

COUNTY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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State of the County – The County Council administration is entering its third year in May led by Cllr Mathew Hicks and Deputy Cllr Mary Evans, who is also Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services. Nicola Beach continues her role as Chief Executive. For most of the year the Council has focussed on its ‘day job’, investing in roads, infrastructure and improving children’s services and social care. However, in February it became clear that the Coronavirus pandemic required serious attention and has since escalated into a National emergency. Council offices and functions are not open for normal business, meetings are through social media and council decision making is suspended. Behind the scenes council officers and staff have redeployed into a wide variety of roles to both maintain basic services and engage with the health service, charities, communities and partners to take whatever steps are necessary to protect public health. As I write the length of time this will take is uncertain. Highlights from Council events over the past year can be found at <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/>.

Major Road Improvements – Preliminary work on the A140 twin roundabouts near Eye has been completed and construction was scheduled to start in April, but this has now been postponed and is likely to commence in the summer.

The Council consulted on options for constructing an Ipswich Northern Fringe Road, however the project was not supported sufficiently strongly to enable it to be taken forward. Separate work is due to commence on improving traffic flow around and within Ipswich when conditions allow.

Highways - Suffolk Highways continues to operate from service centres at Rougham, Halesworth and Ipswich and has made a range of changes and improvements to its operations. The web-based reporting system is now widely used for road and drainage issues - as a reminder:

Report a defect <https://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/>

To check on area roadworks - <https://roadworks.org/>

‘The Hold’ Historic Records Centre, Ipswich - ‘The Hold’ at Ipswich Waterfront building main build was completed in 2019 and it will be populated and open for business later this year, the official opening having been delayed by corona virus issues. The Suffolk Record Office can consequently claim the Archive Service Accreditation quality standard which allows records of national importance to be retained in the County in the long term.

Civil Parking Enforcement – The County Council, took over responsibility for CPE as of January 2020 and delegated this authority to district and boroughs. In Mid Suffolk officers commence patrols as of April 2020 and will enforce against parking regulation violations. Judgement based parking problems such as at dangerous locations or use of pavements and verges remain matters for the police.

Special Education Needs & Disabilities – In December Suffolk County Council announced details of investment in new SEND units planned to attach to mainstream schools following a thorough evaluation process last summer. As well as Ipswich, new interaction Key Stage 3/4 Units will be set up at Ixworth School and Newmarket Academy. Completion of these units will enable more children with SEND to receive education and assistance in County.

Planning and Major Projects – With East Suffolk, Suffolk County Council welcomed EDF Energy's decision to delay their Sizewell C application for a Development Consent Order to construct Sizewell C. This project has not received unequivocal support from the Council which has concerns about the effects of construction and on the degree of project coordination between Sizewell and other nationally significant infrastructure projects in East Suffolk, including offshore wind farms and their associated on shore connectivity requirements.

Rail Improvements – Suffolk County Council is working with Norfolk to obtain funding for key upgrades at **Ely station** to improve the Cambridge line. The Ely Taskforce anticipate that a Strategic Outline Business Case (presentation of rail options) will be submitted to Government this summer.

A Preliminary Strategic Outline Business Case has received funding from the East West Rail Consortium for a new rail link between **Ipswich/Norwich and Cambridge**. Suffolk County Council is leading the business case for eventual passenger and secondary freight through to Oxford.

New Stadler trains are now operating on all routes across the Suffolk network. Suffolk County Council is actively engaging with Greater Anglia and Network Rail to discuss some problems encountered early in 2020 with the operation of passenger services on the Suffolk lines.

Station Improvements - Two 'Access for All' bids relating to improvements at Bury St Edmunds and Needham Market Stations have been successful. Suffolk County Council lobbied for Greater Anglia to make these bids to DfT along with other partners.

If you have comments or questions about this report or any other matter, please get in touch as I would like to hear your views.

Thank you for your support and participation over the past year.