

September 2023 Town and Parish Newsletter

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Exciting new chapter comes with allergy danger for young people

A column by Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection.

For many young people this is the time of year when they are about to begin the exciting new chapter in their lives as they go to university or college.

Leaving home for the first time, they will be mixing and living with new people of their own age and rightly enjoying all the fun and opportunity this brings.

However, for those suffering from food allergies this can bring new challenges and I would encourage parents to talk to their children about it.

Those aged between 16 and 24 are in the most at-risk category when it comes to allergies, so please do encourage your young person to talk to their friends and housemates, to make them aware of their situation and how to spot an allergic reaction.

Most people will already know someone with an allergy and be able to support. However, occasionally housemates are just not able to understand the seriousness of the allergy and it may be wise to speak with the university or college welfare officer to seek alternative accommodation if the allergy relates to their environment.

Also, encourage them to carry wipes and clean down surfaces, to reduce the risk of cross contamination before eating or studying around campus.

When eating out, if it is a planned occasion, suggest they look at online menus in advance if available and use social media to find recommendations for suitable places to eat out with allergies.

In Suffolk, we regularly get complaints about allergens - 14 different allergen types must be declared in law – and while people focus on nut allergies many others are just as deadly to relevant people. Allergies are increasing and are therefore more important today.

Locally, we took just over 230 food samples last year, around half of which were tested for the presence of undeclared allergens.

Of those, approximately 25% of samples were unsatisfactory in that they were either labelled incorrectly, not declaring the correct allergens or if a meal contained an undeclared allergen.

Samples are taken either because of complaints, or due to our local knowledge/intelligence of the product/premises type.

Last year we had more than 100 complaints about specific food businesses of which three quarters were complaints about allergens.

In terms of the main product type tested in Suffolk:

- Vegan chocolate – 12 samples were taken of chocolate described as ‘vegan’ – nine of which contained traces of milk. Whilst some did contain a precautionary allergen label e.g., ‘May contain milk’ – consumers may not notice this and instead rely on the name of the food and, if they are allergic to dairy, this could be an issue.
- Take-away coffee – 17 samples of take-away coffees, from a mix of independent and high street retailers were taken. Of the nine ‘non milk’ versions (oat/almond/soya latte) – five contained traces of milk. Again, a vegan customer or someone with a dairy allergy would incorrectly assume there would be no trace of milk.
- Vegan ‘ready to eat products’ such as sausage rolls, pastries and cakes - 20 samples were taken of which five contained either milk or egg traces.
- Vegan ‘takeaway’ meals - 16 samples were taken of which six contained traces of either egg, fish or shellfish.

The Chartered Trading Standards Institute is calling for a new legal definition of vegan food to be created to ensure the rules are clear, and that any food manufacturer or restaurant flouting these rules can be held accountable.

This would provide clarity for those with allergies, for example to milk or eggs, over whether food labelled as vegan is safe to eat.

Until that happens, consumers should not rely on the vegan description if they have a serious milk allergy.

Similarly, anyone with allergies really needs to read the label on food products properly, including any 'may contains' information.

In restaurants/cafes they should not rely on the vegan description alone - always have a conversation with the staff.

These are simple steps but can make all the difference.

***Anyone with concerns about the labelling of a food product, or wishing to report an allergy or intolerance reaction, can contact Suffolk Trading Standards via Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.**

Ambling African Women break down barriers to accessing Suffolk countryside

Suffolk County Council celebrated the launch of ‘Ambling African Women’ a new partnership with PHOEBE, the Ipswich-based charity advocating for black and ethnic minority women and children.

The new partnership aims to support PHOEBE members to access the countryside for its health and well-being benefits and is part of the wider work by the Green Access and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) teams to address inequalities in countryside access.

Founded by Zimbabwean women social workers in 2008, P.H.O.E.B.E (Promotion of Health, Opportunity, Equality, Benevolence and Empowerment) offers specialist domestic abuse advice, information, casework, advocacy and support and counselling services to black and ethnic minoritised women and children in Suffolk.

The Council worked with PHOEBE in 2022 to identify specific cultural barriers to countryside access. The partnership which has been developed will help inform future interventions that will be offered to other community groups facing similar barriers to visiting the countryside.

At the launch event on Tuesday 29 August, Suffolk County Council and its partners hosted a guided walk for around 30-40 women from the PHOEBE centre, who are part of the centre's new Ambling African Women walking group.

There were women of all ages and fitness levels taking part, from babies in pushchairs, up to retirement-age women, with plenty of chatting and socialising along the way. The walk took place at Snape Maltings, which is in the Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, with a guided walk along the Sailors Path from Snape Maltings along the river to Snape Warren and back, followed by lunch and traditional African music.

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

"It's fantastic to see the level of enthusiasm towards this important project. We have such beautiful countryside here in Suffolk and it's there to be enjoyed by all.

"The project aims to encourage those who may face barriers in accessing the countryside to do so and enjoy all the health and wellbeing benefits it has to offer.

"This partnership is in part a culmination of 'Discovering Suffolk', one of SCC's 2020 Fund projects. Discovering Suffolk has delivered a new Suffolk walking app, is installing QR codes to raise awareness of countryside access and is now focused on working with groups who have not been well connected with countryside access in the past."

Founder, and CEO of PHOEBE, Mrs Mollin Delve, said:

"We think it's amazing that PHOEBE has been included as pioneer, stakeholder in planning and delivering this exciting and enjoyable work in Suffolk. Our involvement has confirmed the many challenges that black women and children face in accessing landscape, including living in systemic poverty, working long hours with no time or funds for recreation.

"As a group, we have been able to overcome the transport barrier and have enjoyed the beautiful Suffolk countryside together.

“We want to extend our gratitude to David Falk, Green Access Manager and his team at Suffolk County Council, AONB for reaching out to us and offering this support.”

To keep up to date with what ‘Ambling African Women’ are up to, you can follow them on Twitter, here: <https://twitter.com/AmblingAfricans>.

New and independent fire control centre gives the best deal for Suffolk

A new fire control centre fitted with state-of-the-art communications for mobilising and managing Suffolk’s firefighters would be in the best interests of the county, a report to councillors says.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) announced in June it would be withdrawing from the shared control room arrangement in place since 2011 with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire and Rescue Service, based in Huntingdon.

The report recommending approval to Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet, due to sit on Tuesday September 12, says fire control would now be brought back into the county by the end of 2024.

The report says the move is necessary because a project to replace the current mobilising technology agreed by both services in 2019, is currently two years overdue.

In addition, the French company providing the new technology entered “Redressment Judiciaire” a form of financial administration which resulted in the freezing of its assets and liabilities. If the company comes out of administration, it will remain with its liabilities to pay.

SFRS concluded the non-delivery and missed milestones by the new technology provider, together with its financial predicament, means continuing with the current IT mobilising project presents an unacceptable risk to firefighters and the public.

This risk should be mitigated as soon as possible by Suffolk having its own control room using tried and tested systems.

However, the current system continues to mobilise the emergency response effectively, keeping Suffolk safe.

The report says:

“The new control room will forecast and coordinate SFRS resources based on risk modelling and new technology.

“This will ensure resources are deployed efficiently and effectively across the county, maximising fire engine availability, improving response times.

“The new control room will coordinate resources out of hours to provide a swifter service to our most vulnerable residents.”

An initial capital investment of £1.588m would be required for project delivery over three years. Additional revenue service of £1.615m annually will need to be provided to support the operating cost of the control room.

Public views sought over improvements to A140

Suffolk County Council has identified three junctions on the A140 – the Thornham Magna junction, the A1120 Earl Stonham junction, and the A140/B1078 junction, which also connects to the A14 – as pinch-point areas that may benefit from improvement.

The assessments show that these junctions are likely to suffer from increasing traffic congestion and associated road safety problems in the future.

Analysis has also shown that they lack sufficient infrastructure for active travel and passenger transport.

With these concerns in mind, the county council is seeking the public’s feedback to inform future bids for funding from the Department of Transport to improve the junctions.

Councillor Richard Smith, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Transport Strategy and Waste, said:

“The A140 is a strategically important road, providing a key connection between Ipswich and Norwich and linking into the A14 in Suffolk and the A47 in Norfolk. Therefore, it is crucial that we ensure it is fit for purpose, and safe for road users and pedestrians.

“The views of residents, businesses and stakeholders will be used as much as possible to develop our bids for funding and I would urge anyone who uses the A140 to let us know what they think.”

A public survey has launched today and will run for six weeks, closing on Sunday 15 October. More information can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/a140

Take part in the survey: www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/A140MRNsury

Awards for care workers who saved centenarian from international scam

A Suffolk care worker and her boss who saved a 101-year-old woman from an international scam that saw her fleeced of nearly £50,000 are being formally recognised.

Sally Mills and Paul Watts are to receive Certificates of Merit from Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service for stepping in when they realised the vulnerable woman was being targeted by heartless hoaxers in Austria.

They were conning the woman through a clairvoyant scam, where people pose as spiritual guides offering insights into a person's life and the future.

They typically target the elderly and lonely via mass mailshot letters, often using an image of someone who looks trustworthy to pose as a clairvoyant.

In this case it was British actress and model Carol-Anne Goodman, who had no idea her image was being used, and who is backing the Trading Standards campaign to crackdown on the scammers.

Sally is a community support worker for Caring Moments Ltd, a domiciliary care provider based in Lowestoft which cares for 60 users around the Waveney valley area.

She was assigned to care for the woman and became suspicious when on one visit the victim handed her some post to send and when she returned to her car £45 in cash fell out from a pre-paid envelope.

Paul had attended training given by Suffolk Trading Standards officer Lesley Crompton and recognised the victim was sending money to clairvoyant scammers.

Lesley worked with the team at Caring Moments to put support and prevention in place to prevent the victim sending any further money, and they have helped provide statements for an international investigation. It is estimated that the victim has sent over £48,000 over several years.

The victim, who has since celebrated her 103rd birthday, now has means to sort her mail, and every letter that she thinks might be a scam is placed in a box for the care team to check when they visit.

Paul said:

"Sally came to me as soon as she became concerned, and based on the training I had received I gave the Trading Standards team a call.

"We don't see this sort of thing very often as most of our service users have family nearby who can keep an eye out for things like this, but this lady's family live miles away so she was looking after her own post.

"Hopefully this case will open the eyes of those who have, or look after, elderly and vulnerable people and what to do when they spot it."

Sally has since appeared on ITV's This Morning show to help highlight the ongoing investigation into clairvoyant scams that is being coordinated by the National Trading Standards Scam Team.

In August, Suffolk Trading Standards presented Sally and Paul with flowers and 'Suffolk Says Thanks' badges for their intervention.

The teams also nominated them for a Certificate of Merit at the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Awards, which they will be collecting at the ceremony on September 27.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, said:

“Sadly, these sorts of scams are all too common and are particularly unpleasant as they prey on such vulnerable people.

“I applaud Sally and Paul for the way they stepped in as soon as they realised something was not right and for letting Trading Standards know so that something could be done.

“Trading Standards will pursue the scammers at every turn to ensure that, wherever possible, they do not get away with their disgraceful behaviour.”

Suffolk Trading Standards encourages people to join the fight against scammers by signing up to become a Trading Standards Champion.

For more details go to the Trading Standards website at www.suffolk.gov.uk/JoinTheFight

Inflation, SEND school transport and care costs contribute to council's predicted overspend

Inflation, school transport for children with SEND, and looking after children in care are the main factors for SCC forecasting to spend £22.3m over its £688.1m budget for this year.

This is a similar story for many councils across the country, due to higher demand for their services, inflation remaining higher than expected for longer, and interest rates rising to levels not forecast by financial markets.

[Recent research by the County Councils Network](#) suggests that England's largest councils will need to make at least £1bn in savings to balance their current 2023/24 budgets.

A [BBC investigation](#) also reported that councils expect to be £5.2bn short of balancing budgets by April 2026, the average council facing a £33m predicted deficit by 2025-26.

Suffolk County Council projects a 4% overspend (£29.3m), to be partially offset by an additional Section 31 grant from Government, and additional income from the pooling of business rates with the district and borough councils in Suffolk, totalling £7m.

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

“Despite being able to publish a balanced budget in February, we are already having to spend more than we anticipated this year.

“We set this year’s budget during a period of highly uncertain economic conditions. Even although the country is now starting to see price rises slowing and energy costs beginning to drop we are still suffering the cost impacts of various global shocks - in particular COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine.

“We are experiencing unexpectedly high demands on certain services, meaning some are spending disproportionately more than others. For example, costs for school transport and children in care make up two-thirds of the total overspend.”

Details of the main areas of overspend are:

- **School transport** - forecast to overspend by £11.4m (39% of the overspend), with £8.3m of this being travel costs for children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). This is largely due to more children with SEND needs, transport operators being in limited supply, and rising costs from those operators who are also feeling the impacts of inflation, especially fuel costs.
- **Children in care** - forecast to overspend by £8.2m (28% of the overspend). The council has a responsibility to provide care for children and young people under the age of 18. Some of these have incredibly complex needs requiring 24-hour care from multiple carers. There is currently an unexpectedly higher number of children requiring this support, with this costing an average of £22,700 per week, per child.
- **Adult care services** - forecast to overspend by £3.5m (12% of the overspend) for purchasing care, due to increases in demand, and staffing costs in the sector. The fees paid for residential and nursing placements remain high with 64% of new residential and nursing packages being above the published rate of £806 per week, with some specialist packages being over £1,500 per week.
- **Inflation** - inflation and interest rates have been higher than experienced in a generation, with the legacy of COVID-19 continuing to have a significant impact on various services. As an example, there is an estimated £3.0m (10% of the overspend) pressure as pay settlements continue to be above historical norms as inflation has remained stubbornly high during 2023 so far. High interest rates mean it has been more costly than anticipated to borrow money, which the council does to help fund big projects, such as upgrading highways, maintaining schools or developing household recycling centres.

In addition to the net overspend of £22.3m from this main budget, the council is forecasting an overspend of £15.8m against its £256.5m budget from the Dedicated Schools Grant and Pupil Premium Grant. This is money from Government specifically to fund schools and services for pupils. This overspend comes solely from resources spent on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision, not including school transport. Suffolk, like many other local authorities, is seeing a continuous increase in demand which is not being met by the same level of increase in funding.

Despite these challenges, council departments continue to make savings. This year's budget identified £25.1m of savings to be made, and the latest figures show that £20m of this is projected to be achieved.

Councillor Richard Rout continues:

"Our officers continue to do great work for Suffolk residents, including providing complex levels of support to those most in need, whilst making savings.

"But with these increasing demands and costs, we are seeing councils around the country having to reduce services and put spending freezes in place, so that they can balance their budgets for this year. Unfortunately, we must now have these discussions too.

"For many years, we have made savings through our transformation programmes – essentially ways of working smarter and leaner whilst still delivering services. We have also built up an appropriate level of reserves, meaning we have savings which we are able to call upon now.

"But this is not sustainable and now that Cabinet has been presented with the council's first financial report for this year, we will work with directors to help reduce this predicted overspend."

The Cabinet at Suffolk County Council will discuss the Q1 2023-24 Revenue Budget paper, at its meeting on 12 September 2023. [Cabinet papers are published on the Suffolk County Council website.](#)

Councils unite against National Grid pylon proposals

In a [joint letter to National Grid](#), the leaders of the three councils address the extensive impact on landscapes and local communities that the scheme would bring.

They also highlight that an offshore solution has not been sufficiently investigated, and the opportunities that this could bring to co-ordinate with other large-scale energy projects off the region's coast.

The Norwich to Tilbury project would see 114 miles of electricity pylons weave their way through the three counties. Only a small percentage of this cabling would go underground, an issue which the councils also raise, stating that more would be needed particularly in the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and near Diss and the Waveney Valley.

Councillor Kevin Bentley, Leader of Essex County Council, said:

We have taken to writing at this time, as there is still the opportunity to explore all options and solutions for a development of this scale. We all support the collective effort to tackle climate change, work towards net zero and to create a secure future for the country's energy. But there are so many elements of this proposal which just do not go far enough.

Councillor Kay Mason Billig, Leader of Norfolk County Council, said:

The impact that this scheme would have should not be underestimated, particularly on the region's unique, designated landscapes and the many communities that will be affected. We all agree that studies into an offshore solution have not been appropriately explored, this is a viable option which we feel has been dismissed too readily.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

Should proposals for the project progress, and further consultations take place, we would expect National Grid to invest a lot more time and effort in working with our local communities. These large schemes can be guilty of doing the minimum necessary when they should be working with local people and businesses as much as possible, who know the area and can help find the best solutions, should the project go ahead.

National Grid held a second, non-statutory consultation, which closed on 21 August 2023. It is expected that a statutory consultation will take place in 2024.

Fraudster farmer who went on the run sentenced to five years

A former Suffolk farmer who went on the run for six months after failing to appear for sentencing for fraud that cost his victims £456,386 has been jailed.

Ipswich Crown Court today sentenced Wayne Parker to five years after his offences were brought to light by Suffolk Trading Standards.

Parker, 36, originally from Mildenhall, obtained credit from multiple suppliers after maintaining that he had a successful sheep and cattle business.

While most of the credit was used to fund his farming business, Wayne Parker Farming, he also lived a lavish lifestyle beyond his means, buying a Range Rover and other luxury purchases on finance.

When chased for payment of his debts Parker denied all knowledge of receiving invoices and resorted to other delaying tactics, such as writing cheques from closed bank accounts with no funds.

He admitted in court to lying to his suppliers but claimed he had sought to consolidate his debts with a company specialising in loans for bankrupt farmers, despite there being no evidence to support this.

Ipswich Crown Court subsequently found Parker guilty of fraudulent trading between February 2018 and May 2020 at a hearing in October 2022.

An arrest warrant was issued when he failed to appear in court for sentencing in February 2023.

While on the run Parker used hire cars in a bid to avoid detection, moving around the west and south of England.

Parker was finally caught at a service station near Basingstoke, Hampshire, on August 31 while driving his own vehicle when its registration plate triggered an alert in a passing police car.

Judge Nicola Talbot-Hadley sentenced Parker to serve four years for fraud, 10 months for 19 animal welfare offences investigated by Cambridgeshire Trading Standards to which Parker had previously pleaded guilty, and two months for absconding.

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

“Instead of doing the honourable thing and admitting his cash flow problems, Parker selfishly took out more and more credit, not caring that doing so could cause serious financial hardship for his suppliers.

“Many of these were small family-run businesses that have suffered considerably from his actions and will be left counting the cost for some time to come.

“Thanks to the involvement of Suffolk Trading Standards, there won’t be any further victims in our county, and Parker can use his time in prison to reflect on his actions and think twice about carrying out such devious behaviour in future.”

The investigation into Parker’s fraudulent activity was prompted by Suffolk Trading Standards noticing irregularities when they investigated him for failing to dispose of animal by-products, breaching tuberculosis requirements, and not recording and reporting animal movements.

This resulted in him receiving a 12-week custodial sentence, suspended for 18 months, in February 2020.

Powerful fostering film ‘Any Of Us’ launched

Suffolk County Council is excited to announce the launch of "Any Of Us," a compelling fostering film that sends a universal message that anyone with the capacity to care can become a foster carer.

The film spotlights three normal people demonstrating the caring qualities essential to becoming a foster carer. Their stories intertwine with Chloe's journey into fostering, creating the narrative that any of us can foster.

Fostering with your council or children's trust means supporting your community by offering safe, nurturing homes to children in need.

Stephen Burroughes, Deputy Cabinet Member for Fostering and Adoption, said:

Any Of Us is an excellent film that illustrates how any of us can become foster carers. It is a heartfelt reminder that we need caring individuals to step forward and provide loving homes for children here in Suffolk

The film has been produced by Reel TwentyFive and project managed by CAN Digital/Rachel Brown. This is the sixth film produced by a growing partnership of councils and children's trusts to promote local authority fostering.

The national launch took place at Birmingham's Everyman cinema on 26 September 26.

If you are interested in becoming a foster carer request your free foster carer pack and find out about the training, support and allowances you'll receive:

[Visit the foster page](#)

Call us: 01473 264800

Email us: fosterandadopt@suffolk.gov.uk

Views sought on Suffolk walking, wheeling and cycling routes

Suffolk County Council has been awarded nearly £11.7 million to develop active travel schemes, including measures such as cycle lanes, shared-use paths, and improved crossing points on roads.

It is hoped that the improvements would help more people to walk, wheel and cycle in their everyday lives and to enjoy safer streets, reduced congestion and better health and air quality.

Councillor Alexander Nicoll, Suffolk County Council Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, said:

We want active travel to be easy, safe and enjoyable for everyone. By creating high quality pedestrian and cycle routes with safe crossings, we hope to create a culture in which active travel can be residents' first choice.

It's important to stress that these ideas are still in development, and we want to hear from residents and businesses about existing challenges and what they would change to ensure we can make the best possible improvements to these routes.

The county council has identified eighteen different routes which could benefit from improvement, including:

- Nacton Road, Ipswich
- Woodbridge Road, Ipswich
- Princes Street, Ipswich
- Ipswich Hospital to Ipswich Waterfront
- Capel St Mary to Copdock Park and Ride
- Grange Road, Felixstowe
- East to West, Bury St Edmunds
- Various other routes located around Ipswich

Each of the schemes is at a different stage of development; if agreed to proceed following the consultation, some schemes will need additional funding as they move to the construction phase.

Residents can read more about the different routes and have their say at <https://arcg.is/1yDG49>. The surveys close on 23 November 2023.