

Cllr Elaine Bryce

Carlford Division

March 2023 Parish Council Report

Now that the days are slowly beginning to draw out, hopefully we're now over the worst of the winter weather. Indeed signs of spring are beginning to emerge across Carlford, with snowdrops and daffodils bringing some colour back into our countryside.

This month's report focusses on delivering high quality, value for money public services, with news of greater investment into children's services, adult care and our precious environment. There is also news of the new highways contract, something which I know you will be keen to learn more about. There is a strong focus on Trading Standards and the outstanding work they do to keep us all safe.

My locality budget is now fully committed for this financial year, but the new funding window will open after the moratorium period for the local elections in May.

As ever, please don't feel you must wait until your next Parish Council meeting before raising any issues or concerns with me. My door is always open, so to speak, so please drop me an email and I will always do my best to try and help.

With best wishes,

Elaine

Cllr Elaine Bryce

Carlford Division

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Your money, invested well

Probably one of the least welcome bits of paper to land on doormats up and down the country is the annual Council Tax bill. A quick glance at social media around the time bills arrive is all the reminder we as Councillors need.

At Suffolk County Council, the Conservative administration only increases Council Tax when it's absolutely necessary.

This year, setting our budget was much more difficult. Like everyone at home, and businesses and organisations across Suffolk, we are having to pay more for the goods and services we use. We are not immune to the huge inflationary pressures that followed the pandemic and were made even worse by Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

In the Summer of last year, we feared a 'budget gap', this the difference between what we have and what we need, upwards of £50 million. Fortunately, in no small part due to the lobbying efforts of Suffolk's Conservative MPs, the money we received from the Government is more than expected. We still faced a gap but it was not as large.

In our budget approved on Thursday 9th February, we made savings of £15 million. Many of these relate to changing the way we work, what we call transformation, while some related to staffing, including reducing the contribution we make to council staff's pensions. They won't see a reduction in pension but because our fund is well managed, we can pay in less. Importantly, none of these savings will reduce any of the services we provide.

In fact, we allocated more money to key services; an additional £36 million for Adult Social Care and another £13.5 million for Children's Services. Alongside this, was another £500,000 for Highways Maintenance, £110,000 for Tree Management, and £45,000 more per year for Suffolk's Citizen's Advice Bureaus. All of this, despite the challenges we face, contributed to a net increase of £62 million being spent on our services, taking our total budget to £688 million.

To achieve this, without reducing services, we needed to increase Council Tax. As Conservatives this is something we never do lightly. Our Budget Consultation, to which over 2,600 residents responded, told us how important Adult and Children's Care is to local people. It also told us that given the challenges we face - namely more people needing our help and rising costs - that many of you accepted Council Tax would need to increase.

Therefore, we took the difficult decision to increase the general part of Council Tax by 1.99% and the Adult Social Care element by 2%. This is below the maximum increase open to us and means that a Band B property, the most common type of property in Suffolk, will pay an extra 86p per week from April.

As Conservatives, we never forget that the money we collect in Council Tax is your money and we always ensure it is invested well. We know that Adult Care and Children's Care, particularly Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, are your priorities. They are ours too. Such is the need for these two areas that 75p in every £1 we spend now goes on people's services.

Everything else, from roads and pavements, to Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service, Trading Standards, and our work to protect the environment comes out of the remaining 25p.

We know value for money is important too. We work hard to keep the amount of money we spend on staffing and administration down, in fact Suffolk is nearly the lowest spending County Council in this respect, so that we can ensure more money goes directly on the services we all use.

This year, for the third year in a row, the Green Party and Liberal Democrats tried to increase Council Tax bills by even more. However, for the third year in a row your Conservative led County Council rejected their attempts to hike bills even further. We know that many people are struggling with rising bills and Council Tax is just another bill on that pile.

We will always invest where it's needed but our first instinct is never to reach for your pockets. We will continue to innovate, work differently, reduce overheads, and cut administrative costs so that the bills you pay are the best value possible.

[New highways services arriving in Suffolk as multi-million-pound contract awarded](#)

Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, has been awarded Suffolk's new highways services contract, which will begin on 1 October 2023.

Following an extensive procurement exercise, Suffolk County Council has confirmed Milestone will be its new contract partner for up to 20 years. The new partnership, which is worth in the region of £800 million - £1 billion, will be delivering highway projects and improvements across Suffolk, including but not limited to maintaining roads, pavements and rights of way, drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting.

When searching for its new highways partner, the county council worked with leading industry analysts to understand the different types of arrangements that other local authorities have in place, to look at which specialist providers are in the marketplace, and to find out what aspects of contract agreement may work best for Suffolk.

The council wanted the new contract to focus on delivering greater social value, utilising local skills and talent, giving young people the opportunity to work in the sector as well as building on the council's commitment to carbon reduction and protecting the environment.

A rigorous procurement exercise was carried out over many months, with various stages of discussions with service providers, to evolve their solutions to meet the various contractual requirements and deliver an effective and efficient highway service for Suffolk. Final submissions were evaluated and extensively moderated before the final winning contract was awarded.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for Ipswich, operational highways and flooding, said:

"The search for a new contractor to deliver our highways services has finally come to completion, and I am delighted to welcome our new highway partner, Milestone, to Suffolk.

"We wanted to find an organisation who could provide excellent services and value for our residents, whilst sharing our ambition and ideas to innovate in improving delivery of services, communicating more effectively with customers and sharing our commitment to reducing carbon use.

“Services related to our highways will in some way impact all those living, working or travelling in our county; this is why it was essential that we went through such a rigorous process to ensure we found the best possible fit for what we needed here in Suffolk.

“As we navigate mobilising the new contract over the coming months, we will continue delivering highways services for our residents which meet the standards and value for money we expect. I want to take this opportunity to thank the officers involved in successfully procuring and awarding this new contract, whilst continuing to keep our county safe and moving.”

Matthew Riches, Operations Director for Milestone, said:

“Milestone is delighted to be partnering with Suffolk County Council to provide safer highways for all users of the county network. In this new partnership, we are committed to maintaining the safest possible network for local communities, businesses and the travelling public, all year round.

“Our commitment to exceptional delivery will also focus on working collaboratively with the council to meet their net-zero carbon targets and enhancing biodiversity.

“We are committed to creating local jobs for local people to support our delivery, in addition to local supply chain partners adding value to the Suffolk economy. We take pride in supporting our local community and look forward to meeting and working with the residents and businesses of Suffolk from October.”

More funds confirmed for children’s services, adult care and the environment

The £687.6m package was approved at a Full Council meeting on Thursday 9 February 2023, with a focus on children’s services, adult care and the environment.

In an online survey, Suffolk residents said that they would like to see more spent on adult services and children’s services, and these areas will receive an additional £35.7m and £13.5m, respectively.

In addition, the council’s net zero carbon budget, which had previously been approved by Cabinet, sits alongside the financial budget. It is a report on how the organisation is progressing to its ambitious target of being net zero by 2030, enabling the council to measure its carbon emissions, monitor its environmental impact, and identify actions and costs needed to reduce those emissions.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:

“Despite the challenges in the national and international economy, and the significant increase in demand for our services, we have successfully delivered a balanced budget. We are protecting the services that people rely on the most and we will be able to continue caring for the most vulnerable in Suffolk.

“We have identified over £15m of savings across the organisation, but this will not see any reductions in services, and some areas will see investment. We are committed to always providing the best value for everyone in Suffolk.”

The council’s budget will increase by nearly 10% (from £625.3m to £687.6m), the additional money largely generated by a 3.99% increase in the council’s share of Council Tax, and more funds from the Government for adult and children’s social care.

The increase of 3.99% to Council Tax is made up of a 1.99% increase in general Council Tax and a 2.00% increase dedicated to funding adult care. This will see the council's share of a Band B property's bill rise by 86 pence per week, compared to last year.

Suffolk Information Partnership Celebrates 100 Partners

The Suffolk Information Partnership is a network of organisations offering information, advice, and services to support people's health and wellbeing in Suffolk.

The partnership was formed in 2010 with five key voluntary sector organisations in Suffolk - Age UK Suffolk, Optua (now Avenues East), Suffolk Family Carers, Suffolk Libraries and Suffolk Mind - alongside Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care services. Now we have more than 100 statutory, voluntary and independent sector organisations delivering services to support all groups across Suffolk.

The 100th partner to join the network was Our Special Friends, a Suffolk based charity that works to help people to benefit from animal companionship during illness, bereavement, or other crises.

The Suffolk Information Partnership helps thousands of Suffolk Residents access the services they need every year, and we are proud of how the partnership has grown. Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities said "I want to say a huge thank you to all the partners that have joined the Suffolk Information Partnership over the years, for your invaluable support in making the partnership the success that it is today. We couldn't have done it without you!

The partnership meets regularly to share updates on its services and discuss topics of interest as well as providing peer support and informal mentoring. Being in the partnership also gives organisations access to a toolkit of resources and the Warm Handover referral scheme. The Warm Handover referral scheme allows partners to refer clients directly to another organisation, where they identify that the client would benefit from other support.

The process supports vulnerable clients and those who may struggle to contact another organisation if they are signposted to that organisation.

For more information about the Suffolk Information Partnership and Warm Handover, visit: <http://suffolkinformationpartnership.onesuffolk.net>

The Suffolk Information Partnership is open to statutory, voluntary and independent sector organisations operating across or within local communities in Suffolk. If your organisation would like to join send a short paragraph about what your organisation does, your logo and contact details to suffolkinformationpartnership@suffolk.gov.uk

The Suffolk Information Partnership and Warm Handover Referral Scheme are free to join.

Suffolk Trading Standards receives High Sheriff's seal of approval

Despite being one of the smaller teams within the Council, Trading Standards continues to make a huge impact in supporting the health and wellbeing of Suffolk's residents by protecting them from dangerous goods and scams. They play a large part in strengthening our local economy by ensuring a level playing field for legitimate traders.

It is surprising just how varied the work of Trading Standards is, as the High Sheriff for Suffolk, Major Jamie Lowther-Pinkerton, learned when he recently visited the team.

He began his visit with a trip to the Port of Felixstowe, Britain's busiest container port, where he met with the Imports team tasked with intercepting potentially dangerous goods before these can enter the UK's marketplace.

The team had a busy morning inspecting tricycles, highchairs, playpens, and baby walkers and testing items for potential choking hazards and strangulation risks with the help of the High Sheriff.

The team is incredibly successful in seizing unsafe items before they can cause injury, fires or even death. They have their work cut out, with an increasing number of unscrupulous online marketplaces selling dodgy products.

Of course, you can also protect yourself by only making purchases from a reputable retailer to ensure that what you're buying meets the necessary safety checks.

If you are a new trader, it may be confusing to know what you need to do to comply with legislation, but Suffolk Trading Standards is here to help and provides advice to start-up and established businesses alike.

Major Lowther-Pinkerton met the team committed to engaging with local businesses who are experts in their field and can give guidance on anything from becoming a wax melts retailer to selling dog treats and food labelling rules. Anyone who needs their help can find out more by visiting www.suffolk.gov.uk/tradingstandards

Although Trading Standards will usually support businesses in the first instance, there are occasions where enforcement action will need to be taken, as was the case for a shop in Lowestoft recently. Officers worked with colleagues from the police and HMRC to seize illicit tobacco on sale at Bargain Point in the town, resulting in the issue of a closure notice.

Many people may see illicit tobacco as a victimless crime. But it can contain harmful substances, posing serious health risks, and is often a gateway to organised crime, including county lines. So please consider this if ever tempted to buy cheap tobacco or cigarettes, as there's probably a reason why it's such a bargain.

Illegal meat was also seized in Lowestoft by East Suffolk Council, supported by Suffolk Trading Standards, earlier this month to help stop swine fever. The pork had travelled more than 1,500 miles from Romania, and it is suspected that it would have gone on sale had it not been intercepted.

Stopping consumers from purchasing dangerous foods remains a priority for Suffolk Trading Standards, who explained to the High Sheriff how they undertake regular testing to ensure that food on sale in the county is properly labelled and doesn't contain anything that it shouldn't. This is vital to protect people with allergens, who could die if they eat something they are allergic to.

You may be most familiar with the ongoing work of Trading Standards to Suffolk of rogue traders, including one of the most prolific fraudsters seen by the team, David Waters, sole director of Felixstowe-based business Anchor Mobility, who promised life-changing products to consumers but failed to deliver on these.

Thanks to the intervention of Trading Standards, Waters was sentenced to 32 months in prison and fined £15,000. Officers also pursued a claim of £50,000 from the proceeds of his crimes, which will serve as compensation for 25 of his victims, who will receive between £600 to £5,000 over the coming weeks.

Major Lowther-Pinkerton finished his visit by presenting the team with a High Sheriff's Award for keeping the county secure from crime and failed standards, commenting that Suffolk is extremely lucky to have such a professional and dedicated Trading Standards department.

Please do all you can to support their fantastic work by signing up to become a consumer champion at www.suffolk.gov.uk/jointhefight or reporting scams and dangerous items to the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on **0808 223 1133**.

Hundreds of illegal vapes seized in Suffolk

Suffolk Trading Standards has stopped the sale of dangerous vapes at premises in Ipswich, Felixstowe, and Lowestoft in their bid to tackle one of the top threats on the high street.

Officers recently discovered over 370 vapes which did not meet the legal requirements, including some which offered as many as 10,000 puffs when a legal vape would offer around 600.

Thanks to the tireless work of Suffolk Trading Standards, hundreds of potentially deadly vapes have been withdrawn from sale in our county.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection:

When used properly, vapes and e-cigarettes can be a successful way of helping people to stop smoking. But criminals are capitalising on this, leading to a rise in illegal vapes, which can contain high levels of nicotine, contaminants, or banned ingredients such as taurine or caffeine.

In addition, some retailers are increasingly selling vapes to underage children, who are often enticed by the colourful packaging and sweet flavours used by some vaping manufacturers.

Consumers can protect themselves by looking out for the following to ensure the vape that they are purchasing is legal:

The tank of a vape is a maximum size of 2ml, and the largest refill bottle is 10ml in size or less

All liquids should come in childproof bottles displaying nicotine warnings and have an accompanying safety leaflet

Vapes should have a nicotine strength of no more than 20mg/ml or 2%

A maximum number of around 600 puffs is offered

Anyone who suspects that a shop is selling unsafe e-cigarettes and vaping liquids or making sales of age-restricted products to children can report this in confidence to Suffolk Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice Consumer helpline on **0808 223 1133**.

Suffolk Trading Standards secures compensation for customers of callous company chief

David Waters, 74, of Manwick Road, Felixstowe, was the sole director of Anchor Mobility, a company found guilty of 15 counts of unfair commercial practice by Ipswich Crown Court.

His offences included fraudulent trading, poor customer service, and misleading consumers by taking large deposits with the promise of delivering goods without ever doing so, resulting in Waters being sentenced to 32 months in prison and fined £15,000 at a hearing in December 2019.

The conviction would not have been possible without the intervention of Suffolk Trading Standards, who discovered more than 20 victims when investigating Anchor Mobility after receiving numerous consumer complaints.

Suffolk Trading Standards also sought additional compensation for all known victims, leading to Waters appearing at Ipswich Crown Court again last June, when a judge ruled that he must repay £50,000 in proceeds from his crimes, reflecting the assets available to him.

Compensation ranging from £600 to over £5,000 is currently being paid out, much to the relief of victims and their loved ones, who praised Suffolk Trading Standards for its efforts in securing a successful outcome.

Graham Crisp, Head of Suffolk Trading Standards, said: "Although no compensation can undo the distress caused by David Water's actions, I am delighted that 25 of his victims will be given a share of £50,000 from the proceeds of his crimes.

"Officers from Suffolk Trading Standards have worked tirelessly to deliver the compensation to victims, with many victims receiving thousands of pounds as a direct result of our involvement.

"Bringing Mr Waters to justice would not have been possible without the assistance of our colleagues from Norfolk Trading Standards and the National Trading Standards Tri Regional Investigation Team, and I am grateful for their help in protecting Suffolk residents and ensuring a level playing field for our county's legitimate traders."

Anyone who believes they may have fallen victim to a fraudulent trader should contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on **0808 223 1133**.

Fire service finalises plan to protect Suffolk's communities

Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, brought the CRMP to Cabinet (Tuesday, 21 February) to seek approval for its adoption from April 2023.

***“We have listened to residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders about what matters to them and where they feel we should direct our resources; without this being to the detriment of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service staff, who already work tirelessly to prevent and respond to emergencies.*”**

The plan details Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's priorities until 2027, including:

Updating how response times are reported to include from the time of call and focus on the areas of highest risk, such as dwelling fires

Addressing climate change to support Suffolk County Council's ambition to be a carbon-neutral authority by 2030, with a view to introducing more non-fossil fuel vehicles in the fleet

Developing preventative safe and well visits, including continued work with the National Farmers' Union to tailor advice to rural and farming communities

Assessing how the service works with partner agencies, such as supporting the ambulance service when appropriate and if capacity and resources allow for this

Reviewing the recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters and specialist support staff to ensure Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service remains a diverse employer of choice

These priorities were identified during extensive research and pre-consultation engagement with staff and stakeholders. In addition, hundreds of Suffolk residents helped to inform the final document by providing feedback on proposals during the CRMP public consultation, which ran from October to December 2022 and included a series of public events held at six supermarkets across the county.

Jon Lacey, Chief Fire Officer for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, said:

“Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has a fantastic reputation both regionally and nationally, as demonstrated by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) recently rating us as “Good” for our effectiveness and well we manage staff.

“Our new CRMP will allow this great work to continue, with it identifying risk and how we can reduce this to ensure that Suffolk is a safe and healthy place to live.

“The document also considers emerging challenges for our county, including an increase in wildfires and floods as a result of climate change, helping us to plan ahead and remain a resilient service that is there for you when you need us most.”

Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, added:

“The public feedback received during the consultation has been invaluable in informing the future of our fire service, and I'd like to thank everyone who gave their time to comment on our proposals.

“We have listened to residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders about what matters to them and where they feel we should direct our resources; without this being to the detriment of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service staff, who already work tirelessly to prevent and respond to emergencies.

“In doing so, we have prepared a plan that reflects the unique nature of our county, including our more rural communities, and enables us to protect all those who live in, work in and visit it.”

Suffolk County Council will support Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service with implementing its CRMP and has allocated over £5.3million to fleet replacement in its 2023/24 budget, which includes the purchase of 20 state-of-the-art fire engines to ensure that firefighters have the equipment needed to help meet the service’s priorities.

The new CRMP replaces Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service’s previous Integrated Risk Management Plan, which was implemented following approval by Cabinet in July 2019.

Future of popular Ipswich sports centre secured by Suffolk County Council

Vivify, a school’s lettings company, will replace Ipswich Borough Council in the management of the public sports facilities at Northgate. The company has extensive experience of running more than 500 sports facilities across the country. It will manage the bookings system and out of hours service.

Paul West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich at Suffolk County Council, said:

“When Ipswich Borough Council handed back its 25-year commitment to run the facilities, we were left in a challenging position.

“Traditionally we have no knowledge or experience of running sports facilities – this sits at borough level. However, we knew we had a duty to pick up responsibility for the popular venue and ensure its future. Hundreds of people use the site, whether running clubs or for racquet sports, so we accepted that - despite the unilateral decision of the borough council - we could not let the site close.

The facilities will be formally handed over on April 1st and will reopen on April 17th following site maintenance and cleaning. The final details of the agreement are currently being worked through.

The new agreement will cost Suffolk County Council in excess of £235,000 until July 2024. During this contract period, Suffolk County Council will continue to review the longer term business case.

Russell Teale, CEO and Co-founder of Vivify, said:

“Here at Vivify we are committed to making sport and leisure spaces accessible to local teams and groups across the UK, while helping our schools do more. We look forward to working alongside Northgate School and Suffolk County Council on this exciting partnership.”

Rowena Mackie, headteacher at Northgate School, said:

“We are delighted that as a school we can continue to focus on our core purpose of educating our students.

“We always wanted to ensure that community use outside of school hours could be maintained as we recognise the importance of access to the sports facilities to very many in our wider community. We are excited to be in a position to work alongside Vivify and the County Council in this regard.

Ten nominees up for Suffolk's Green Hero award

The award will go to an outstanding individual who inspires others to care for the environment, connects people, and brings environmental projects to life.

Suffolk County Council's Creating The Greenest County Awards for 2023 will see a total of nine awards presented to schools, businesses and communities from across the county. They celebrate the achievements of those in Suffolk who are protecting our environment, reducing their carbon emissions and inspiring others.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:

"We've had well over 100 nominations across all our awards this year, which just goes to show much Suffolk's communities care about our local environment.

"The nominees help us all to understand that we must make significant changes to the way we live, by protecting our natural environment, reducing carbon emissions, making our homes more efficient, and reducing our energy and water use.

"Our judging panel will select the winners for each category, but the Green Hero award will be chosen by the public. Over 1,000 people voted for our last Green Hero which was Debbie Bartlett from Litter-Free Felixstowe."

The judging panel is made up of previous winners, sponsors and environmental experts and awards will be presented at an environmentally-friendly ceremony to be held in March at The Hold, in Ipswich.

The Awards categories are:

- Green Business
- Green Small Business
- Green Tourism
- Green School (two awards)
- Green Hero
- Green Community
- Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscape
- Waste Reduction and Recycling

To vote for your Green Hero, visit www.greensuffolk.org/hero - **voting closes on Friday 3 March 2023.**

In-person Citizenship Ceremonies return in Suffolk

During the pandemic, like many other services, Citizenship Ceremonies moved to being conducted online. 563 new citizens were welcomed in virtual ceremonies in 2022. In-person Ceremonies have once again been taking place since 18 January 2023 and take place every month at the Ipswich Register Office and on alternating months at the Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft offices.

After nearly three years of conducting citizenship ceremonies online it feels great being able to bring everybody together again, to celebrate this very significant event in their lives. Having their guests with them at the ceremony makes the occasion even more special for the new citizens. It is an honour to be a part of their journey.

Jacqueline Maynard, ceremony manager for Ipswich Registration Service

I'm pleased that since January we have been able to conduct these important ceremonies in-person again. Group ceremonies allow new citizens an opportunity to meet with other new citizens as they are enrolled, helping them to truly feel part of our diverse community.

Cllr Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities

The most recent ceremony took place on Monday 13 February. For the thirty-four participants at the ceremony, this was the last step on their journey to British citizenship:

Judith, a secondary school teacher from Felixstowe, said "I came to Britain from Zimbabwe as a teen. It feels great to be a British citizen now and to be part of the British culture and share in British values".

Natalia moved to Suffolk from Greece. Having made Sudbury her home, she says she's excited to become a British citizen now. She said: "I've been here for eight years now. It just made sense to apply for citizenship and become a part of Britain."

Citizenship Ceremonies can only be booked once an application has been approved by the Home Office, and an official invitation has been sent. Please call our Ipswich Office on **0345 607 2050** to book or email citizenship@suffolk.gov.uk

For more information, please visit [the Citizenship Ceremony page on our website.](#)

Suffolk's exemplary commitment to retrofitting homes

While the Warm Homes Suffolk initiative is ensuring that the most vulnerable households receive support, the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership is tackling the shortage of trained installers in the county.

Almost 50 people have been trained in retrofitting through Skills Bootcamps, providing a much-needed boost to the workforce needed for the delivery of warmer homes.

The skilling-up of 46 people in Norfolk and Suffolk in three levels of retrofitting through the Government funded initiative comes after Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders agreed to create a Fuel Poverty Retrofit team to support those struggling most with their energy bills.

A Fuel Poverty Retrofit Team will work with residents living in energy inefficient properties to address funding issues and ensure a consistent supply of installers.

An extension of the Warm Homes Suffolk Scheme, the move is expected to lead to around £50m worth of work and deliver almost £4.8m in combined potential savings for households through insulation, air source heat pumps and the replacement of single glazing.

Improving the energy efficiency of homes is a key determination of Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan, as doing so will help the county to address climate change and achieve its goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2030.

Councillor Andy Drummond, Chair of the Environment Portfolio Holders Group is proud of the work happening in the county:

"Suffolk faces a tremendous task to retrofit our aging housing stock to become more energy efficient, but with dedicated initiatives in place such as the LEP's skills bootcamps, Warm Homes Suffolk and its financial support from our public sector leaders, demonstrates that Suffolk is excelling at this challenge."

More than 62,000 properties in Suffolk are thought to have the worst Energy Performance (EPC) grades of E, F and G and 28% of its households are facing fuel poverty. The new team will strive to secure funding to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and ensure minimum standards for the private rental sector.

Just as crucial as the money to fund installations is an available workforce that can meet the demand, and 46 people in Norfolk and Suffolk have received training in domestic retrofitting thanks to the Skills Bootcamps coordinated by New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership.

They have received training in three levels: Retrofit Advice (Level 3), Award in Domestic Retrofit Assessment (Level 4) and Diploma in Retrofit Coordination & Risk Management (Level 5).

Up to around 40 more people are expected to be trained in retrofitting after a successful bid by New Anglia LEP to deliver more Skills Bootcamps in Wave 4 of the initiative.

The LEP, in partnership with Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils, was successful in gaining £1m funding to deliver Skills Bootcamps on behalf of the Department for Education.

Bev Wallman, the LEP's Skills Broker, said:

"We know there is a skills deficit in this sector and these Bootcamps will not only help bridge that gap and provide green jobs, but also support efforts to increase energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty."

Among those to complete a Domestic Retrofit Assessment Level 4 was Sophia Gentile, a qualified teacher who retrained as a retrofit coordinator when she saw "a real need to make people's homes easier and cheaper to keep warm and dry".

Sophia set up her own business in 2021, Retrofitco, and was one of the first women in the East of England's retrofit industry. She liaises between contractors, property owners and tenants to coordinate the delivery of high standard retrofitting.

"Everything we do is about protecting the environment but, this winter in particular, it is also about helping people tackle the energy and cost of living crises," she says.

Eating Disorders Awareness Week - From 27 February to 5 March 2023

Eating disorders are one of the most dangerous and complex mental health issues for anyone to overcome - they should be taken seriously.

See Suffolk County Council's 'Eat Well, Feel Well' advice page for information on eating disorders and where to go for support, and tips to help your community maintain good relationships with food.

Help raise awareness of eating disorders support:

Share the [Suffolk County Council's page](#).

Share our '[Eat Well, Feel Well' Campaign](#) to help families in Suffolk find tips and advice for improving their relationships with food to prevent eating disorders.

Share BEAT Eating Disorders Charity's new '[Men Get Eating Disorders Too' Campaign](#).

Volunteering at Suffolk Archives

Suffolk Archives are looking for volunteers in their branches in Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft and Ipswich.

'Volunteers bring the archive to life for researchers and local communities, making more archives accessible and connecting people to the places they live. By volunteering you will develop new skills, make new friends and conserve Suffolk's history for the next generation.' – Suffolk Archives

There are a range of roles available from remote volunteering to in-person.

If you would like to join the remote volunteer team at Suffolk Archives, visit www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/volunteer

Hosts for Ukraine

It has been over a year since the start of the war in Ukraine. Suffolk County Council is still in need of a wide range of host homes for Ukrainian refugees.

Potential hosts can sign up directly with the County Council by [completing our online form](#) or emailing refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk.

Learn more here: [Support for Ukraine - Suffolk County Council](#)