

Parish Report – April 2021

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After serving as you County Councillor for the last 21 years and attending well over 2000 Parish Council meetings it is now time to say farewell. Thanks for your company and friendship it has been a pleasure to serve you all. I hope I have been some assistance over the years I know it has been frustrating at times trying to deal with the mountains of bureaucracy that seems to have come into place but I think the successes outweigh the disappointments. It will seem strange having most of my evenings free but I expect I will soon find different ways to fill them.

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May I wish you all the very best for the future, it may well be farewell but not goodbye as I expect I will still see many of you when I am out and about in whatever new roles come my way.

LDGI Group motion on carer's database receives unanimous support

On March 18th the LDGI Group presented a motion designed to improve the county's support offer for carers. The motion will see the Council working with Suffolk Family Carers to create an opt-in register for carers, who will be offered increased support including advice, signposting to key services, and the option to be consulted on key policies affecting carers. The motion received unanimous support from the Council.

Automatic number plate recognition camera project (ANPR)

Suffolk County Council is working with the police to run a 2-year ANPR camera trial in speeding hot spots across the county. The cameras will be used to help detect and deter speeding offences that have been highlighted in towns and villages and educate drivers on the importance of road safety.

An ANPR camera will be installed at a site where it has been identified by a local council, with support from their county councillor, that there is a problem with speeding and/or rat-running on roads with a 20 or 30mph speed limit. The devices will be moved between sites and will remain in situ for up to one week per site. There is the option of extending this period if needed.

An ANPR device identifies a speeding vehicle by capturing an image of the number plate of the vehicle. Data will then be shared with the Police and the County Council. The County Council will write to the owner of the vehicle on behalf of both parties explaining that their vehicle has been registered as speeding. Repeat offences at a particular location could prompt the deployment of SafeCam (the Police's enforcement team) and the issuing of fines to those who breach the speed limit.

Freeport East bid successful

A combined bid from Suffolk and north Essex for a designated freeport has been approved by the Government. Freeport East will have sites at Felixstowe, Harwich and Stowmarket, and could create 13500 jobs over the next ten years. Trade would increase by an estimated 1.3 million tonnes and £66.4m gross value added.

The freeport will operate its own customs zone, allowing businesses to import goods without paying duties until the goods are exported again. This allows for raw materials to be imported, refined into a finish product, and then exported again while only paying one round of customs duties.

Suffolk Inclusive Growth Investment Fund

As part of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Suffolk Public Sector Leaders have established the £1.65m Suffolk Inclusive Growth Investment Fund (SIGIF), with contributions from Suffolk's pooled business rates and New Anglia LEP.

The fund is open to projects which address the significant impact of Covid-19 on Suffolk's businesses, employees, and the local economy. Projects must be sponsored by either a Suffolk local authority and / or the New Anglia LEP. Thus far £367,292 of the money has been allocated to town centre improvements in Babergh and Mid Suffolk, a multi-media improvement hub in Ipswich, and flexible retail 'pods' in West Suffolk. There will be a rolling call for projects with decisions made quarterly (Dec / Mar / June / Sept) – the aim is to have all funding committed by 30 September 2021.

£500k for highways improvements near schools

Locations around schools across Suffolk have benefitted from new road markings and signs, following an investment of £500,000 from the Highways Investment Fund (HIF). The extra funding has been focussed on improving the safety of pupils and parents travelling to and from school, refreshing lines and cleaning and repairing signs in and around school zones. 146 locations were identified as requiring new signs to replace those that were damaged or missing. Additionally, 218 areas with faded road markings are receiving a refresh.

Quiet Lanes scheme launched

SCC has announced new support for the Quiet Lanes scheme, which will cover over 300 miles of lanes in Suffolk. Quiet Lanes is a nationally recognised designation for narrow, rural roads which can be shared with walkers, horse riders, cyclists and other road users. It encourages drivers to take their time when they see the Quiet Lanes sign, to allow for all road users to travel with greater safety. The initiative has another 50 proposed lanes going through planning for April 2021. A new website allowing residents to find the Quiet Lanes near them will be available in May.

New sustainable travel website launched

The Way To Go Suffolk provides information and advice on walking and cycling, public transport, car sharing and electric vehicles. The new website will feature up to date information on how people can travel more sustainably across the county, and will also include support and guidance on how to write a Travel Plan for a Business, School or a New Housing Development.

SCC plants 10,000 trees in five months

100,000 trees have been planted in just five months, since Suffolk County Council committed £228,000 from its Suffolk 2020 Fund to protect biodiversity. The council has been working closely with the farm tenants, The Woodland Trust, Giles Landscapes, The Suffolk Tree Warden Initiative and local communities to ensure that a total of 102,586 saplings have been distributed and planted in the best possible places available over this last winter.