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Suffolk County Council Report February 2024

Dear All,

It is with deep sadness that I start my report to Clare Division by paying tribute to Mary Evans who sadly died last month. Mary worked tirelessly as County Councillor to Clare Division for 8 years and was Deputy Leader at Suffolk County Council. She will be greatly missed.

Please see my report below. You will note from the second item that I have been asked to move portfolio and am now the cabinet member for Children and Young People's Services.

Kind regards
Bobby

Suffolk One Network

This is a quick reminder about the website one.network. It is a free-to-view website, with large-ranging sources of roadworks and traffic disruption information in the UK.

The one.network map enables highway authorities to communicate authoritative up-to-date information about roadworks, events and other activities on the highway.

Users can register for email alerts about upcoming roadworks affecting their area. This is particularly useful for informing residents on future works.

Greater focus on SEND in Suffolk County Council cabinet reshuffle

Special educational needs and disabilities has been given an even greater focus as part of a reshuffle of Suffolk County Council's cabinet announced today.

Experienced cabinet member Cllr Andrew Reid will take the role of cabinet member for SEND and education. The role previously included oversight of skills, but to enable more political focus and accountability on urgent improvements on SEND services, this has now been moved to Cllr Richard Smith to sit alongside his existing responsibilities for economic development, transport strategy and waste. Cllr Debbie Richards will support Cllr Reid as deputy cabinet member for SEND. A new SEND Improvement Board is also being established to help drive forward reform.

Continuing the changes to children and young people (CYP) leadership, serving cabinet member Cllr Bobby Bennett has been appointed as cabinet member for CYP services. Two deputy cabinet members have been promoted to cabinet roles – Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton is now cabinet member for equality and communities and Cllr Craig Rivett is cabinet member for public health and public protection.

Alongside these changes, further new faces come in as deputy cabinet members. Cllr Nadia Cenci becomes deputy cabinet member for property and county farms, Cllr David Roach becomes deputy cabinet member for fostering and adoption and Cllr Heike Sowa joins as deputy cabinet member for transformation.

A full list of the new cabinet and deputy cabinet members is below.

Cabinet Members

Leader – Cllr Matthew Hicks

Deputy Leader and Finance and Environment – Cllr Richard Rout

SEND and Education – Cllr Andrew Reid*

Economic Development, Transport Strategy, Waste and Skills – Cllr Richard Smith MVO*

Children and Young People’s Services – Cllr Bobby Bennett*

Public Health and Public Protection – Cllr Craig Rivett*

Equality and Communities – Cllr Philip Faircloth-Mutton*

Adult Care – Cllr Beccy Hopfensperger

Ipswich, Operation Highways and Flooding – Cllr Paul West

Deputy Cabinet Members

Transport Strategy - Cllr Alexander Nicoll

Highway Drainage – Cllr Steve Wiles

Protected Landscapes and Archaeology – Cllr Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro

County Farms and Property – Cllr Nadia Cenci*

Fostering and Adoption – Cllr David Roach*

Transformation – Cllr Heike Sowa*

SEND – Cllr Debbie Richards*

*Indicates a change to the previous Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member roles.

Suffolk DVD counterfeiter receives suspended sentence

A man who made thousands of pounds from pirating DVDs of films and TV shows has been given a suspended prison sentence following a case brought by Suffolk County Council’s Trading Standards team.

John Williams received a 16-month term, suspended for two years, plus a fine of £7,500 after pleading guilty to two offences related to the sale, supply and manufacture of counterfeit DVDs.

Williams, 72, of Pot Kiln Road, Great Cornard, Suffolk, was also ordered by Ipswich Crown Court to pay a Proceeds of Crime Order of £77,182, as the criminal benefit he made from the sales of counterfeit discs, plus pay prosecution costs of £42,870.

Suffolk Trading Standards began investigating after receiving a report of fake cult and classic DVDs being sold online.

Test purchases were carried out and the discs analysed, which confirmed them to be counterfeit.

Titles examined included Wonder Woman 1984, Shazam, X Men Apocalypse and TV programmes The Strange World of Gurney Slade and Dial 999.

More than 40,000 copied DVDs were seized from his home in October 2021 along with computers, disc burners, a colour photocopier with print outs of DVD box paper insert sleeves, and address label stickers.

Analysis of the seized computers found Williams had sold fake DVDs when attending film and TV fairs, mainly in London, making up to £1,500 per fair, and that he had a wide network of customers in the UK and abroad.

Williams pleaded guilty to one offence under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1998 and one under the Trademark Act 1994.

Graham Crisp, Head of Suffolk Trading Standards, said the original complainant, a UK company called Network Distributing Ltd of London, would purchase copyright licencing rights and restore and remaster the content of classic TV and films for DVD.

However, the company ceased trading in June last year with the loss of nearly 30 jobs.

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

£150,000 Home Office funding announced to support Serious Violence work in Suffolk

Suffolk's Safer Stronger Communities Board has announced a fund of £150,000, which will support work to tackle serious violence in Suffolk.

The £150,000 funding from the Home Office will support Suffolk's Serious Violence Strategy. Organisations can bid for funding for specific projects, which support the work of Suffolk's Serious Violence Strategy. Allocation of funding will be managed through Suffolk Community Foundation.

In January 2023, the Government introduced a Serious Violence Duty on public bodies to ensure relevant services work together to share knowledge and target interventions to prevent serious violence.

The Serious Violence Duty has given partners in Suffolk the opportunity to reflect on the current countywide system for tackling violent crime and in response to this, Suffolk's Safer Stronger Communities Board has published its Serious Violence Strategy.

The strategy brings together work already taking place across the system to tackle serious violence, such as the existing Criminal Exploitation, Violence Against Women and Girls and Combatting Drugs strategies.

By bringing this work together in one place, the Serious Violence Strategy aims to improve partnership working, using a whole system approach to tackle serious violence in Suffolk, focusing on young people and communities at risk of becoming involved in serious violence, creating a safer place for communities to live and thrive.

The strategy encompasses four core themes:

1. Prevention and early intervention: Focus resources and commissioning of interventions that are preventative, improving outcomes for young people.
2. Safety of young people: Use evidence led approaches to identify communities of greatest need.
3. Communication and engagement: Work with communities to continue to develop innovative solutions and promote successes. Use engagement opportunities to support evaluation of initiatives and review strategy aims.
4. Strengthening the System: Continue to collaborate, innovate, and work in partnership to create a whole system approach to tackling serious violence.

Visitor attractions invited to join 'Good Journey' scheme

Suffolk Growth Partnership and Suffolk County Council have teamed up with the national organisation 'Good Journey' – the UK experts in car-free leisure – in a push to cut carbon emissions and widen access to our leisure, culture and nature for more people.

The initiative, launching in March 2024, supports Suffolk's Greenest County journey towards a carbon net zero visitor economy and will welcome car-free visitors to an array of attractions across Suffolk.

Around 25 local tourism and visitor attractions are now invited to join the Suffolk Good Journey scheme offering residents and visitors discounts and incentives to leave the car at home and explore more of the county on foot, by bike or using public transport. Suffolk visitor attractions participating will be supported and feature on goodjourney.org.uk – providing easy travel information and discounts to domestic and international visitors.

Visitor attractions participating in the Suffolk Good Journey scheme will also form part of a marketing campaign showcasing sustainable tourism visits to Suffolk, offering adventures by train, bus, bike and foot to suit all ages and tastes – from exploring the towns, coast and countryside, and local food and drink delicacies to discovering the cultural and heritage attractions and film locations.

Visitor attractions and venues interested in joining Suffolk Good Journey county can find out more details by contacting Loretta Jones at Good Journey on loretta@goodjourney.org.uk or info@suffolkgrowth.co.uk

Fake university website shut down by Suffolk Trading Standards

A website for a fake university aiming to scam money from overseas students has been shut down by Suffolk Trading Standards.

Calling itself the College of Suffolk, the website claimed the university had been founded in 1990 and was located on Queen Street in Ipswich.

Quoting yearly fees ranging from £3,500 to £8,900, it claimed to offer courses in acting, musical theatre, dance and performance.

The site used images of the real University of Suffolk and even had a page promoting the county, saying how it was home to its own breed of horses, breweries and famous celebrities such as singer Ed Sheeran.

A foreword by college 'President' Dr Stephen Spinks talked of how it provides "exciting learning opportunities in business, human resources, accountancy, finance, musician (sic) and art – all critical areas for the world of work."

It is the second time such a fake college has been foiled by Trading Standards – an identical scam using the same name and information was closed down in 2019.

The website was being run from Hong Kong and while Suffolk Trading Standards have had no reports of victims in

Trading Standards says anyone considering applying for a college course can beat degree fraud through the Higher Education Degree Datacheck (HEDD) website <https://hedd.ac.uk/> where people can:

- Check whether a university or college is an official degree awarding body by using the look-up service
- Download free toolkits allowing employers, universities and colleges to tackle degree fraud
- Check original degree certificates with the issuing university

Degree fraud can be reported to the HEDD fraud team on 020 8148 2400.

If you have concerns about a website, please report it to Trading Standards via 0808 223 1133.

1,400-year-old Anglo-Saxon artefacts now on display in West Suffolk

Archaeological finds from a popular exhibition at the National Trust's Sutton Hoo, are now on display at the West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Museum.

Rendlesham Revealed: The Heart of a Kingdom AD 400-800 will be on display until 23 July 2024. Over 50 archaeological finds from the original exhibition are on public view, including gold jewellery, coinage, and food remains.

The display focuses on the main story of royal Rendlesham at its height when it was the power centre of the early East Anglian kingdom 1,400 years ago.

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service is curating the display to celebrate the “Rendlesham Revealed” community archaeology project funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, made possible thanks to National Lottery players.

The objects are on loan from Colchester and Ipswich Museums and from Suffolk County Council’s Archaeological Service, some of those on display include:

- Gold and garnet dress accessories and weaponry fittings, used by the highest levels of society, such as warriors and royalty
 - A copper-alloy gilt horse-harness fitting, with garnet and shell centre inlay with a zoomorphic interlace design
 - A gold-and-garnet pyramid mount used on sword scabbards
- Gold, silver and copper-alloy coinage. More coinage of the 6th to 8th centuries has been found at Rendlesham than anywhere else in England, suggesting that Rendlesham played a crucial role in encouraging trade and the use of money across south-east Suffolk and beyond
- Imported objects from across Europe suggests long-distance contacts, gift giving and trade
 - A gold circular pendant made of impressed gold sheet of a form which originated in southern Scandinavia in the 5th century
 - An unusual silver brooch in the form of a horse-and-rider, similar to examples found in modern-day France and the Netherlands in the later 5th century
- Objects representing the ordinary population of farmers and craftworkers, including belt buckles, pins and weaving items
- Animal bone, the rubbish from butchery, cooking and eating, which tells us about farming practices and feasting

The temporary display is now open at West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Museum until 23 July 2024. Entry to see the display is included in the normal admission charge to the museum.

A virtual interactive tour of the original exhibition at Sutton Hoo is also planned in the coming months, including video interviews with the archaeologists themselves.

To find out more about the Rendlesham Revealed project visit: heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham

Council to propose new funding for arts & heritage in Suffolk

Suffolk County Council is today (26th January) announcing its intention to create a new funding pot open to all arts and heritage organisations in the county.

- Core funding for nine arts and heritage organisations still to cease after 2024/25
- New £500,000 funding pot proposed from 2025/26, open to all arts and heritage organisations in Suffolk
- Proposal to be tabled at Cabinet meeting on 30 January

Following this week’s announcement from government that £600 million of further funding will be available to local councils, the council intends to propose a new £500,000 project fund to which all Suffolk’s arts and heritage organisations can apply.

However, this does not alter the difficult financial decisions the council is having to make so that it can prioritise spending on services like SEND, home to school transport and children in care. An extra £74 million is still needed over the next two years to protect the county's most vulnerable adults and children.

Proposals to end the core funding of £528,000 of nine arts and heritage organisations after the 2024/25 financial year, are still in place. This funding will be replaced with the new £500,000 project funding pot, open to all arts and heritage organisations, from April 2025.

The new £500,000 fund would contribute to delivering on the council's ambitions such as looking after the health and wellbeing of Suffolk's residents, particularly those most in need of extra support to live as safely, independently, and healthily as possible.

The impact of the government announcement for further funding for councils will be discussed at Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Meeting on 30 January 2024, where proposals will be explored.

Trading Standards seize 2,007 illegal vapes in Ipswich

Suffolk Trading Standards has seized more than 2,000 illegal nicotine vapes from shops in Ipswich.

The devices were recovered from three shops in the borough by trading standards officers checking for compliance on advice issued after previous visits.

The businesses will now be subject to further investigation to consider whether they should face further action, which could include prosecution.

The legal UK limit on nicotine content in disposable electronic cigarettes is no more than 2% (20mg/ml) and must not exceed 2ml in capacity (around 600 puffs).

The disposable products seized contained oversized tanks, giving between 3,500 to up to more than 10,000 puffs.

The seizures saw 964 found at one shop, 867 in the second and 176 in the third.

Last November a total of 1,913 vapes were seized from shops in Lowestoft, Felixstowe, and Ipswich, while a further 2,500 were recovered in September from a shop in Ipswich. Investigations into these seizures continue.

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 market for illegal vapes. In addition, some retailers sell vapes to underage children by using colourful packaging and sweet flavours.

The Government [announced on Monday January 29](#) that it intends to ban disposable vapes to tackle the rising number of young people taking up vaping. It will also bring in measures to prevent vapes being marketed at children and to target underage sales.

Consumers can ensure the nicotine vape that they are purchasing is legal by checking the following:

- That the tank of a vape is a maximum size of 2ml, and the largest refill bottle is 10ml in size or less
- That all liquids come in childproof bottles displaying nicotine warnings and have an accompanying safety leaflet
- That vapes have a nicotine strength of no more than 20mg/ml, or 2%
- That a maximum number of around 600 puffs is offered

Always buy vaping products from a reputable supplier such as a specialist vape shop, pharmacy, supermarket or a UK-based online retailer so they are covered by UK safety and quality regulations.

Anyone who suspects that a business is inappropriately selling vaping materials can report this in confidence to Suffolk Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice Consumer helpline on 0808 223 1133.

Suffolk local area partnership commits to urgent improvements to SEND services and apologises to families

The partnership responsible for overseeing and delivering services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Suffolk have apologised to families and commits to urgent action to strengthen and accelerate improvement plans following an inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission.

- Ofsted and CQC Inspection Report finds significant concerns with SEND services
- The Local Area Partnership promise urgent action to accelerate and strengthen improvement plans
- Senior leaders offer joint apology to Suffolk families

The inspection, which took place in November, highlighted that ‘there are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns’ about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND. The report can be read [here](#).

The local area partnership which delivers SEND services is made up of Suffolk County Council, the NHS Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB.

The inspection report, published January 30th, identifies two priority actions as follows:

1. The partnership should work more collaboratively and effectively to improve strategic planning. This needs to deliver systems with measurable impact that will create better experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
2. Leaders should cooperate to take urgent action to improve the timeliness and quality of the statutory Education Health Care plan process, Education Health Care plan needs assessments and Education Health Care plans and annual reviews. This should ensure that plans meaningfully capture the views and aspirations of children and young people with SEND and their families, so that they get the right support at the right time.

The local area partnership is now implementing a number of urgent actions. These include the proposed investment of £4.4 million into SEND services next year by Suffolk County Council (subject to Full Council agreement on February 15), and the establishment of a Suffolk SEND Improvement Board, which will be chaired by an Independent Chair, to oversee the improvement plan and actions needed. A new SEND Strategy is also in the process of being co-produced with parents and carers to set the strategic direction.

Alongside key priorities, the report identifies a number of areas where the partnership is working well. These include:

- In some areas, the local area partnership has worked successfully to improve services
- Strong levels of capital investment have increased the availability of special school places
- Initiatives to equip professionals in schools, such as the online tool to support schools, Valuing SEND or VSEND, are showing early signs of impact
- Several health teams support families sensitively and successfully, including the neonatal physiotherapy service
- Social care teams are effective. Social work assessments and reviews are comprehensive and helpful.
- Many providers, such as schools and colleges, praise their relationship with the local area partnership

As a result of this inspection, a monitoring inspection will be carried out within approximately 18 months. The local area partnership is now required to prepare and submit a priority action plan to address the identified areas for priority action.

The Ofsted and CQC report follows two years of significant investment into the way SEND services are delivered in Suffolk. Reform progress has been monitored by the Department for Education, who reported [in March 2023](#), that progress was 'reassuring' and noted 'the leadership's commitment to improvement in a wide range of areas'.

Significant pieces of reform include:

- Investment of more than £55 million to create more than 1,250 additional places in specialist and mainstream schools
- Creation of specialist SEND support teams and training for all Suffolk schools to support them to meet the additional needs of children in mainstream schools
- Proposed investment of £4.4m in 2024/25 and £3.4m in 2025/26 to expand our statutory SEND teams and secure sufficient educational psychology resource to improve the quality and timeliness of Education Health and Care assessments and reviews
- The ICB has invested £700,000 in recurring funding in the voluntary and community sector to provide support for families waiting for these diagnoses, as well as co-producing a new parent resource pack as part of the Suffolk Local Offer