



Thedwastre North June 2019 Newsletter

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Housing and the environment among priorities outlined by Suffolk County Council leader

A new programme using council land to create much-needed homes and a plan to cut carbon emissions were among the priorities outlined by the Leader of Suffolk County Council on 23 May.

In a speech to the council's Annual General Meeting, Councillor Matthew Hicks confirmed the authority's commitment to continuing work to protect vulnerable adults and children, improve Suffolk's roads, and raise educational standards.

He also outlined five new policy priorities to address in the coming twelve months. These include proposals to start using council-owned land to create more homes in Suffolk, and plans to cut carbon emissions, starting with a major policy review involving a cross-party group of councillors.

What is not well-known is that Suffolk County Council is the third largest landowner in Suffolk. Much of that land is put to good use, as county farms, operational depots and office accommodation. There is scope to convert some of SCC land into much needed housing. And that would present an opportunity to generate income for the county council to reinvest in vital public services.

Building on work in the past twelve months, Councillor Hicks pledged to continue working collaboratively with district and borough councils, other public sector partners, businesses and residents to find the best ways of delivering services to the people that need them most.

Councillor Hicks confirmed the reappointment of his current cabinet members and deputy cabinet members, with the addition of Councillor Nick Gowrley who will lead the council's new economic development and housing portfolio.

[Read Councillor Matthew Hicks' speech in full](#) (PDF, 131KB)

Ofsted confirms that Suffolk County Council's Children's Services are 'Outstanding'

On 21 May, it was announced that Ofsted inspectors have awarded Children's Services at Suffolk County Council the top grade of 'Outstanding' following their visit in April 2019. Only eight other Local Authorities, out of 152, have been judged to be 'Outstanding' overall.

Ofsted's inspection report of children's social care services said:

"Services for children are of an exceptionally high standard. They are child-focused and make a positive difference to children's lives".

Inspectors were impressed with improvements made across the service since it was rated 'Good' in 2015. The report states that, "stable and aspirational leadership and strong political and financial support have created conditions that are conducive to continuous improvement and the development of sustainable, high-quality services. Senior leaders have addressed the recommendations of the previous inspection. They have continued to attract new opportunities, develop practice and strengthen partnerships".

Inspectors commended the staff, highlighting that "the work that staff are doing with children and young people is impressive; the way that they are doing it is making a real difference to their lives". The report states that, "workers build positive and purposeful working relationships with children and their families. They ensure children are safeguarded, and that their wider needs are addressed. They consistently act to ensure the best outcomes for children". Workforce management is also recognised by Ofsted as a strength.

Inspectors praised the ethos within the council's children's services, saying "the local authority consistently demonstrates, through its range of help and protection services, its commitment to supporting parents to bring up their children safely and successfully".

[Read the full Ofsted report \(PDF\).](#)

New fire engines and uniforms making Suffolk safer

Suffolk's firefighters are now kitted out in new state-of-the-art uniforms, making them safer than ever before.



The new Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) saw its first action on 1 May 2019, as firefighters responded to reports of a washing machine fire near Bury St Edmunds.

The new clothing is more lightweight, comfortable and tailored, and includes specific designs for men and women. There are also different uniforms for different incidents.

Three new fire appliances are also being rolled out, to be based at Framlingham, Holbrook and Long Melford fire stations.

Mark Hardingham, Suffolk's Chief Fire Officer, said:

"A firefighter's role has changed a great deal in recent times. In the last year, over a third of emergency incidents we attended were not actually fire related. These included events such as road traffic collisions

and rescues of both animals and people, from water or height.

"The new multi-purpose uniforms will allow our firefighters to adapt to the ever-changing demands on them."

This is the first major upgrade to firefighters' equipment since 2011. As well as providing firefighters with the latest PPE, the new contract also provides better value for the Service and Suffolk County Council. This is part of our on-going programme of investment to make

sure our firefighters have the best available tools for the job, whilst improving their safety and wellbeing. Despite the ongoing financial challenges, our priority is keeping our staff and Suffolk safe.

The old uniforms will be returned to their previous supplier, where they are recycled and often exported abroad, predominantly to African countries.

New Highways Self Help scheme empowers Suffolk people to do more in their community

'Highways Community Self Help' is designed to support and empower town and parish councils in Suffolk to carry out minor maintenance tasks in their area.

The much-anticipated scheme has been developed in partnership with towns and parishes across Suffolk after it was recognised that many of these councils were willing to carry out additional works to maintain and improve the look of their communities, such as sign cleaning, hedge cutting, and fingerpost painting.

Highways has committed £100k to the scheme in its first year, taken from the £9.67million additional funding allocated to Suffolk Highways by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, in the Budget last October. The investment will help fund training; personal protective gear such as gloves, hi-viz and safety glasses; and any necessary tools.

The types of works that town and parish councils are keen to undertake include:

- Sign cleaning
- Fingerpost cleaning/painting/repair
- Tree pruning/branch removal
- Hedge cutting/pruning
- Siding out of footways, or paths (widen to original/full width)
- Grass verge cutting
- Weed killing/weed removal.

Towns and parishes across Suffolk will be able to carry out these tasks and more through one or more of the following four options:

- Buying in services from contractors
- Using their own trained employee(s)
- Using volunteers to undertake work
- Buying additional services from Suffolk Highways.

Towns and parishes that are interested in joining Community Self Help are encouraged to visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/communityselfhelp for more details.

Get on your bike with Suffolk's firefighters

Cyclists and families are invited to join firefighters and volunteers on this year's Suffolk Fire Ride. The ride starts from Felixstowe fire and police station on Sunday 16 June 2019.

As well as enjoying an organised ride around the Suffolk countryside, you can meet local firefighters and see inside Felixstowe's joint fire and police station.

It's a great day for young families to bring their bikes and ride together on the shorter route. Even if two wheels aren't your thing, everyone is invited to come along, meet our firefighters and visit the station.

The event moves around the county each year, with local businesses regularly supporting the ride and offering services in kind.

This is the fifth annual Suffolk Fire Ride and the event has routes covering 100km, 50km and a shorter family-friendly course. Money raised goes to The Fire Fighters Charity. Last year's Suffolk Fire Ride in Holbrook saw a fantastic turnout of over 100 cyclists, raising nearly £2,000.

It costs over £8million per year for The Fire Fighters Charity to meet the needs of its beneficiaries. The charity supports firefighters to be fit, healthy and happy so they can continue saving lives, as well as supporting those who have retired. With no regular government funding the charity is reliant on donations and fundraising from the general public and the fire and rescue community.

For more information and to register your place, visit www.suffolkfireride.co.uk. Advance entry fees for the 100km and 50km routes are £20 per person (£30 on the day), or £5 for the family route.

Webcast meetings

Many of the council meetings are now webcast – Cabinet and Council meetings since the beginning of May – and more are planned. (MSDC meetings are also available online via YouTube.)

Further details are on the SCC website - www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/ - the tab to 'watch on-line'

Jane Storey
3rd June 2019