

October 2020 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Plotting the road to COVID recovery – Leaders agree £3.4 million investment in Suffolk's future

On 25 September, Suffolk's public sector leaders met to agree collective action as part of Suffolk's recovery from COVID-19 over the coming months. To kickstart the process, the group agreed in principle to a significant investment of £3.4 million towards key priorities to support Suffolk's communities and businesses, addressing some of the challenges people currently face, including isolation, hardship, exploitation and the uncertainty of the economy. As part of the first phase of supporting Suffolk's recovery, the following funding was agreed to support some of Suffolk's immediate areas of focus:

Driving inclusive economic growth – investing in recovery (visitor economy/local investment) and the Suffolk Growth Partnership - £1,302,500m (over three years).

Supporting the most vulnerable – hardship funding - £800,000.

Community safety – tackling gangs and county lines – £1,352,202m (over three years).

Over the last few months, we have all seen how Suffolk is blessed with so many people willing to volunteer their time to support one another, and businesses which have found ways to adapt and continue through incredibly tough times. Across Suffolk's public sector we have dedicated staff who have all risen to the challenge to maintain essential services under immense pressure and develop innovative solutions to get help to those who need it when they need it most. The way in which Suffolk's public sector has risen to the complex challenges in responding to Covid-19 so far is testament to our approach, and that's how we wish to continue into recovery. We now have the opportunity to develop collaborative plans that provide a clear direction for Suffolk's recovery, supported by active engagement and consultation with all of our communities. As the national response to COVID-19 continues, it is important for Suffolk to establish an approach to recovery that is inclusive, people-focussed, and sustainable during these challenging times. Suffolk's public sector leaders are committed to driving the services and support that communities and businesses across Suffolk need as the first steps towards recovery from the pandemic begin. Every leader and their organisation has been at the forefront of the local response, playing a key role throughout the last seven months. The response through Home But Not Alone has proven a real success, bringing together services and volunteers with those who need support. The established PPE team, which formed part of the Suffolk Resilience Forum's response, has successfully sourced and supplied vital equipment where it is needed most.

Whilst it is essential that individual organisations across Suffolk's public sector have their own recovery plans and processes in place, agreeing funding for these key areas is another clear sign of the collaborative focus that all of Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders recognise in supporting their priorities, including: creating strong communities, supporting the most vulnerable, inclusive economic growth, tackling climate change, improving health and care, improving community safety, and securing fairer funding for local public services.

Council announces £300,000 for electric vehicle charging points in rural Suffolk

100 fast charging points for electric vehicles will be installed in rural parts of the county by SCC. The council will be reaching out to interested parish and town councils and non-profit organisations to put in fast chargers where there are currently none. The funding will cover the installation and set-up costs, meaning very little expense for the hosts and possibly creating a source of income for them. This project is the first to benefit from the council's Suffolk 2020 Fund, which was announced earlier this year. This is a £3m fund for the council's own projects to bid into. Projects must help address the council's climate emergency declaration and must improve Suffolk for all residents in years to come. The £300,000 award will link into the council's existing Plug In Suffolk project, which was launched in February 2019. It is the UK's first 'fully open' public fast charging network for electric vehicles, meaning drivers simply pay by contactless payment with no need to register their details. Ultra-low emission vehicle ownership has nearly trebled in the last three years in Suffolk and I want to this to continue by making it even more convenient to charge up across the county. I'd like to see fast charging points at our rural village halls, community buildings, sports clubs, places of worship and in small villages. We can now make this a reality and hopefully provide the host with a source of income too. If you look at a map of existing charging points in the county, there are big gaps – and one of the barriers to people switching to an electric vehicle is lack of confidence about finding a place to charge. This funding will help fill those gaps and give people that confidence. Once these charging points are installed, Suffolk will have one of the best rural charging networks in the country. We will be contributing to better air quality, reducing carbon emissions and cutting down our reliance on fossil fuels – all supporting our climate emergency declaration and ambition to create the greenest county. A better charging network can also help Suffolk economically. The UK's electric vehicle owners can look fondly on Suffolk as an even more welcoming destination, as they will be able to

charge their cars right across the county. The fast charging points supplied by Plug In Suffolk do not require any registration, membership or apps - drivers simply park, plug in and charge using contactless payment. There have already been expressions of interest for charging points from around 20 suitable sites. In the coming weeks, officers from Suffolk County Council will be contacting town and parish councils to investigate more possible locations. For further information on Plug In Suffolk or to apply to join the network, visit www.greensuffolk.org/plug-in-suffolk

County Council unable to support plans for Sizewell C in its current form

SCC has stated it cannot support EDF Energy's plans for Sizewell C in its current form. A report, and accompanying supporting documents, discussed at the Cabinet meeting on 22 September, focussed on significant concerns regarding transport impacts, site design, and the environmental impact on the Suffolk coast which remain unanswered by EDF Energy. Details of the council's position will be shared as Relevant Representations with the Government's Planning Inspectorate, which is overseeing the process for this proposed development. It is very clear from the Council's representations that the current proposals do not sufficiently avoid, minimise, mitigate or compensate impacts of the proposed development. Many issues raised in previous rounds of consultations remain outstanding, and the lack of improvement and progress regarding many of these issues is very disappointing considering how early in the development process the council raised its concerns. The Relevant Representation document fully details the council's proposed position and lists the areas where it believes EDF Energy needs to undertake further work. SCC has always supported the principle of a new nuclear power station at Sizewell and recognises that Sizewell C would offer an important contribution to the national energy strategy. The council would also welcome the benefits of new jobs and skills. However, it cannot support the current proposals presented by EDF Energy as they stand today. The council does not support EDF Energy's proposed transport strategy as it remains predominantly lorry-based and, in the council's view, is unsustainable. The authority strongly believes that an increased proportion of rail and sea transport is reasonably achievable and, in its current form, the transport impacts on Suffolk's highway network are unacceptable. The Relevant Representation document published goes into greater detail on other areas of concern, including:

Proposals to have additional pylons on site.

Ecological damage.

Suitable mitigation to protect local wildlife species.

Appropriate levels of funding for mitigation measures and compensation to support the impact on the local community and related infrastructure.

To view the Cabinet report and accompanying draft Relevant Representation document, visit committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk.

Successful £4.4m adaptive street lighting project celebrates first year

On 17 September, Suffolk celebrated a successful first year of its £4.4m Live Labs project – 'A Smarter Suffolk'. Suffolk's Live Lab project is part of the ADEPT SMART Places Live Labs Programme - a £22.9m project funded by the Department for Transport. Suffolk was one of nine local authorities to successfully bid for funding.

The main aim of Suffolk's Live Lab is to use its existing street lighting infrastructure to provide a showcase of innovative technologies that bring efficiencies to Suffolk County Council now, and potentially to other local authorities in future. Benefits from these technologies are set to revolutionise the way services are delivered by local authorities through the collection of data from sensors placed on street lighting columns throughout the county. As well as working with the University of Suffolk and BT, Suffolk has spent the last year negotiating with potential providers of a wide range of such sensors so that they can be deployed in different environmental conditions - namely urban, rural and coastal locations. The project will enable local authorities to monitor aspects such as weather, air quality, road surface temperatures, and traffic volumes, as well as create on-street electric vehicle charging and support the deployment of 5G infrastructure by the mobile network operators.

So far, Suffolk has installed 43 sensors, with plans to install hundreds more over the coming months.

The data being gathered can help to provide a picture of road use. This will be particularly valuable in areas where COVID-19 related initiatives such as cycle lanes have been implemented, as data for before and after implementation can be analysed. The original two-year timescale for the Suffolk Live Labs project was recently extended by six months to account for the impact of COVID-19. This allows a greater time period to analyse incoming data from the deployed sensors.

Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division