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 Suffolk Tories



# June 2023 Town and Parish Newsletter

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## Suffolk Trading Standards constructs case against brazen builder

A builder who received in the region of £592,000 from customers for contracts which were never completed pleaded guilty to his crimes at Hendon Magistrates Court yesterday.

Alan Gary Middleton, 45, of Merlin Close, Rugby, traded as GK Builders, G & K Builders, Middleton Building Services, AGM Custom Construction and AGM Bespoke Construction Limited, and operated across Suffolk, previously living in Saxmundham.

Suffolk Trading Standards began their investigation into Middleton after receiving reports of customers who had paid for building work to be carried out only to have this never completed.

To placate his victims, Middleton advised that he “would only work on one property at a time”, but consumers quickly became aware that he was working on multiple projects to the detriment of their own building works.

The investigation also uncovered that Middleton was using various tactics to extract more money from customers, including falsifying supplier invoices and using a fake VAT number, with one customer asked to pay £25,000 in VAT alone.

In addition, he had declared himself bankrupt but failed to disclose this to consumers despite this being a legal obligation.

Once Middleton realised that Suffolk Trading Standards was investigating him, he reverted to using the name Alan Middleton for business, having previously used Gary Middleton.


### **Graham Crisp, Head of Suffolk Trading Standards, said:**

“Sadly, we have spoken to several consumers who were taken advantage of by Middleton, with many using their life savings or taking out loans to pay for the work in an attempt to achieve their dream home.

“Middleton’s greed saw him do whatever he could to extract money from his victims, including falsifying invoices to claim £170,000 in VAT despite not being registered.

“He also forged insurance documents to mislead people into thinking their properties were protected, and endangered lives by incorrectly stating that building control was not required for projects when this was in fact needed.”

At a hearing at Hendon Magistrates Court (acting as a Nightingale Crown Court) yesterday (Tuesday, 6 June), Gary Middleton pleaded guilty to 4 offences of Fraud by False Representation under the Fraud Act 2006 and 1 offence of theft.



At a previous hearing Gary Middleton and his wife Katie Middleton, 34, of Merlin Close, Rugby both pleaded guilty to two counts of fraudulently obtain a mortgage for themselves worth £400k.

Both will appear in court for sentencing on 14<sup>th</sup> July.

**Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for Public Health and Public Protection, commented:**

"Customers put their trust in Middleton only for him to disappear part way through a job, causing untold distress when they had to finance the completion of his work.

"The work that was carried out by Middleton was often of a poor standard leaving his victims spending years trying to rectify his mistakes and ensure that what he had done was safe and legally compliant. In one case an extension built by Middleton had to be knocked down to the foundations and started again.

"I hope that yesterday's plea and subsequent sentencing will go some way to seeking justice for those who are still paying the price for Middleton's actions."

Anyone who believes they may have been the victim of a fraudulent or substandard trader should contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.

### Suffolk Fire Service to bring control room back to the County

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has announced plans to create a new fire control centre here in Suffolk.


Since October 2011, Suffolk has shared a control room with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire and Rescue Service in Huntingdon. The joint project has worked well, saving both fire services money and enabling greater cross-border resource sharing.

However, the company behind a project to deliver a new IT system, initiated in 2019, has run into technical and financial problems, causing a significant delay. This, in addition to advancements in technology, has led to the decision to bring fire control back into the county by the end of 2024.

**Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Fire and Public Protection, said:**

"We have enjoyed a successful partnership with Cambridgeshire, and it served as a national example of how well sharing resources across counties could work.

"It is time, however, to bring fire control back into our county and under direct Suffolk leadership.



“We are committed to delivering the most effective and efficient services to our residents, and in this case, it is essential that we strive to find and develop a solution which is robust, sustainable and works for Suffolk.”

A new, Suffolk-based control room, with its own market, tried and tested fire engine mobilisation software, will mean modernised IT systems and improved public and firefighter safety in Suffolk.

**Jon Lacey, Chief Fire Officer at Suffolk Fire and Rescue, said:**

“Following detailed talks with Cambridgeshire the decision has been made to bring fire control back into Suffolk. This decision has not been taken lightly and will take time to implement, however, we are confident it is achievable and the right way forward.

“Clearly a lot of time has gone into our collaborative work to date, so I would like to thank the teams for doing everything they could to make this work.

“Communities in Suffolk will not be impacted by this decision. We remain committed to providing excellent prevention, protection, and response to our residents.”

The proposed new control centre will be brought to Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet for approval in September 2023.

### **Help for Suffolk Pre-payment Meter customers**

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A package of support has been created for pre-payment meter customers in Suffolk who are struggling with their energy bills.

Warm Homes Suffolk is a Suffolk-wide Council partnership service, delivering energy efficiency support to low-income households affected by cost-of-living pressures.

Supported by Suffolk’s Collaborative Communities Board and funding from Public Health Suffolk’s Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), the service is now able to offer specific help for households struggling to pay their energy bills via a pre-payment meter, in addition to its existing support.

The support covers the whole of Suffolk and is available for all residents, whether they are in social housing, council tenants, owner occupiers or private renters.

The Warm Homes Suffolk Service can check eligibility and support applications for grants to increase household energy efficiency, with measures such as loft and wall insulation to air source heat pumps, draught-proofing and more.



It is estimated that more than 24,000 people in Suffolk are pre-payment meter customers.

The service will work with each individual to understand the pressures on their finances and the impact this is having on their lives. The service can carry out a home visit, as well as providing advice over the phone and by email.

The COMF funding of £180,000 will enable this project to run for 12 months to provide the following:

- Income maximisation (through grants and benefits)
- Budgeting advice
- Help understanding bills and heating systems
- Support to reduce energy expenditure (By promoting social tariffs and support to switch suppliers)
- Improving household energy efficiency (By installing insulation, draught proofing, heating systems and solar panels)
- Facilitating switch away from prepaid meters if appropriate

**Councillor Bobby Bennett, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities said:**

“I am pleased that through the Collaborative Communities Board and Public Health COMF funding, we are able to offer Suffolk residents who use pre-payment meters this help with their energy bills, which will support people financially as well as reduce the Health risks associated with inadequately heated homes. If you are struggling to pay your energy bills or know someone who is, please get in touch.”

Pre-payment meter customers who would like support can contact [prepay@eastsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:prepay@eastsuffolk.gov.uk) to find out more, or call: **Prepay West at 07769 365796, or Prepay East at 07769 366229.**

Referrals can be made directly from households, the voluntary sector and professionals to find prepay households who can benefit from an independent look at their bills.

Warm Homes Suffolk also offers support and advice for residents who are not pre-payment meter customers. To find out more about the support on offer, visit: <https://www.warmhomessuffolk.org/>

**Cllr Bobby Bennett added:** “Further details of the cost-of-living support available for Suffolk residents and organisations can be found at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/costofliving](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/costofliving).”



## New public project celebrating migration to Suffolk receives grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund

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Suffolk Archives has been awarded a grant of £126,523 to deliver the community-based project 'Arrivals'.

This project will celebrate and explore historical and contemporary stories of migration to Suffolk.

***Arrivals: Celebrating Migration To Suffolk*** will collect and preserve the histories of ethnic minorities, underrepresented and marginalised groups and individuals, who have travelled to Suffolk from overseas to make it their home.

The project will be delivered by Suffolk Archives, Suffolk County Council's Archives Service, and provides an opportunity to meaningfully engage with diverse local communities, strengthening connections and putting recent migration into a longer historical context of people settling in Suffolk.

Made possible by National Lottery players, this exciting project begins with the recruitment of volunteers, the launch of a community forum and a range of community-based activities which will collect stories and build relationships with communities from across the county.


The programme of supporting activities will include engagement with local schools, in addition to free workshops for community groups that will offer training in identifying, organising, and preserving their archives and the opportunity to co-create activities that will share these stories with the wider community.

The project will also include the cataloguing and selective digitisation of relevant records already in our collection to make them easier for the public to use. We will also be using the project as an opportunity to add the records for more ethnically diverse groups to our archive collections.

The project will inform the contents of a free exhibition taking place at The Hold on Ipswich Waterfront from November 2023 to April 2024. Research and community curation for the exhibition will take place throughout the summer and autumn.

**Councillor Bobby Bennett, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities said:**

"I'm delighted that this project has received the backing of the NHLF. Suffolk has a rich history of welcoming migration and this project will allow Suffolk Archives to explore this further by collecting historical and contemporary stories of migration to Suffolk.



“The project aims to connect individuals and communities, and help more people feel a sense of belonging in Suffolk, particularly those who have arrived here recently. It will culminate in an engaging exhibition which we hope will help to strengthen understanding between people and communities.”

### **Letting agent who lost landlords thousands disqualified as company director**

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Suffolk Trading Standards has successfully stopped a Newmarket business owner from being a company director for 8 years following his sentencing last year for defrauding customers by over £80,000.

Francis Smart, aged 46, and proprietor of Smart Residential Letting Agents, pleaded guilty to two counts of fraud in respect of retaining rent and deposits under S1 Fraud Act 2006 in August 2022 after it emerged that he had broken the law by pocketing tenancy deposits instead of placing these into a Deposit Protection Scheme.

He was subsequently sentenced to 32 months per offence, to run concurrently, by a judge at Ipswich Crown Court last summer, who commented that Smart’s actions were “particularly sad” adding that he had “betrayed those who trusted you and caused a lot of distress”.

Officers from Suffolk Trading Standards worked alongside colleagues from the National Trading Standards Tri-Regional Investigations Team to secure the conviction after more than 30 witnesses alleged that they had faced substantial losses after using Smart’s services.

Both Trading Standards teams also applied to have Mr Smart disqualified as a company director, with a judge agreeing to this for a period of 8 years at Ipswich Crown Court yesterday (Thursday, 15 June).


#### **Graham Crisp, Head of Suffolk Trading Standards, said:**

“Francis Smart being banned from being a director of any company registered in the UK for 8 years is an excellent outcome for Suffolk Trading Standards and our colleagues from the National Trading Standards Tri-Regional Investigations Team, whom I would like to personally thank for their help with the matter.

“Yesterday’s ruling also means that Smart is not allowed to be involved in the forming, marketing or running of a company for the same time period, which should bring some comfort to his clients who lost thousands of pounds due to his lies and deceit, and that he will not be able to repeat these actions once out of prison.”

**Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, added:**





“I am continuously grateful to officers from Suffolk Trading Standards for their tireless work to rid our county of rogue traders, enabling residents to remain protected and creating a level playing field for legitimate businesses.

“Securing justice against Francis Smart is the latest in a long line of successful court cases for the team, and I have no doubt that their actions have stopped landlords, including those who bought an investment property to fund their retirement, from facing any further losses from a despicable fraudster who didn’t think twice about blatantly disregarding the law.”

By law, a deposit must be placed in a Deposit Protection Scheme within 30 days of the landlord receiving it, and landlords are also obligated to provide information to tenants about where their deposit is held.

Anyone who suspects that an individual or business is fraudulently trading can report their suspicions in confidence by contacting Citizens Advice on 0808 223 1133.

### “Ipswich ware” pottery made for the first time in over 1,000 years

“Ipswich ware” jars and pots, first made 1,400 years ago in Suffolk’s County town, are being fired again in a replica Anglo-Saxon kiln.


Thanks to funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, this new experimental archaeology project is being led by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, to investigate how Anglo-Saxon pottery was once made in Ipswich.

The new Anglo-Saxon Ipswich ware kiln has been built and fired by studying archaeological remains excavated from the Buttermarket in Ipswich, something never attempted before. Only two kilns have ever been excavated in Ipswich, the other was discovered at Stoke Quay.

Ipswich ware pottery was made in the town from c. AD 680-870. Jars, cooking pots and pitchers were the most commonly made items, simple in design and grey in colour. They were mass-produced and distributed throughout eastern England and were some of the first of their kind in post-Roman Britain.

**Faye Minter, Suffolk County Council’s Archaeological Archives and Projects Manager, said:**

“These projects are important, allowing us to test archaeological hypotheses by replicating historical methods and techniques based on evidence from excavations. This can give invaluable insight into our history - the lives, skills and industry of people who lived in the past.”



“The results so far suggest that there was a high level of skill, knowledge and significant resources needed to successfully produce Ipswich ware, much more than we anticipated. There is more for us to learn and already the volunteers have come up with a plan for a second firing later this summer to test more theories.

In partnership with Hands on Heritage experimental archaeology site, and Keith Wade from the Ipswich Archaeological Trust, Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service has collaborated with volunteers and local organisations to make replica Ipswich ware pots using historical methods. To fire the pots a replica kiln was built in Tunstall, which took three days. In April it was set on fire over a 27-hour period, with 100 beautiful hand-made pots surviving the process.

Local volunteers from the Anglian Potters have been researching Ipswich ware pottery over the past year and conducting experiments with raw clay processing and making replica pots with children from Rushmere Hall Primary School in Ipswich.

**Councillor Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro, Suffolk County Council’s Deputy Cabinet Member for Protected Landscapes and Archaeology, said:**

“It is wonderful to see that the finds from our local excavations and archaeology are bringing together local people, schools, and organisations over 1,000 years later.

“Not only is the project providing a better understanding of Suffolk’s important past but is giving the local community a hands-on opportunity to discover more about their heritage, connecting them to the Anglo-Saxon way of life.

“I’d especially like to thank Bulmer Brick and Tile Company, and Tarmac - Suffolk suppliers who have kindly donated locally sourced materials for this project.”

**Tony Minter of The Bulmer Brick and Tile Company, said:**

"It was our pleasure to contribute our clay to this project, and we were grateful for the opportunity to see the results of everyone's fantastic efforts in April. We hope that further firings provide even more opportunities for the local community to learn about their heritage, as well as improve our understanding of the diverse role materials such as clay played in our history."

This experimental work is part of the community archaeology project ‘Rendlesham Revealed: Anglo-Saxon Life in South-East Suffolk’. It is run by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, and funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, who awarded a grant of £517,300 for the four-year project, which was made possible thanks to National Lottery players.

To find out more about the ‘Rendlesham Revealed’ project visit: [heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham](https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham)



## Suffolk Fire Manager receives BEM in His Majesty The King's Birthday Honours List

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Richard John Clarke, Crew Manager with the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has been awarded a British Empire Medal for his services to the Fire Fighters Charity and the community he serves in Newmarket.

Described as an active and exemplary servant to the people of Suffolk, Richard is a well-respected role model to his colleagues, and he has dedicated his life to serving his community and country. He has worked in wholetime service and in his spare time as an On-Call firefighter and trained many new Suffolk recruits, ensuring they uphold the highest standards of safety and a positive culture across the service.

Richard also helped train Suffolk firefighters to drive ambulances during the first wave of the pandemic and took the lead role in driving these vehicles, potentially putting himself in danger to help the community before the vaccine was available.


He overcame serious injury to his leg and knee, sustained whilst attending a forest fire. He was admitted to hospital where doctors told him he might not make a full recovery or return to full operational duties, but with the help of the Firefighters Charity and after 15-months of support and rehabilitation, he returned to full operational duties; a true testament to his resolve, personal resilience, commitment to the service and his determination to continue to serve his community. His injury and experience of the Firefighters' Charity made a lasting impact and led him to help and support other injured firefighters and their families by fundraising for the Charity. He has helped raise the Charity's profile with numerous fundraising events such as Ladder Climbs, Open Days, and the successful Suffolk Fire and Rescue Car Draw helping to raise more than £200,000 and demonstrating his success in developing charity activity in the local community.

### **Jon Lacey, Chief Fire Officer at Suffolk Fire and Rescue, said:**

"Richard is an outstanding member of the fire and rescue service family and has served his community and his country with selfless dedication.

"I could not be prouder of him and his achievements to date and he could not be more deserving of this recognition. Congratulations Richard."

Richard also joined the Civilian Services Contingent as a drill instructor and served nationally at Remembrance Day events in London, taking a pivotal role in preparing the fire service parade to take part in the service. He then went on to lead the Civilian Services Contingent at the Remembrance Parade 2020, a proud achievement for him, Suffolk and the National Fire Service.



Richard leads the Suffolk Ceremonial Team, a voluntary role, attending funerals for serving and retired firefighters, events across the county and firefighter memorial events, supporting the fire service tradition of showing respect for the fallen and promoting positive values in the community.

**Richard John Clarke, Crew Commander for Newmarket at Suffolk Fire and Rescue, said:**

“I am truly overwhelmed, very proud and privileged to be recognised in His Majesty The Kings Birthday Honours List.”

### Ancestry appointed to digitise Suffolk’s popular family and local history sources

More than 400 years of fascinating historical documents held at Suffolk Archives are to be digitised and made available online, thanks to an agreement between Suffolk County Council and Ancestry.

Suffolk Archives will work alongside the family history website Ancestry to create high-quality, full-colour digital images of millions of baptism, marriage and burial records from parishes within the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.


The earliest records being digitised date back to 1538 and include events in the lives of notable historical figures, such as the 1776 baptism of landscape artist John Constable, and the 1846 burial of Thomas Clarkson who devoted his life to the abolition of slavery.

It is hoped that Suffolk’s main parish records will be published online in early 2025 with other collections of local interest to follow. Public access will be free of charge in Suffolk Archives branches or at any Suffolk Library. Anyone with an Ancestry subscription will also be able to access the records as part of their research from their own computer or device.

**Cllr Bobby Bennett, Suffolk County Council, Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities said:**

“Exploring your family tree has never been more popular and technology is making it easier and more accessible than ever before. This new agreement will lead to more than four centuries of fascinating documents, held by Suffolk Archives, being professionally digitised and made available online on Ancestry. As a result, anyone with Suffolk roots anywhere in the world will be able to learn more about their ancestors at a click of a button.”

**Kristian Lafferty, Senior Content Acquisition Manager at Ancestry, said:**



“Ancestry is delighted to be working alongside Suffolk Archives to make these unique historic collections available online for the first time. The archive service does an exceptional job of caring for, curating and preserving the rich cultural heritage of Suffolk, and we’re proud to be working together on the digitisation and publication of documents representing hundreds of years of Suffolk history. These records will be a priceless resource for those who want to research their Suffolk roots in the UK and all over the world, providing valuable insight into the lives of many people’s ancestors from the region, alongside some of Suffolk’s most notable residents.”

**Gary Peverley, Acting Diocesan Secretary, Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, said:**

“Suffolk Archives is the official record office for the diocese, and they store a huge amount of material. This is an exciting project to digitise Suffolk’s parish registers and transcripts with Ancestry. Going forward it will make it easier to draw on the archives and offer improved preservation of the original registers ensuring they are readily available to everyone in the future”.

Further details about the project can be found on the [Suffolk Archives website](#).

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### **Sudbury man guilty of selling fake DVDs**

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John Williams, 72 of Pot Kiln Road, Great Cornard, has pleaded guilty to two offences related to the sale, supply, and manufacture of counterfeit DVDs.

John Williams, 72 of Pot Kiln Road, Great Cornard, has pleaded guilty to two offences related to the sale, supply, and manufacture of counterfeit DVDs.

Williams first became known to Suffolk Trading Standards when they received a report of fake cult and classic DVDs being sold on a website. Test purchases were carried out with the Trade Mark and Copyright holder confirming them to be counterfeit. Titles examined included Wonder Woman 1984, Shazam, X Men Apocalypse and the TV programmes The Strange World of Gurney Slade and Dial 999.

Over 40,000 DVDs were seized from Mr Williams’ home in October 2021 alongside computers, disc burners, a colour photocopier with some printouts of DVD box paper insert sleeves and address label stickers.

Forensic analysis of the seized computers found that Williams had sold fake DVDRs when attending numerous Film and TV fairs, mainly in London and that he had a wide network of customers he sold discs to, both in the UK and abroad.



Appearing at Ipswich Crown Court today, John Williams pleaded guilty to one offence under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1998 and one under the Trademark Act 1994. The sentencing will be on 24 July 2023.

**Councillor Andrew Reid, cabinet member responsible for Public Health and Public Protection, said:**

“I congratulate Trading Standards who worked hard to bring this matter to Court, and I would like to extend my thanks to the Film Content Protection Agency and the National Trading Standards eCrime team for their assistance.”

Anyone wanting to report the sale of illegal goods should contact Trading Standards via Citizens Advice Consumer Service at **0808 223 1133**.

### £100m broadband investment in Suffolk under government's Project Gigabit

Better broadband is on its way for around 80,000 properties across rural Suffolk in a £100 million investment under a £5 billion government infrastructure programme.

The county is one of three to benefit from Project Gigabit and was chosen to host the launch of the announcement by Minister for Data and Digital Infrastructure, Sir John Whittingdale.

Similar projects were also announced for Norfolk and Hampshire as Sir John was joined in Orford by Suffolk Coastal MP Therese Coffey and Councillor Matthew Hicks, the leader of Suffolk County Council.


Project Gigabit is the government's £5 billion mission to roll out gigabit-capable, reliable broadband across the UK.

Improved connectivity unlocks new opportunities and fuels innovation, supporting the Prime Minister's priority of growing the economy by creating better paid jobs.

Around 62,000 homes and businesses in Norfolk stand to benefit from £114 million of Project Gigabit investment, across locations including Buxton, Castle Acre and Horning.

A further 8,000 premises in the northwest of the county are being reviewed for inclusion subject to survey in the next six months.

This project is managed by BDUK who in turn have contracted CityFibre to do the actual work of installing the cabling.



CityFibre, the UK's largest independent full-fibre provider, will deliver gigabit-capable infrastructure for around 218,000 homes and businesses having secured £318 million of Project Gigabit funding after a competitive process. The provider will also be making a private investment of £170 million to deliver the project.

Decisions on where broadband infrastructure is installed will be made by BDUK and not by SCC.

Survey work in all three counties commences immediately, with the first installations in the New Year and the first live connections expected by summer 2024.

Once connected, residents and businesses will enjoy access to broadband services over a network capable of supporting speeds of up to 10Gbps.

**Sir John Whittingdale said:**

"Access to lightning-speed broadband is key to the Government's plans for driving economic growth and levelling up communities. This investment of £318 million in government funding is a significant milestone in achieving that mission.

"Delivered through our flagship Project Gigabit programme, 218,000 homes and businesses across Norfolk, Suffolk, and Hampshire will benefit from a modern digital infrastructure, helping to power local communities and our plan to boost connectivity all over the UK."

**Cllr Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:**

"As a rural county, we welcome the announcement of £100m for providing fast, reliable broadband to some 80,000 premises across Suffolk. This will build on our Better Broadband for Suffolk programme which has helped to deliver wider access to superfast broadband.

"Not only will this investment in our digital infrastructure help to keep our residents connected, but, since many of Suffolk's small businesses are operated from households across the county, it is essential for the future of the local economy."

**CityFibre CEO Greg Mesch said:**

"Securing three further Project Gigabit contracts firmly establishes CityFibre as an integral delivery partner to the Government for rural connectivity.

"Our growing participation is central to our strategy, optimising our commercial rollout plan alongside the programme to provide our ISP customers with unrivalled network density in regions throughout the country."



## Council to consider new chapter for library services

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Suffolk County Council's Cabinet is set to discuss the future of library services in Suffolk at its next meeting on 11 July.

The current contract with Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society (IPS), worth £5.92 million per annum, comes to an end on 31st July 2024. The Council now needs to consider how library services will be delivered following the expiry of the contract.

The report to Cabinet will recommend that a new Library Service contract is procured using a competitive tender process.

To enable meaningful engagement, public consultation, and a competitive tender process to take place, the report also recommends that the current contract with Suffolk's Libraries IPS is extended by 10 months, to 31 May 2025.

The public consultation will be used to inform the requirements and future development of the new service.

### **Cllr Bobby Bennett, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities, commented:**

"Libraries play a vital role in our local communities – they offer so much more than books; providing community spaces which bring people of all ages together, to learn, socialise, read and take part in activities. Building on the good work already happening in Suffolk, we are committed to supporting library services, so that our residents continue to see the same high level of service from their local library. A competitive tender process will give us the opportunity to test the current market to ensure we are providing the best value for money for our residents."

In May 2023, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet agreed to protect library services by providing Suffolk's Libraries IPS an additional £720k per year to address increases in service costs, until the end of the current contract. The proposal to be put to cabinet on 11 July is to continue to fund Suffolk Libraries IPS at this rate for the duration of the proposed 10-month extension.

The proposed value of the new contract will be £6.842m per year, considering the increased service costs and including an additional £0.2m for the Libraries Outreach Service. The proposed term of the contract will be 6 years, with the option to extend for a further 6 years.

The recommendations will be discussed at the meeting of Suffolk County Council's Cabinet on Tuesday 11 July. Papers for the meeting can be viewed at <https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk>.