milk can all be frozen!

### **Councillor James Mallinder, Chair of the Suffolk Waste Partnership, said:**

“Bananas and bread are two of the most commonly wasted foods, and this is a great way to show simple methods of putting them to use instead of throwing them away. Freezing is also a great way to store food for longer and save it from the bin.

“During the current lockdown we are all spending much more time at home, so it is a good time to keep an eye on the food in your kitchen and take some simple steps to reduce food waste and save money.

“Wasted food is a waste of natural resources so by cooking better we will be helping the planet and tackling our climate concerns. The smallest of changes can make a big difference over time.”

## New home-schooling resource ‘a godsend’

On the January 19, A new digital resource was launched to help parents and carers build exercise into the daily routines of children being home schooled during lockdown.

Providing information about, and access to, a host of curriculum-based and other popular resources, the resource brings together, in one place, everything parents could need to bring exercise into the home in a fun and engaging way.

Produced as part of the popular Keep Moving Suffolk campaign, it responds to data showing that activity levels of children and young people have fallen significantly during lockdown prompting fears of a long-term impact on their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

**Councillor James Reeder, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Prevention at Suffolk County Council urged parents not to under-estimate the power of exercise on children’s education, saying:**

“Besides the obvious health benefits from being active, exercise has a wonderful ability to help and support a child’s educational attainment. Not only does it improve their concentration and make them more focused it is proven to improve their readiness to learn. So, by building in regular exercise breaks throughout the day children will be happier, healthier and better equipped to study.”

## **Suffolk 2020 fund project embraces love of the great outdoors – Discovering Suffolk**

On January 20, as part of the Suffolk 2020 fund, the Discovering Suffolk project was launched.

The aim of the project is to raise further awareness of the range of great walking routes, areas of interest and variety of landscapes that form Suffolk’s beautiful countryside through public rights of way and points of access.

Given the experiences many people have faced over the last year living through the pandemic, it is recognised that exercise and wellbeing is a fundamental element in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and whilst we continue to live within Government

guidelines at present, Suffolk's countryside offers a freely accessible means for many of us to experience nature and stay healthy.

The key element of the Discovering Suffolk project is the development of a smartphone app alongside a range of supporting QR codes fixed to rights of way signposts located along different routes to promote walking, cycling and exploring Suffolk's countryside.

Discovering Suffolk builds on our changing behaviours when visiting the countryside, as people become ever more interested in local exploration and taking short walks and cycling exercises during the pandemic. The project will continue to promote the Discover Suffolk website as new content, information and advice continues to be added to the current offer, promoting walking routes and cycle rides through local communities. The project seeks to actively engage new audiences who are not aware of the options available on their doorstep or have perhaps only begun to explore the local countryside beyond their neighbourhood.

Work will shortly start on developing the Discovering Suffolk App and setting the sites for the QR code points around the county. After development, the new, free App will provide access to the full range of Discover Suffolk outdoor guides with over 100 walks across the county. The App and QR codes will include audio, video, imagery and fun activities to further enhance people's enjoyment, appreciation and understanding of Suffolk's natural and built environment.

**Cllr Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Rural Affairs, said:**

"As part of our investment this year through the Suffolk 2020 fund, we wanted to find new ways to support and encourage access to our beautiful Suffolk countryside, particularly amongst residents and communities who may have not considered local walks, cycling or exploring public rights of way, close to where they live. I believe this new smartphone App will provide an accessible platform for people to find out what's available and where they can begin to enjoy healthy walks, peaceful spaces and explore nature.

"During these challenging times, we all need to continue to abide by the Government's latest guidance relating to exercising safely within our local

communities, keeping to social distancing rules and protecting families and friends. As part of this we can all find ways to enjoy the natural environment and countryside that surrounds us by considering the impact we have on the environment and considering others. At the moment this means staying local to where we live, but in time as the situation improves, there will be greater opportunity to explore further, as long as we continue to adhere to the guidelines in the short term.”

## **Strong interest shown by Suffolk’s communities to engage with 2020 fund project creating electric vehicle charging points**

On January 21, it was announced the council had received 50 expressions of interest from local communities across the county which want to host new electric vehicle charging points.

This follows the launch of the Suffolk 2020 funded project in September.

Suffolk has long held ambitions to Create the Greenest County and as part of the Suffolk 2020 fund, which is all about investing in community projects to support the council’s climate emergency declaration and improve Suffolk for all residents in years to come, this year £300,000 has been invested into creating 100 fast charging points in rural areas of the county. Reaching 50 expressions of interest so quickly demonstrates great progress for the project and suggests that many communities can see the real benefits in being part of the Plug In Suffolk scheme.

At present, the majority of EV charging points are concentrated in our larger towns such as Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich and Lowestoft, but given the new expressions of interest, it is hoped that new fast charging points can begin to be installed across a range of more rural locations including Beccles, Wilby, Horringer, Orford, Long Melford and Tuddenham St Martin.

The strong interest comes from local Parish Councils and communities who can see the potential benefit in hosting charging points at rural village halls,

community buildings, sports clubs and even places of worship besides commercial buildings and shops elsewhere. The council has begun to undertake site surveys and plan for the initial installations that will take place in the coming weeks. Once installed, each host community takes a share of the income generated by drivers who pay to charge their cars in the locality.

Ultra-low emission vehicle ownership has nearly trebled in the last three years within Suffolk and this is set to continue to grow even faster with Government vehicle initiatives. In total, there are around 422,000 cars licensed in Suffolk, but currently just under 2,500 of these are ultra-low emission cars. With an improved charging network across the county, the council believes this will encourage greater electric vehicle ownership in Suffolk in years to come.

**Councillor Richard Rout, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection at Suffolk County Council, said:**

“This project is a key part of the council’s commitment to addressing the climate emergency that was declared in 2019, getting accessible electric vehicle charging points located across Suffolk to support residents and communities as they make informed choices in the use of greener transport options.

“Encouraging electric vehicle use is one way we can contribute to better air quality, the reduction of carbon emissions and cutting down our reliance on fossil fuels, all of which support the council’s climate emergency declaration and ambition to create the Greenest County.

“By putting the infrastructure in place, I hope we enable more people to choose electric vehicles. With fewer petrol/diesel vehicles on our roads, Suffolk’s air quality improves and we contribute fewer carbon emissions.

“I am very pleased with these initial expressions of interest. It gives me great confidence that we have made the right investment to begin breaking down some of the anxieties and barriers residents may have about owning an electric vehicle.”



## **Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service praised for its work throughout the pandemic**

On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service was recognised nationally for its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) was praised for its positive contributions to the local community and commitment to the welfare of its staff.

In August 2020, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) was commissioned by the Home Secretary to examine how fire and rescue services are responding to the pandemic.

**In her report, Zoë Billingham, HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services, said of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service:**

“We were impressed with how the service adapted and responded to the pandemic effectively. The efficient use of its staff was notable, utilising extra capacity and providing support and resource for remote and home working. It provided support to Suffolk County Council (SCC) and the LRF, including advice, resources and effective command and control frameworks to co-ordinate its response.

“The service communicated well with its staff throughout the pandemic, including issues relating to staff wellbeing. It also made sure all staff had the resources they needed to do their jobs effectively, including extra information and technology, and it put in place additional flexible working arrangements. Staff wellbeing was a clear priority for the service.”

SFRS has continued to respond to emergency calls since the beginning of the pandemic, with over 4,500 emergency calls since the first lockdown was announced in March 2020.

In addition to this, staff across SFRS have been redeployed to support other departments in Suffolk County Council, in response to the pandemic.

These include:

- Providing additional resource to colleagues in the Coroner's Office
- Setting up and administering the first booking system and phonenumber for testing key workers
- In April 2020, around 30 firefighters volunteered and trained to work alongside paramedics to drive frontline emergency NHS ambulances, in turn freeing up paramedics to care for patients
- Teams have also helped deliver food, essential items and medicine as part of the Home But Not Alone scheme

**Dan Fearn, Temporary Chief Fire Officer, said:**

"I am extremely proud of everyone who works for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service and I would like to thank each and every colleague for their professionalism and commitment to keep the communities of Suffolk safe.

"Fires, road traffic collisions, rescues and flooding have not stopped because there is a global pandemic. All our teams have stepped up by continuing to respond to emergency incidents, whilst supporting our partners and colleagues across Suffolk.

"Like many organisations, we have had to adapt our ways of working so we can continue to operate safely. We continued to safely recruit new members of our fire service team, train and develop our operational crews and, of course, ensure that we are there to help the most vulnerable in the county.

"Over Christmas and the New Year period, our operational crews and officers remained busy. On Christmas Eve and Day, a number of personnel assisted with a major flooding incident in Bungay, some of the worst flooding in the area in 50 years.

"It has been, and continues to be, a very challenging time due to COVID-19. But our teams across Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service are ready to respond to emergency calls and support their communities to overcome the virus. In the coming weeks, personnel will continue to assist the ambulance service and be ready to support our health colleagues where needed."

**Councillor Richard Rout, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection at Suffolk County Council, said:**

I'm delighted for every member of Suffolk's Fire and Rescue Service. To be commended by Her Majesty's Inspectorate is what they deserve for going above and beyond their responsibilities, during such professionally and personally testing times.

"It echoes the 'good' rating which the Inspectorate awarded the Service just over a year ago. That report did highlight some areas for us to work on, which I'm pleased to say colleagues have been focusing on ever since, to make our Service even stronger.

"That is why the council's Cabinet unanimously backed my proposal last year, to increase the service's budget by £500,000 plus inflation. That increase totals close to £1m and is helping to deliver the improvements identified in the report, alongside our existing plans for further investment, to keep Suffolk safe."

## **New recycling campaign aims to get Suffolk's recycling right**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> January, a new campaign was launched in Suffolk to help people get their recycling right.

Each year more than 10,000 tonnes (about 20%) of recycling from Suffolk homes is rejected due to the wrong items being placed in Suffolk's recycling bins. This is the same as 1 in 5 lorries full of recycling going to waste. The cost of sorting and disposing this spoiled recycling is more than £1million.

The new awareness campaign, launched by the Suffolk Waste Partnership is called Together We Can Get Our Recycling Right. It includes a leaflet to all households with the do's and don'ts of what can easily be recycled at home, plus tips on how to recycle other items not accepted in home recycling bins. The campaign will be supported on the Suffolk Recycling website and social media channels.

There are three simple steps that householders can take to improve the quality of their recycling. These include:

- Put glass in a bottle bank, not in your wheelie bin
- No bagged items. Keep your recycling empty, clean and dry
- Keep all food out of your recycling bin. Put any food you cannot eat or compost in your rubbish bin.

You can recycle the following items in your recycling bin at home: plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays, metal cans, aerosols and foil and paper, card and books. The worst offending items incorrectly found in recycling bins include glass, black sacks, food waste, cartons and nappies.

## **Help us shape ambitious new Dementia therapy initiative using virtual reality experiences**

On the 28 January it was announced that as part of its work in supporting local care home providers and the ongoing care of residents with Dementia, Suffolk County Council is launching an exciting new initiative to develop virtual reality content, helping people recall and access positive memories that they hold dearly. Such experiences help to complement the support offered on a day to day basis, providing a variety of positive stimulus to those using the equipment and valuable respite for their carers.

In recent years, a number of international academic studies have demonstrated proven successes in using such technology as a reminiscence and therapeutic aid to help people access memories and positive emotions, despite facing the effects of experiencing Dementia. Some care providers already use theme rooms in their settings and show archive films to residents with positive effect. Developing the use of virtual reality will support and complement the great experiences that local care providers use.

The intention is to produce a range of local, Suffolk-based films and interactive materials that people can enjoy and experience whilst sat in comfort in their usual

care setting, with the support and input of their carers or family members. A set of equipment, each consisting of a headset and connecting equipment will be made available to support different areas of the county, supported by the Council's Adult Social Work Teams. A budget of £80,000 has been granted for this project through Suffolk County Council's Suffolk 2020 Fund, which is all about developing a range of community-focussed initiatives to support residents across the county. This money covers the cost of developing the films and materials, carrying out supporting academic research, the purchase of the equipment and the management and resourcing required to deliver the project in coming months.

As part of getting the ball rolling, the council would like to hear from people who have ideas about what kinds of films and experiences they may like to see produced.

The project team would also love to hear from care providers, service users and their family carers across Suffolk that may be potentially interested in helping to trial and take part in using the technology in months to come and take part in a service user group to drive the success of this project.

Those who are interested in taking part and/or sharing the ideas for possible content should contact the team in the first instance by emailing: [suffolk2020vr@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:suffolk2020vr@suffolk.gov.uk)

**Beccy Hopfensperger, Cabinet Member for Adult Care at Suffolk County Council, said:**

“This initiative is part of the digital revolution that is happening across the care sector at the moment. Given the extremely challenging period everyone has experienced through Covid-19, it has been essential to find ways to innovate and adapt to the changing circumstances and make the most of technology and supportive aids where possible to continue supporting our most vulnerable residents alongside the amazing work of our committed care providers and their staff.

“The virtual reality experience may seem a strange choice to some, but there is a great deal of evidence to support the research demonstrating that residents with

Dementia who use the technology are able to often access memories and experiences, triggered by particular places, colours and sounds. Where it has been used elsewhere, the technology has offered positive outcomes including improving wellbeing, behaviour, and even cognition in some cases. This type of therapy also supports inter-generational shared experiences between older and younger family members.

“We really want to work with our partners in the local care sector to think about what sorts of experiences may work best, such as films of trips to the seaside, archive film footage of historic moments or particular landscapes and Suffolk landmarks.”

