



**Cllr Karen Soons**  
**Nov 2020 Monthly Newsletter**  
**07864 601 887**



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)

## **A message from Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, on free school meals**

While Suffolk County Council is not providing the Government-funded vouchers to schools for Free School Meals over this half term week, we are supporting families and children in need as we don't want any child to go hungry.

In August, DEFRA awarded Suffolk County Council £770,000 as our share of the hardship grant. Suffolk Public Sector Leaders provided further match funding of £800,000 in September. So far, the Suffolk system has spent £600,000 and this covers:

- The Local Welfare Assistance Scheme that funds supermarket, food and fuel vouchers; school uniforms; essential furniture items; white goods; and oil heating refills.
- The Suffolk Advice and Support Service phonenumber.
- A donation of £100,000 to the Suffolk Community Foundation to provide grants to organisations to help communities with immediate hardship.

Some of the help provided to date by the hardship fund includes:

- Supporting families with food and fuel vouchers, paying utility bills, and buying school uniforms.
- Buying a bike for a man to get to his new job, after losing his old job due to Covid-19 and having to sell his car to cover expenses.

- Buying special boots for a child with disabilities, which the family could no longer afford.
- Covering rent arrears for people.

On top of this, Suffolk County Council has also committed £250,000 to Suffolk Foodbanks and awarded a further £60,000 to the Suffolk Community Foundation's emergency hardship fund.

Schools receive government funding to provide free school meals. For maintained schools, this funding comes through Suffolk County Council and is forwarded to our community and voluntary controlled schools annually. In Suffolk, there are now about 19,000 children receiving Free School Meals.

In the early summer, we widened the support given in Suffolk by providing vouchers to families once they apply for Universal Credit and giving vouchers to children entitled to Free School Meals but who are not in school. As you will be aware, the Government funded an extension of the provision of meals for children throughout the school holidays. At SCC we provided extra funding to ensure that children who qualified for FSMs after the Government's deadline still got the vouchers throughout the summer holidays.

Families who need help to feed their children or with any other financial concern can access support in many other ways in Suffolk. In the early days of the pandemic, one of our main challenges was helping those who were isolated and struggling for support. This was addressed through the Home But Not Alone phonenumber, which is ready to stand up again if needed. We recognise that the challenges that many families face now are financial – and many of these families will be facing hardship for the first time in their lives. The Suffolk Support and Advice Line has been set up to help address these issues. It can help with debt advice, budgeting, mortgage, rent or credit card problems and employment queries. The number is **0800 068 3131** and is manned Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. People can also go to: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/suffolk-advice-and-support-service/>

We appreciate that the needs of people across our county will change as we go into winter. We will work with our partners to ensure that we can adapt and flex to address these needs and offer the right support at the right time.

## **Council announces £228,000 for tree-planting, protecting hedgerows and verges across Suffolk**

Suffolk's natural environment will receive investment for tree-planting, restoring hedgerows, and improving roadside verges for wildlife.

£228,000 from the Suffolk 2020 Fund will enable Suffolk County Council to enhance its work to protect and encourage biodiversity in the county. The authority will do this through a number of new schemes, as well as building on existing work.

Working with The Woodland Trust, Suffolk Tree Wardens, landowners, and county farm tenants, the funding will support the planting of around 100,000 trees, including replanting hedgerows in suitable locations across Suffolk over the next 18 months. It

will also help establish around 10 community tree nurseries, which will support more planting in years to come. Local volunteers will be supported to collect seeds, set up nursery beds and grow trees in their communities.

The funding will also be used to trial better ways to manage roadside verges for wildlife. This includes exploring the use of new technology and cutting techniques, as well as developing new partnerships with parishes and landowners. The funding will help expand the existing Roadside Nature Reserve network managed by the council with the help of volunteers, seeing a 25% increase in the overall length of verges managed for wildlife.

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

“This funding will boost the council’s existing work to protect Suffolk’s environment and wildlife. Increased tree planting will allow us to offset carbon emissions, though we are continuing to work to eliminate the council’s emissions where possible, as part of our commitment to our climate emergency declaration.

“But this is much more than just planting trees and walking away. We are setting up the support needed to allow trees, hedgerows and verges to thrive for years to come, including in urban areas. We are committed to a ‘right tree, right place’ policy and to working with others. This will be achieved through a new Suffolk Tree Partnership, involving many others across Suffolk, to support local communities and landowners to help manage and increase tree cover.

“We will also work with others to develop a ‘healing wood’ initiative as a way of recognising the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our communities.

“With Suffolk’s healing woods we will all have access to natural spaces, where we can reflect on our own experiences of the pandemic or take a quiet moment to grieve for loved ones.”

People in Suffolk can have their say on plans for a ‘healing’ woodland space in memory of those who died from Covid-19. A survey has now been launched online for people to share their thoughts and preferences on what they would like to see.

Among the questions people can answer are whether they believe there should be multiple woods spread across the county, and whether it should be on existing public ground. The potential locations are to be identified in the new year.

**Councillor Richard Rout said:**

“We’ve already had a really positive and personal response to this project, and whatever your background or beliefs, nature offers a place for all to reflect and remember.

“It’s really important to me, to hear from as many people as possible about how and where a healing wood will have the most positive impact for them.”

The survey will run online until 25 November. The council will then collate and publish the results with a plan for the next steps.

[Visit the website here to take part in the survey.](#)

## **New cycle parking installed thanks to Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund**

New cycle parking has been installed in two Suffolk towns thanks to the Government's Emergency Active Travel Fund to help make cycling safer and easier.

One of the positives to come out of the COVID-19 crisis is the noticeable increase in people cycling. Whether that is for commuting to work to avoid overcrowding the transport network, for leisure, or as part of daily exercise.

This has resulted in reduced congestion and improved air quality, as well as supporting people's health and wellbeing.

Suffolk County Council has used some of their grant from the fund to install cycle parking bays in Stowmarket and Sudbury.

In Stowmarket the parking bays have been installed outside the John Peel Centre, at the Stricklands Road junction with Ipswich Road and on Wilkes Way.

In Sudbury the parking bays have been installed on North Street near the Masonic Hall, King Street near to Rees Café and by the Belle Vue artwork.

The locations of the cycle parking were selected in partnership with Sudbury Town Council and Stowmarket Town Council.

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

"Many residents in Suffolk have embraced cycling during the pandemic, so we have a real opportunity here to make cycling safer and easier not just for this unprecedented period, but for the future as well to reap the associated health and pollution benefits

"To get more people cycling long term we need to ensure there are enough places for them to safely store their bikes, so I am really pleased it is now easier to access Stowmarket and Sudbury town centres on two wheels.

In line with the Department for Transport guidelines, the county council is delivering a raft of measures across the county to encourage active travel. This includes alterations to road layouts and providing temporary footpaths and cycle lanes, as well as offering free family cycling sessions and bike maintenance vouchers.

To keep up to date with how Suffolk County Council is making it safer and easier for residents to choose active travel – walking and cycling – visit [suffolk.gov.uk/walkingandcycling](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/walkingandcycling)

## **Council leader hails action on the environment, roads and housing, despite COVID-19 challenges**

COVID-19 has not stopped Suffolk County Council from protecting Suffolk's natural environment the council's leader said on 22 October.

In his third executive statement to the council, Councillor Matthew Hicks thanked the authority's staff and councillors who have taken to kitchen tables, spare rooms and

bedside tables to keep council services running and protect Suffolk's most vulnerable adults and children throughout the pandemic.

**Speaking at the meeting, Councillor Hicks said:**

"I want to pay special thanks to our outstanding staff, who time and time again have gone above and beyond expectations to support those who have been affected by the pandemic, and to ensure people across Suffolk get the tailored support and service they need to stay safe and well.

"Many staff, including our carers, social workers, foster families and firefighters, to name a few, continued to work at the height of the pandemic, facing exceptionally difficult conditions, delivering the same quality of care, compassion and professionalism, despite such uncertainty.

"I know I speak for every county councillor when I say we are exceptionally grateful to all our staff at this time."

He recognised that despite the challenges, the council has:

- Created new school places for children with special education needs, with 210 young people attending new, special units at schools in East Suffolk, West Suffolk and Ipswich.
- Made it possible for 98% of premises in Suffolk to access superfast broadband, with a plan for the remaining 2%.
- Maintained a stable budget, despite the increasing demand and cost of running public services.
- Agreed a new model for Family Hubs in Suffolk, releasing funding tied up in buildings to reinvest in more staff to help people.
- Fought for Suffolk's interests in the development of Sizewell C and other energy projects.
- Secured the funding and appointed a company to build the Gull Wing bridge in Lowestoft.

**On the council's work to protect the environment and reduce carbon emissions, Councillor Hicks said:**

"I am extremely pleased with the progress and momentum we have put into strengthening our environmental credentials this year, as part of our commitment towards addressing the climate emergency which we declared last March.

"I am also very pleased to confirm that the first three Suffolk 2020 projects have been launched to support local communities and focus on key environmental priorities. We are increasing the number of electric vehicle charging points offered across the county, with particular focus on rural areas. It is my hope that the, at least, 100 additional charging points will give Suffolk one of the best, if not the best, rural charging networks.

We are creating a series of 'quiet lanes', reducing the number of motorised vehicles using certain single track lanes, and have committed funding to plant at least 100,000 trees in the next 18 months, improve our maintenance of trees and hedgerows, and manage our roadside verges better for wildlife."

On the council's major programme to resurface a quarter of Suffolk's road network within four years, he said:

"In August this year, a fresh new road surface was laid in Eye as we accomplished our commitment to surface 1000 miles of Suffolk's road over a four-year period. A commitment we have delivered ahead of time."

On housing, he said:

"As the third largest landowner in Suffolk, the county council is in a prime position to support the growing local need for new housing and the supporting community infrastructure. I am really pleased that a great deal has been achieved during the last 18 months towards meeting my commitment to explore potential development opportunities and generate income for the county council.

"As an illustration of what's to come, we have now handed over the site at Chilton Woods near Sudbury to a commercial house builder to develop 1150 homes over the next 10 years, offering numerous community benefits including new school provision, new sports facilities and community woodland with children's play areas. We will invest the income from this site in a range of council services.

"Two further large schemes are currently being planned in North Lowestoft and West Mildenhall with consultations planned for later this year. These schemes will include over 2,000 new homes, with new schools and an array of supporting community facilities."

Building on work in the past 18 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.

**Ending his executive statement, Councillor Hicks said:**

"My passion and my commitment remain as strong as ever. My approach is centred on the principles of listening, collaborating, being open and transparent, being supportive, and taking a pragmatic view when it comes to taking tough decisions."

[Read Councillor Matthew Hicks' speech in full \(PDF, 113KB\)](#)

[See the speech delivered on the recording of the October 2020 meeting of Suffolk County Council.](#) The full speech starts at 01:23:00.

## **Adopt East launches**

14 October marked the launch of Adopt East, a regional adoption agency which has been established to recruit adopters across the East of England.

Adopt East will work across local authorities in Southend, Thurrock, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Hertfordshire, Bedford and Luton to find families for children who are waiting to find their forever home. Adoptionplus, Barnardo's, and Adoption UK are also part of the partnership.

The Adopt East alliance will deliver the highest quality adoption service to children and families throughout the region by bringing together the expertise and skills of all its partners.

The scale of the organisation means that adopters will have access to a larger number of children waiting for adoption. This will help partners to match children with the right family for them, at the earliest opportunity.

Adopt East is committed to providing good quality adoption support services to support all families with their adoption journey.

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

“In Suffolk we have been working hard to find loving and supportive families for children waiting for adoption. These children have not always had the best start in life and really do deserve to find their forever homes. The adoption process can seem daunting for families, but SCC have a wealth of experience and are there to support families every step of the way. Adopt East is great news for Suffolk as it will mean we can draw on expertise and skills from across the whole region to help us to find the right families for our children.”

To find out more about the Adopt East Alliance [visit the Adopt East website](#).

## **Councils ready with Test and Trace Support Payment for most vulnerable**

Councils in Suffolk are helping administer a Government scheme to provide financial help to those on low incomes and benefits who must self-isolate.

Details about the Test and Trace Support Payments, and how to apply, can be found on District and Borough Council websites.

If you have been contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate, you are under a legal obligation to do so, and could be eligible for a £500 Test and Trace Support Payment.

Those who are eligible will need to meet all the following criteria:

- Told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.
- Employed or self-employed.
- Cannot work from home and will lose income as a result.
- Currently receiving at least one of the following benefits: Universal Credit; Working Tax Credit; income-based Employment and Support Allowance; income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance; Income Support; Housing Benefit; and/or Pension Credit.

Applications are made for one person only and any further applications within the same household must be made by each individual. Payments are subject to tax but not National Insurance. People must make the application within 14 days of the last day of their NHS test and trace self-isolation period.

Applicants should ensure that they have the below information available before starting the application:

- NI number
- 8-digit test and trace ID number
- Recent bank statement, proof of self-employment, or wage slips.

If asked to do so by Test and Trace, you must self-isolate by law. Failure to do so will mean you are no longer eligible for the payment and steps will be made to recover the funds.

Please visit the [NHS Test and Trace](#) website for more details of the NHS Test and Trace self-isolation requirements for those:

- Testing [positive](#)
- Those who have been in [contact with someone](#) who has tested positive and now has been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

Visit your District or Borough Council websites for details on how to apply for the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment:

- Babergh District Council [www.babergh.gov.uk](http://www.babergh.gov.uk)
- East Suffolk Council [www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk)
- Ipswich Borough Council [www.ipswich.gov.uk](http://www.ipswich.gov.uk)
- Mid Suffolk District Councils [www.midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk)
- West Suffolk Council [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk)

## Support to help businesses prevent spread of COVID-19

From 12 October, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), working with Suffolk councils, has been speaking to businesses to offer guidance and advice on how they can manage risk and protect workers, customers, and visitors from COVID-19.

All of Suffolk's district councils, working together as part of the Suffolk Resilience Forum's Safer Places Group, have agreed to work in partnership with the HSE to enable them to support thousands of businesses more quickly through a targeted approach.

Both the HSE and the councils are also working alongside local public health authorities to support the understanding of any patterns in confirmed coronavirus cases in the area.

### **David Collinson, the lead for the Safer Places Group said:**

"We are talking to local businesses and inspecting sites in and around Suffolk to understand how they are managing risks in line with their specific business activity. Many will already have the correct measures in place, but equally others may welcome a bit more help to ensure they are doing all that they can to protect their staff, customers, visitors and ultimately their business.

"Becoming COVID-secure must be a priority for all businesses in Suffolk. It is a legal duty for businesses to protect their workers and others from harm and this includes taking reasonable steps to control the risk and protect people from coronavirus. This does require adjustments and we advise employers to work with their employees when implementing changes, to help increase confidence with workers, customers and the local community.

“All businesses are in scope for spot checks, which means businesses of any size, in any sector, can receive an unannounced check to ensure they are COVID-secure. By making sure that businesses have measures in place to manage the risks, we can benefit the health of the local community, as well as support the local and national UK economy.”

The checks, which will be by telephone but with follow-up visits where required, will see the HSE give advice and guidance to manage risk and protect workers, customers, and visitors. Where some businesses are not managing this, action will be taken. This can range from the provision of specific advice, to issuing enforcement notices, to stopping certain work practices until they are made safe and, where businesses fail to comply, to prosecution.

For further information on how to manage the risk of coronavirus in different business sectors please read the Government guidance at [www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19).

## **The Hold welcomes first visitors and opens inaugural exhibition**

Monday 28 September saw the public able to access The Hold, Suffolk’s flagship new heritage facility on Ipswich Waterfront.

This versatile new building will be the permanent home of the Suffolk Archives Ipswich branch and is shared with the University of Suffolk, who have dedicated teaching spaces within the building.

The creation of The Hold, and its associated countywide programme of events and activities, has been made possible thanks to a grant of £10.3m from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and further funding support from other national organisations and local Suffolk heritage groups.

The public are currently able to access ‘front of house’ areas, including archive inspired displays, the café, shop, and toilets, including a new Changing Places facility.

First year History students were some of the first to try out the new facilities, with lectures and seminars beginning in the new facilities. The main area, known as ‘The Street’, as well as the café and shop, enjoyed a steady trickle of curious visitors and passers-by.

On 2 October, the long-awaited Exhibition Gallery also opened to visitors. The inaugural exhibition, *Global Events: Suffolk Stories*, examines how Suffolk has responded as a community to key global events over the past 100 years.

It focuses on the arrival of American service people during the ‘Friendly Invasion’ of World War Two, as well as the rising tensions and public messaging of the Cold War period, and the collective community response to the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020.

Through original archival documents, photos, music, and film, visitors will be able to explore the similarities and differences between these three global events and understand how Suffolk has changed as a result.

In order to manage numbers and ensure everyone's safety, all visitors are asked to reserve a time slot and purchase tickets in advance, via the exhibition section of the Suffolk Archives website: [www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/exhibitions/global-events-suffolk-stories/](http://www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/exhibitions/global-events-suffolk-stories/).

**Councillor Paul West, Portfolio Holder for Heritage, said:**

“Although there is still some way to go before The Hold is fully ready, it is very exciting that the major milestone of public access has been reached. We hope people are excited to see how this major development has progressed, and we encourage visitors to take advantage of the building being open to come and see the progress so far.

“The archives service has been waiting a long time for the ability to display documents and artefacts in a way that is accessible to the wider public and we are very pleased to have our inaugural exhibition up and running so we can get this next crucial phase of our work under way.”

Enabling public access to certain areas of the building is stage one of a gradual and phased approach to bringing The Hold fully into use, trialling public access and testing out the new COVID-19 requirements that have been put into place to ensure a safe and secure environment.

The move of the local studies and strongroom collections was delayed by the lockdown earlier this year - just two weeks into the Ipswich branch closure and the move preparations. Work is now under way once more but is likely to take until at least the end of this calendar year to complete the move.

It is expected that the official opening of The Hold will take place early next year once the building is fully completed, and all the archives have been moved into the strongrooms.

The public areas of The Hold are open from 9.30am - 4.30pm, Monday to Friday (café open from 8.30am), and 10am - 4pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Visitors are very welcome to discover the displays, enjoy a spot of lunch, browse the gift shop or, with booked tickets, explore the exhibition.