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Suffolk County Council Report February 2022

SUFFOLK INVITED TO NEGOTIATE HISTORIC NEW ‘COUNTY DEAL’

- **Suffolk one of nine counties invited to negotiate a groundbreaking devolution deal**
- **Move will give local leaders more control over areas such as transport, skills and infrastructure**
- **Part of the largest devolution of power from Whitehall to local leaders in modern times**
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Local leaders in Suffolk are set to get more control over areas such as transport, infrastructure and skills in the largest devolution of power from Whitehall to local leaders in England in modern times, the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities announced today.

Suffolk is one of nine county areas invited to negotiate a historic ‘County Deal’ - a new devolution model that, subject to negotiations, will give local leaders more powers to make decisions for their communities for the first time – part of a ‘devolution revolution’ across England.

This could include greater control over buses and trains, to deliver London style public transport or skills programmes which focus on local the needs of local people to help them access the high quality, high paying jobs of the future.

The plans are set out in the Levelling Up White Paper, published today, which outlines our blueprint for driving up living standards and improving opportunity and prosperity across the country.

WARM HOMES SUFFOLK FUND TO HEAT UP COLD HOMES THIS WINTER

Suffolk residents who are struggling to keep their homes warm can contact a new project which offers funding and free advice at www.warmhomessuffolk.org. Suffolk’s councils have joined together to establish Warm Homes Suffolk. The team will be on hand to offer expert advice on reducing energy usage and to identify benefits that residents may be entitled to, to help keep their homes warm. The work of Warm Homes Suffolk will also help the county towards its target of Net Zero by 2030, as the project aims to better insulate homes and provide more efficient heating, meaning less carbon is released into the atmosphere. A successful bid was made to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for funding worth £2.7 million of funding to run Warm Homes Suffolk - The Warm Feeling Fund. This is part of the Government’s Local Authority Delivery phase two (LAD2) scheme, designed to improve the energy efficiency of Britain’s homes. The bid was led by Suffolk County Council, on behalf of all councils in the county.

For eligible residents, the scheme can offer a range of home upgrades, including cavity, loft and external insulation, installation of solar photovoltaic systems and switching central heating to more efficient low carbon heat pumps. The scheme is available to homeowners, private tenants and landlords. There are some conditions to meet before being able to access the funding which is aimed at residents who are: ● earning under £30,000 per annum ● currently receiving benefits (or think they may be eligible) ● living in homes with a low energy rating.

If you are a landlord with tenants and property that meet the above criteria, then you could receive a subsidy of up to two-thirds for work which improves the energy efficiency of your property, up to the value of £5,000.

More details and further information about eligibility can be found in the on the Warm Home Suffolk website www.warmhomesuffolk.org, or by calling 03456 037 686. Lines are open Monday to Friday between 9am and 4pm

COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT TO FURTHER ENHANCING SUFFOLK'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Suffolk County Council will be doing even more for the county's natural environment, as it confirms plans to enhance the biodiversity of at least 30% of its land and assets, by 2030.

This means it will be progressing its work around managing highway trees, planting more hedgerow, nature-based flood management solutions, roadside nature reserves, and much more. The council already planted 100,000 trees last year, and is on course to plant another 100,000 this year. It has also put in around 20 kilometres of mixed species hedgerow.

The policy's ambitions stretch across the whole organisation, from looking at the impact of street lighting, to how it procures goods and services.

One example of the positive changes that the council will make, is to stop using Glyphosate in all highway maintenance operations. This will happen as soon as it is able to deploy a suitable alternative, and at the latest by 2023 for routine weed treatment programmes. The council will work with other local authorities, both locally and through the Local Government Association, in reaching this goal as soon as possible.

The proposals were agreed at Suffolk County Council's Cabinet meeting on 1 February 2022, following the work undertaken by the Policy Development Panel which was set up in July 2021.

RESIDENTS URGED TO SUPPORT SUFFOLK SPECTACULAR

Suffolk is set to stage a host of exciting Jubilee celebrations during 2022 – bringing the county’s communities together to mark this momentous milestone.

Her Majesty The Queen will become the first ever British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, on Sunday 6 February, after 70 years of service.

The unprecedented anniversary will be celebrated throughout the year, with a four-day UK bank holiday taking place from Thursday 2 to Sunday 5 June to enable people to commemorate the occasion.

Plans are already in place for a Festival of Suffolk – the county’s biggest ever community event. This year-long spectacular will incorporate much-loved existing events, such as the Suffolk Show, alongside dedicated Jubilee celebrations, including a race day and torch relay. Details on the latest line-up can be found at: www.festivalofsuffolk.org/.

A highlight of the festival is the Big Jubilee Lunch, set to take place on Sunday 5 June. The initiative encourages people to come together and celebrate, either by hosting their own street party or simply enjoying a cup of tea with a neighbour.

To help facilitate this, Suffolk County Council has set up a dedicated website: www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent and will waive its fees for any road closures for events on this day, as well as providing free assistance with traffic management for all applications received before 11pm on Sunday 27 March.

The council is also supporting the Queen’s Green Canopy in Suffolk, which aims to plant over 775,000 new trees in 2022 – one for each resident in the county.

Almost a quarter of a million trees have been planted to date, with everyone urged to visit suffolk-lieutenancy.org.uk/queens-green-canopy/ and find out how they can ‘Plant a Tree for the Jubilee’ either directly or via one of the many organisations taking part in the scheme.

In addition to using the Jubilee as an opportunity to create a greener county, a focus on health and wellbeing will also form an important part of the celebrations, with plans for themed parkruns across Suffolk and a County Community Games tournament currently in development.

While primary school children across the county can participate in a Time Capsule Competition – enabling them to showcase how their school, students, teachers, and community have changed over the Queen’s reign.

Schools have until 11 February to express their interest in the competition: www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/education/time-capsule/ and must submit their entry by 25 March, ahead of the winner being announced on 1 April.

The winning school will get the opportunity to visit The Hold – home to 900 years' worth of Suffolk's history – which will also house their time capsule entry to preserve it for future generations to enjoy.

“The Festival of Suffolk provides the perfect opportunity for us to spend time with loved ones or visit our favourite places again, and I'd encourage everyone to take part in what's set to be a splendid series of events for our county.”

Businesses can also benefit from the occasion by attending the Suffolk Business Expo, scheduled for Monday 20 June to Friday 1 July. The event – organised by Suffolk County Council, the Suffolk Chamber, and other partners – aims to showcase Suffolk businesses, whilst helping them to capitalise on the expected increase in tourists to the county and bounce back from Covid-19.

SNIFFER DOG HELPS SECURE SUCCESSFUL SEIZURE FOR SUFFOLK TRADING STANDARDS

A significant amount of illegal tobacco was seized in Felixstowe this month as agencies continue to protect consumers by cracking down on this serious crime.

Suffolk Trading Standards worked closely with the police and Wagtail UK Limited on the operation, which saw undercover officers purchase illegal tobacco from a premises in the town centre of Felixstowe before carrying out a raid.

This resulted in Billy the sniffer dog discovering 8,180 cigarettes and 7,450g of hand-rolled tobacco, with this being detained by Suffolk Trading Standards for further assessment as part of their ongoing investigation into the retailer.

Officers believe that all items were illegally imported into the UK, without duty being paid, meaning that they do not comply with legal packaging and labelling requirements and could prove dangerous to the public.

Illegal tobacco costs the UK economy around £2 billion each year in lost taxation – depriving vital public services, such as the NHS, of much-needed revenue.

It also provides a cheap source of tobacco for children and young people, encouraging them to take up an unhealthy habit which could last a lifetime.