

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – JULY 2023



Cllr Stephen Burroughes - Framlingham Division

• **SUFFOLK FIRE SERVICE TO BRING CONTROL ROOM BACK TO THE COUNTY**

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has announced plans to create a new fire control centre here in Suffolk. Since October 2011, Suffolk has shared a control room with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire and Rescue Service in Huntingdon. The joint project has worked well, saving both fire services money and enabling greater cross-border resource sharing.

However, the company behind a project to deliver a new IT system, initiated in 2019, has run into technical and financial problems, causing a significant delay. This, in addition to advancements in technology, has led to the decision to bring fire control back into the county by the end of 2024.

A new, Suffolk-based control room, with its own market, tried and tested fire engine mobilisation software, will mean modernised IT systems and improved public and firefighter safety in Suffolk.

The proposed new control centre will be brought to Suffolk County Council's Cabinet for approval in September 2023.

• **HELP FOR SUFFOLK PRE-PAYMENT METER CUSTOMERS**

A package of support has been created for pre-payment meter customers in Suffolk who are struggling with their energy bills. Warm Homes Suffolk is a Suffolk-wide Council partnership service, delivering energy efficiency support to low-income households affected by cost-of-living pressures.

Supported by Suffolk's Collaborative Communities Board and funding from Public Health Suffolk's Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), the service is now able to offer specific help for households struggling to pay their energy bills via a pre-payment meter, in addition to its existing support. The support covers the whole of Suffolk and is available for all residents, whether they are in social housing, council tenants, owner occupiers or private renters.

The Warm Homes Suffolk Service can check eligibility and support applications for grants to increase household energy efficiency, with measures such as loft and wall insulation to air source heat pumps, draught-proofing and more. It is estimated that more than 24,000 people in Suffolk are pre-payment meter customers. The service will work with each individual to understand the pressures on their finances and the impact this is having on their lives. The service can carry out a home visit, as well as providing advice over the phone and by email.

The COMF funding of £180,000 will enable this project to run for 12 months to provide the following:

- Income maximisation (through grants and benefits)
- Budgeting advice
- Help understanding bills and heating systems
- Support to reduce energy expenditure (By promoting social tariffs and support to switch suppliers)
- Improving household energy efficiency (By installing insulation, draught proofing, heating systems and solar panels)
- Facilitating switch away from prepaid meters if appropriate

Pre-payment meter customers who would like support can contact prepay@eastsoffolk.gov.uk to find out more, or call: **Prepay West at 07769 365796**, or **Prepay East at 07769 366229**.

Referrals can be made directly from households, the voluntary sector and professionals to find prepay households who can benefit from an independent look at their bills. Warm Homes Suffolk also offers support and advice for residents who are not pre-payment meter customers. To find out more about the support on offer, visit: <https://www.warmhomessuffolk.org/>

- **“IPSWICH WARE” POTTERY MADE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OVER 1,000 YEARS**

“Ipswich ware” jars and pots, first made 1,400 years ago in Suffolk’s County town, are being fired again in a replica Anglo-Saxon kiln. Thanks to funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, this new experimental archaeology project is being led by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, to investigate how Anglo-Saxon pottery was once made in Ipswich.

The new Anglo-Saxon Ipswich ware kiln has been built and fired by studying archaeological remains excavated from the Buttermarket in Ipswich, something never attempted before. Only two kilns have ever been excavated in Ipswich, the other was discovered at Stoke Quay.

Ipswich ware pottery was made in the town from c. AD 680-870. Jars, cooking pots and pitchers were the most commonly made items, simple in design and grey in colour. They were mass-produced and distributed throughout eastern England and were some of the first of their kind in post-Roman Britain.

In partnership with Hands on Heritage experimental archaeology site, and Keith Wade from the Ipswich Archaeological Trust, Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service has collaborated with volunteers and local organisations to make replica Ipswich ware pots using historical methods. To fire the pots a replica kiln was built in Tunstall, which took three days. In April it was set on fire over a 27-hour period, with 100 beautiful hand-made pots surviving the process.

Local volunteers from the Anglian Potters have been researching Ipswich ware pottery over the past year and conducting experiments with raw clay processing and making replica pots with children from Rushmere Hall Primary School in Ipswich.

This experimental work is part of the community archaeology project ‘Rendlesham Revealed: Anglo-Saxon Life in South-East Suffolk’. It is run by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, and funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, who awarded a grant of £517,300 for the four-year project, which was made possible thanks to National Lottery players.

To find out more about the ‘Rendlesham Revealed’ project visit: heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham

- **SUFFOLK FIRE MANAGER RECEIVES BEM IN HIS MAJESTY THE KING’S BIRTHDAY HONOURS LIST**

Richard John Clarke, Crew Manager with the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has been awarded a British Empire Medal for his services to the Fire Fighters Charity and the community he serves in Newmarket.

Described as an active and exemplary servant to the people of Suffolk, Richard is a well-respected role model to his colleagues, and he has dedicated his life to serving his community and country. He has worked in wholtime service and in his spare time as an On-Call firefighter and trained many new Suffolk recruits, ensuring they uphold the highest standards of safety and a positive culture across the service.

Richard also helped train Suffolk firefighters to drive ambulances during the first wave of the pandemic and took the lead role in driving these vehicles, potentially putting himself in danger to help the community before the vaccine was available.

He overcame serious injury to his leg and knee, sustained whilst attending a forest fire. He was admitted to hospital where doctors told him he might not make a full recovery or return to full operational duties, but with the help of the Firefighters Charity and after 15-months of support and rehabilitation, he returned to full operational duties; a true testament to his resolve, personal resilience, commitment to the service and his determination to continue to serve his community. His injury and experience of the Firefighters’ Charity made

a lasting impact and led him to help and support other injured firefighters and their families by fundraising for the Charity. He has helped raise the Charity's profile with numerous fundraising events such as Ladder Climbs, Open Days, and the successful Suffolk Fire and Rescue Car Draw helping to raise more than £200,000 and demonstrating his success in developing charity activity in the local community.

Richard also joined the Civilian Services Contingent as a drill instructor and served nationally at Remembrance Day events in London, taking a pivotal role in preparing the fire service parade to take part in the service. He then went on to lead the Civilian Services Contingent at the Remembrance Parade 2020, a proud achievement for him, Suffolk and the National Fire Service. Richard leads the Suffolk Ceremonial Team, a voluntary role, attending funerals for serving and retired firefighters, events across the county and firefighter memorial events, supporting the fire service tradition of showing respect for the fallen and promoting positive values in the community.

- **£100M BROADBAND INVESTMENT IN SUFFOLK UNDER GOVERNMENT'S PROJECT GIGABIT**

Better broadband is on its way for around 80,000 properties across rural Suffolk in a £100 million investment under a £5 billion government infrastructure programme. The county is one of three to benefit from Project Gigabit and was chosen to host the launch of the announcement by Minister for Data and Digital Infrastructure, Sir John Whittingdale. Similar projects were also announced for Norfolk and Hampshire as Sir John was joined in Orford by Suffolk Coastal MP Therese Coffey and Councillor Matthew Hicks, the leader of Suffolk County Council. Project Gigabit is the government's £5 billion mission to roll out gigabit-capable, reliable broadband across the UK. Improved connectivity unlocks new opportunities and fuels innovation, supporting the Prime Minister's priority of growing the economy by creating better paid jobs.

Around 62,000 homes and businesses in Norfolk stand to benefit from £114 million of Project Gigabit investment, across locations including Buxton, Castle Acre and Horning.

A further 8,000 premises in the northwest of the county are being reviewed for inclusion subject to survey in the next six months. This project is managed by BDUK who in turn have contracted CityFibre to do the actual work of installing the cabling.

CityFibre, the UK's largest independent full-fibre provider, will deliver gigabit-capable infrastructure for around 218,000 homes and businesses having secured £318 million of Project Gigabit funding after a competitive process. The provider will also be making a private investment of £170 million to deliver the project. Decisions on where broadband infrastructure is installed will be made by BDUK and not by SCC.

Survey work in all three counties commences immediately, with the first installations in the New Year and the first live connections expected by summer 2024. Once connected, residents and businesses will enjoy access to broadband services over a network capable of supporting speeds of up to 10Gbps.

- **COUNCIL TO CONSIDER NEW CHAPTER FOR LIBRARY SERVICES**

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet is set to discuss the future of library services in Suffolk at its next meeting on 11 July. The current contract with Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society (IPS), worth £5.92 million per annum, comes to an end on 31st July 2024. The Council now needs to consider how library services will be delivered following the expiry of the contract.

The report to Cabinet will recommend that a new Library Service contract is procured using a competitive tender process. To enable meaningful engagement, public consultation, and a competitive tender process to take place, the report also recommends that the current contract with Suffolk's Libraries IPS is extended by 10 months, to 31 May 2025. The public consultation will be used to inform the requirements and future development of the new service.

In May 2023, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet agreed to protect library services by providing Suffolk's Libraries IPS an additional £720k per year to address increases in service costs, until the end of the

current contract. The proposal to be put to cabinet on 11 July is to continue to fund Suffolk Libraries IPS at this rate for the duration of the proposed 10-month extension.

The proposed value of the new contract will be £6.842m per year, considering the increased service costs and including an additional £0.2m for the Libraries Outreach Service. The proposed term of the contract will be 6 years, with the option to extend for a further 6 years.

The recommendations will be discussed at the meeting of Suffolk County Council's Cabinet on Tuesday 11 July. Papers for the meeting can be viewed at <https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk>.

For further information from my report or questions please contact me at:
stephen.burroughes@suffolk.gov.uk

Cllr Stephen Burroughes

County Councillor for the Framlingham Division

Deputy Cabinet Member for Children & Young Peoples Services

Twitter @CllrStephenB