

SHOTTISHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
2021/2022 REPORT FROM SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

In setting out its 2021 business plan for the next few years, the council's priorities are to:

- promote and support the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk
- strengthen the local economy
- protect and enhance the environment
- provide value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer.

The following are just some key highlights of the county council's work over the past year.

It was announced in **March 2021** that 100,000 trees had been planted in just five months, since Suffolk County Council committed £228,000 to protect biodiversity. In January this year the council committed to planting a further 100,000 trees in 2022.

Further in **March 2021**, work on Lowestoft's Gull Wing Bridge started and in **March 2022** year the first major steel section arrived. Substantively funded by the county council with support from the government, this project is on time and once opened will provide a massive boost to the local economy.

In **May 2021**, we started trialling demand-led electric buses with services running from Framlingham to Wickham Market and through to the train station at Campsea Ashe. In **December 2021**, a further route was added from Campsea Ashe through to Snape village and the Maltings. If the trial is successful, then the ambition is to extend it in here in the east. It also plays a part in Suffolk County Council's own target of being carbon neutral by 2030.

In **September 2021**, four locations were announced by Suffolk County Council as "healing woods and spaces". They will offer people better access to nature and provide a positive legacy to the pandemic. The project connects with the motion unanimously passed by the county's councillors earlier this year, to commit to developing mental health support in Suffolk, in response to the impacts of the pandemic.

In **November 2021**, two Suffolk schemes received Government funding totalling more than £940,000. Enabling Self-Employment in Suffolk and the Suffolk Road to Net Zero business support programme are among 477 schemes across the country to receive backing from the Community Renewal Fund. This is a £200 million pot set up by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities aimed at boosting skills training for the unemployed and investing in businesses developing low-carbon technology.

Further in **November 2021** it was announced that properties, including fire stations and libraries, will receive investment as the council continues to drive its ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. Suffolk County Council will be committing £12.8m towards reducing the carbon produced by buildings in its corporate estate.

In **December 2021**, Cabinet members committed an extra £20 million over the next three years into further improving Suffolk's highway drainage systems and footpaths. In recognition of the increasing maintenance demand on these areas, councillors approved the use of £10 million to specifically deliver an increasing number of drainage schemes that deal with problems that affect larger numbers of people, and a further £10 million to improve footpath quality and access.

In **December 2021**, the county council endorsed far-reaching recommendations to improve Suffolk people's mental health and wellbeing, including the creation of a dedicated fund of £2.5m and the development of a cross-system group to support community wellbeing in Suffolk. We have done this against the backdrop of COVID-19 as the strains of the pandemic have meant that the issue of mental health has been in the public consciousness like never before.

In **January 2022**, it was announced that Suffolk County Council has agreed to join forces with construction firm Lovell Partnerships to form a property development alliance to build nearly 3,000 much-needed homes. The county council will provide the land as its equity contribution and several sites have so far been identified mainly in the west, but also at Lowestoft.

It was announced in **February 2022** that Suffolk's LED replacement programme reached a new milestone, with over 20,000 streetlights upgraded with new, sustainable LEDs and counting as part of the project to replace all 43,400 county council streetlights. The project is due to complete by the end of 2022. This upgrade supports Suffolk County Council's ambitions for becoming a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030.

In **February** this year, the budget for 2022/23 was approved. The focus remains on children's services, adult care and the environment. The council's budget has risen from £598.2m to £625.4m, with the additional money generated by a 1.99% increase in council tax, a further 1.00% from the Adult Care Precept, and an increase in grants received from the Government.

In **March** this year, we heard news that the Secretary of State for BEIS had approved construction of two new offshore windfarms together with onshore substations at Friston. A decision on Sizewell C is expected soon. Having objected to the site at Friston, I am very mindful other projects will be attracted to connect to the grid at Friston and near Snape. The collective impact will be too much for the area.

Finally, in late **March** this year, the county council approved the business case for the proposed Freeport East now submitted to the Government for endorsement. Should the business case be approved £25m in seed-corn funding will be made available, It is estimated that Freeport East has the capacity to create 13,500 jobs and generate between £307M and £442M in terms of retained business rates over 25 years.

Andrew Reid
County Councillor – Wilford Division
25th April 2022