

Councillor Bobby Bennett  
County Councillor for Clare Division  
07813551959  
[Bobby.bennett@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Bobby.bennett@suffolk.gov.uk)

**Suffolk County Council Report**  
**June 2023**

Dear All,

Please see below an update for June 2023.

Following feedback, I will be publishing more updates on my facebook page, please follow me at Bobbybennett4clare or follow this link [Facebook](#)

Last month we held our Annual General Meeting where it was announced that Highways and SEND will be areas of particular focus for Suffolk County Council over the next two years. There was also reaffirmed commitments to deliver:

- The Gull Wing bridge in Lowestoft
- New homes on SCC land
- Further help for Ukrainian refugees
- A new highways contractor Milestone
- Hundreds more EV charging points
- A £20 million flood prevention and footpath improvement programme.

To coincide with the annual general meeting, Suffolk County Council has published a list of its top 50 achievements since 2021, including:

- Our Cassius Digital Care work and innovation is going from strength to strength
- An extra £2.5m for mental health services
- 300 miles of road now designated as quiet lanes
- New household waste sites in Ipswich and Haverhill
- £13 million in funding secured for active travel
- 3,000 environmentally friendly homes being delivered on SCC land
- 250,000 trees planted
- Over 100 new EV charging points
- A new Highways Contract with Milestone starting in October
- 43,400 streetlights converted to LED.

As always please email or telephone me if you have an issue that you would like my help with and please do not hesitate to share my contact details with anyone if they need to get in touch.

Kind regards

Bobby Bennett  
[Bobby.bennett@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Bobby.bennett@suffolk.gov.uk)  
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## **Feedback about rural transport in Suffolk 2023**

We are looking for feedback from people who use rural transport services in Suffolk. Your feedback will help shape and develop the future of our services.

Have your say. **Survey will close 18 June 2023.**

The survey will be advertised on social media and Suffolkonboard. Please forward to anyone you think may like to participate.

Thank you.  
Passenger Transport Team  
Suffolk County Council

[PTUTRT@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:PTUTRT@suffolk.gov.uk)



## **Fire service urges people to stay safe this summer**

After a record-breaking number of wildfires last year, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is asking everyone to be fire safety aware as the weather gets warmer.

Firefighters from the service responded to more than 500 fires in the open, which includes woodland, heaths, farmland, and fields, during July and August 2022. By comparison, there were only around 100 fires in the open in Suffolk during the same period in 2021.

Some of the large-scale incidents included a field fire at Knodishall, a blaze at Barham involving 45 acres of crop, and a forest fire near Thetford.

A significant increase in fires due to the extreme temperatures experienced last summer also resulted in the service declaring a major incident for the first time in decades on Tuesday, 19 July 2022.

To help avoid a similar spike in demand this year, the service is asking everyone to play their part in reducing the risk of fires. During hot and dry weather, people are encouraged to:

- Put litter in the bin when out and about.
- Avoid barbecues and campfires in public open spaces.
- Ensure that any cigarettes are totally put out and disposed of properly.
- Pick up any glass items instead of leaving them lying around after a picnic.
- Report any fires in the countryside immediately by calling 999.

Further advice on staying fire safe during the summer months can be found on [Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's website](#), with guidance also being shared regularly on their [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) channels.

### **Further support for Homes for Ukraine Sponsors**

Suffolk County Council will provide additional financial support for Homes for Ukraine Sponsors who are hosting Ukrainian guests, up to a value of £900.

From April, Sponsors who have hosted guests for a minimum of six months, will receive an additional £150 each month from the council.

This is in addition to the £350 monthly thank you payment Sponsors receive from the UK Government, whilst their guests are staying with them.

The Government's monthly payment rises to £500 after their guests have been in the UK for 12 months, at which point the council's additional payment will stop.

### **Suffolk residents offered chance to name new fire engines**

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service will launch its 'Name the Fire Engine' competition at next week's Suffolk Show, enabling the public to name a fleet of new life-saving vehicles.

Nine new fire engines are set to be ready for use by the end of 2023, following Suffolk County Council allocating over £5.3m in its 2023/24 budget to replace some of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's current vehicle fleet with state-of-the-art alternatives.

To help celebrate the service's 75th anniversary this year, Suffolk residents are invited to play an important part in shaping its future by naming the new engines in a competition due to officially launch at the Suffolk Show next week, on 31 May and 1 June.

Entry forms will be available at Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's stand within the Emergency Services Zone of the event held at Trinity Park, Ipswich, and people can also enter online by visiting the service's Twitter and Facebook pages.

After the competition closes on Friday, June 30, a judging panel consisting of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's senior fire staff and Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, Councillor Andrew Reid, will decide on the winning names.

### **£10 million new funding to fix residential roads**

Local road surfaces in villages and residential areas in Suffolk should be blitzed as part of a new £10 million programme, Suffolk County Council has announced today.

The extra funding will nearly double Suffolk Highways' £11 million annual roads maintenance budget, but be targeted at smaller residential streets which are typically maintained less frequently than busier A and B roads.

The announcement was made by Suffolk County Council's leader, Cllr Matthew Hicks, at the authority's annual general meeting today.

The funding is subject to a formal Cabinet decision which will follow later this year.

At the same time, Cllr Hicks also reiterated the council's commitment to improving services for children with special educational needs and disabilities, including £55 million to create 1,275 new SEND school places by 2025.

### **Work begins on new Haverhill Recycling Centre**

Construction of a new £2 million recycling centre for Haverhill has begun.

DXI Regeneration LTD has been awarded the construction contract to build the new site on behalf of Suffolk County Council and working in partnership with FCC Environment after landowner negotiations were successfully concluded.

The new centre, which should be completed in early 2024, will be built within the current Waste Transfer Station in Homefield Road and will replace the current facility in Chalkstone Way.

The Waste Transfer Station is operated by FCC Environment, the council's partner which manages all of Suffolk's 11 recycling centres.

The new centre will feature:

- A raised platform giving visitors an elevated position from which to safely dispose of waste - removing the need for steps
- An easy-to-use layout allowing customers to access clearly marked recycling bays
- No need to close the facility to replace full containers
- Improved accessibility and increased capacity
- Greater separation between public vehicles and larger vehicles
- Queuing capacity within the site and better access from the public highway compared to the Chalkstone Way site.

The replacement recycling centre will meet the needs created by forecasted housing growth in the area and address growing demand at Chalkstone Way

The waste transfer station – which takes waste collected locally and bulks it for onward reprocessing – will continue to operate at Homefield Road alongside the new recycling centre.

### **Suffolk residents urged to #ShakeItOut and keep recycling clean, dry and loose**

A campaign encouraging people in Suffolk to shake out their bags and not to put them in their recycling bins is underway.

The #ShakeItOut campaign has been launched by the Suffolk Waste Partnership to encourage households in Suffolk to help improve recycling rates across the county by making sure black bin bags and other plastic sacks are not thrown in with recyclable materials.

The Partnership, made up of the county, district and borough councils in Suffolk, says more than a quarter (26%) of the materials in Suffolk's recycling bins in 2022/23 were not able to be processed as they were spoiled.

Items that contributed to spoiled recycling collections included:

- Materials that were not clean and dry, or contained food and drink residue
- Rubbish sacks or plastic bags containing recycling
- Non-recyclable items, such as nappies and food waste

Plastic bags and rubbish sacks are a particular problem – recycling handlers can't see what's inside them and they are often full of rubbish or other non-recyclable items.

This means bags are removed during the sorting process to avoid spoiling other good recycling. Any removed bags are then sent for disposal.

The Suffolk Waste Partnership has also released a new animation as part of the wider campaign to promote the #ShakeltOut message.

The animation aims to remind households across the country of the simple measures they can take to help improve recycling: <https://youtu.be/iBKOUFWxXdQ>

To find out more about the #ShakeltOut campaign and for more information on recycling in Suffolk, visit [www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk/shake-it-out](http://www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk/shake-it-out)

### **Competition to create virtual reality films for people with dementia**

Suffolk County Council is supporting Dementia Action Week with a competition to produce virtual reality films for people living with the condition.

The competition is part of a nationwide initiative called VR Challenge UK and will be launched at a virtual event in the Metaverse on Thursday.

It is being run by Suffolk County Council in conjunction with Spark Emerging Technologies Ltd as part of the council's recently awarded contract to develop a new, bespoke virtual reality (VR) app to deliver therapeutic experiences to people living with dementia across all Suffolk care settings.

Young people and adults from across the UK will be invited to get involved with this opportunity to create meaningful and stimulating VR films for people living with dementia.

The competition is open to amateurs and professionals, as well as students from further and higher education, carers, and people living with dementia themselves.

It is hoped nursing and residential homes, day centres, as well as Further Education Colleges, universities and charitable organisations from across the UK will grab this opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of people with dementia.

The free Metaverse launch event will open from 12.30pm on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May for a 1pm start, and can be experienced with a VR headset as well as via any web-browser.

To register for the event, visit <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SFVB7VB> where you will then receive the link you need to join.

You are advised to allow plenty of time before the start of the event at 1pm to choose an avatar and acclimatise to the 3D virtual surroundings.

In the first round of the competition, entrants will simply be invited to submit a brief storyboard of their proposed film for one of the following six categories:

- Suffolk

- Nostalgia
- Nature
- Leisure
- Computer Generated Imagery (CGI)
- Carer content

The deadline for the submission of storyboards will be Friday 30<sup>th</sup> June. Shortlisted candidates will then proceed to the second round of the competition where they will receive exclusive support from Spark to go on and plan, film and produce their proposed films by the deadline of Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> August.

The final VR films will be evaluated by people living with dementia before being judged by a specialist panel. The winning films will be showcased at an awards ceremony in mid-October. Winners in each tier of the competition will have the opportunity of choosing from three prizes: a brand new Insta360 X3 360 camera kit; a top of the range Oculus Meta Quest 2 VR Headset; or to gift a year's subscription to the new VR app with all the required hardware to a care setting of their choice. More details can be found on the competition website at <https://vrchallengeuk.co.uk>

### **Library services protected as Suffolk County Council approves additional funding**

Suffolk County Council has today underlined its commitment to library services in Suffolk, as it approved plans to increase its funding to Suffolk Libraries, to enable the service to continue operating at its current level, until the end of the contract in July 2024.

Suffolk Libraries currently receives £5.9m per year from Suffolk County Council, however the service is forecasting a deficit of £60k per month from April 2023. The service has cited increases in service costs, a reduction in income opportunities following the Coronavirus Pandemic and rising inflation, as causes of the deficit.

This means it is no longer possible for the service to continue operating at its current level of service, within its current contract value.

At today's meeting of Suffolk County Council's Cabinet, the council has approved plans to absorb this cost pressure, funding Suffolk Libraries an additional £720k per year, through to the end of the current contract in July 2024. This additional funding will support Suffolk Libraries to continue delivering its highly valued services to Suffolk Residents.

The council has previously made a commitment to continue to support Suffolk Libraries. At Suffolk County Council's full council meeting in February, the council agreed to fund an additional £250k in the first quarter of the 2023/24 financial year to help with the increased costs Highlighted by Suffolk Libraries. This £250k for the first quarter of the year is included within the overall figure agreed by Cabinet today, of an additional £720k for the 2023/24 financial year.

The council also supported Suffolk Libraries with £155,000 for initiatives to support residents with Cost of Living and support for Digital Inclusion in the 2022/23 financial year.

In addition, the Council continues to successfully access Section 106 funding to support ongoing building developments required to ensure buildings are fit for purpose and support service delivery.