

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – DECEMBER 2020

Cllr Stephen Burroughes - Framlingham Division



• PRESSURE ON COUNTY'S HOSPITALS WHY SUFFOLK ENTERING TIER 2 RESTRICTIONS

Suffolk's current COVID infection rates, local hotspots and pressure on hospitals are among the reasons why the county will enter tier two local restrictions on Wednesday 2 December. Following today's decision by central Government to place Suffolk in the High Alert tier, public sector organisations in Suffolk have set out their goal to get the county out of local restrictions as quickly as possible. They have also moved to help residents, business owners and employees to understand the restrictions that will apply across the county, and the reasons for them.

Whilst Suffolk has so far seen comparatively lower levels of infection than elsewhere in the region and country, the current infection rate (85 cases per 100,000 people) is more than double what it was when Suffolk entered tier one on 14 October (35 cases per 100,000 people). At the beginning of September, there were just five cases per 100,000 people. Parts of Suffolk, especially in Ipswich and Hadleigh, are seeing much higher numbers of positive COVID cases than anticipated. This all puts pressure on Suffolk's hospitals, which need to protect Suffolk's vulnerable residents whilst still treating non-COVID patients. There were 116 COVID patients in Suffolk hospital beds as at 23 November.

From Wednesday 2 December 2020, people in Suffolk will be able to:

- Meet a maximum of six people from other households outdoors.
- Go to pubs and bars operating as restaurants with people from your household or support bubble, consuming alcohol but only with a substantial meal,
- Go shopping but whilst wearing a mask in indoor public spaces and respecting social distancing rules.
- Attend schools, college or university.
- Make use of early years childcare.
- Go to the gym or leisure centre, while following their guidance.
- Get a haircut or personal care treatments, while following their guidance.
- Stay overnight with their household or support bubble.
- Attend a wedding, civil partnership or wake of up to 15 guests or funerals of up to 30 mourners.
- Attend entertainment and sporting events, while following their guidance and capacity limits.
- Visit places of worship, whilst following their guidance.
- Take part in exercise classes or organised adult sport outdoors.
- Visit a loved one in a care or nursing home, if allowed locally and while following their guidance.

Until the position changes, we will not be able to:

- Meet people from other households or support bubbles indoors.
- Visit pubs and bars not serving food.
- Stay overnight with people from another household or support bubble.

- Exercise indoors with people from another household or support bubble if there is any interaction between them.

Everyone is encouraged to work from home and limit their journeys where possible.

- **GREAT NEWS FOR LOWESTOFT'S GULL WING BRIDGE WHICH GETS GOVERNMENT APPROVAL**

Construction of Lowestoft's Gull Wing bridge will get underway early in 2021, following final approval of the scheme on Wednesday 25 November by the Government.

The Gull Wing project team at Suffolk County Council received official confirmation that its full business case has been approved, meaning that the £73.39m funding from the Department of Transport can now be accessed. With this final milestone now reached, the contract with building and civil engineering contractor, Farrans, will be signed. Other formalities such as formally acquiring land can also be completed, paving the way for construction work to start in the new year.

- **HELP US TO HELP YOU THIS WINTER**

(Press release issued on 24 November on behalf of Suffolk Resilience Forum)

Suffolk residents are being urged to support their physical and emotional wellbeing this winter and to get help early if they have any concerns. As we head into winter, with ongoing restrictions on our daily lives related to the Coronavirus pandemic, it is vital to know what support is out there and to seek help if you need it.

Support is still in place for anyone who is struggling with emotional or physical wellbeing due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The Covid Hub acts as a gateway to local services which can provide support for a range of issues related to emotional and physical wellbeing. If you need ideas on how to look after your and your family's mental health and wellbeing, [visit COVID-19 information hub](https://ealthysuffolk.org.uk/covidhub) at ealthysuffolk.org.uk/covidhub.

- **REPORT ABOUT SEND SERVICES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC FOLLOWING OFSTED AND CQC VISITS**

On 23 November, an initial report was published by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on the support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Suffolk was visited by Ofsted and the CQC in October, as one of eighteen local authorities taking part in the study. The purpose of the visits is for Ofsted and the CQC to gather evidence to inform future national improvements for children and young people with SEND across Education, Health and Care. This was not an inspection of Suffolk County Council or Health Services.

The overall aim of these visits was to:

- Support the local area to understand the impact of the pandemic on children and young people with SEND and their families.
- Find out what has worked well for children and young people during this time, what the challenges have been, and what lessons have been learned.
- Work with the local area to identify opportunities for improvement that address the challenges faced by children and young people with SEND.
- Highlight best practice case studies and share insights nationally to promote whole system learning.

The voices of children, young people and families were gathered through case studies and via a survey. Ofsted and the CQC also spoke to the education health and care professionals who work with young people with SEND. Ofsted and the CQC provided the local area with a letter that summarises the visit and provides more detail on the specific information shared with the visiting team; it reflects the Suffolk response during the pandemic. [Read Area SEND interim visit - Suffolk letter here](#) (PDF, 148KB). Suffolk was part of the first six visits which took place in October. [Read the overall report from the first six areas visited here](#).

A national report will be published in spring 2021, reporting the learning from visits across all eighteen areas.

- **INVESTING IN SUFFOLK TRADE AS UK EXITS EU**

As the end of the UK's transition period for exiting the EU draws closer, Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) continue to pay close attention to progress. As part of their meeting on 20 November, SPSL heard more about how Suffolk is preparing and proactively planning to support future economic growth by strengthening Suffolk's trade offer. Throughout the transition period, which began when the UK left the EU on 31 January 2020, SPSL have maintained a keen focus on local issues through the work of the county's Brexit Task Group, which was set up to understand and plan for the support and potential mitigation local businesses and residents may need.

As part of this, on 20 November, SPSL agreed to invest £490,000 over the next three years to support the continued strategic growth of Suffolk's economy and business community, and to support future local and regional business interests. The money will be used by Suffolk Chamber of Commerce to strengthen Suffolk's trade offer as Trade Advisors proactively represent the interests of Suffolk's businesses and communities by showcasing local products and services. They will also identify, encourage and foster relationships with EU businesses, provide tailored advice and support to Suffolk businesses looking to enter international markets, and protect local business interests which need to operate under the new rules following the UK's exit from the EU.

The Suffolk Trade team will comprise the two existing Trade Advisors who were recruited to support Suffolk's efforts in March 2019, when Suffolk Public Sector Leaders agreed to invest £243,600 as part of Suffolk's allocation of Government funding. The latest round of funding will enable the extension of these Advisor roles through to 2023.

The £490,000 is made up from the following amounts:

- £350,000 to be used from the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders' pooled business rates budget.
- £140,000 to be used from Suffolk's allocation of the Government's Brexit funding.

As well as covering the employment costs for two Advisors, this funding will in time be used to recruit a further member of the Suffolk Trade team and will cover operational costs for communications, events and web-based information that will be used by the team to support local businesses and foster relationships with international markets.

- **SUFFOLK SCHOOLS & BUSINESSES SCOOP NATIONAL AWARDS**

A Modeshift STARS accreditation is awarded to a business, education or community setting that actively brings about a positive change in travel behaviour. The accreditation complements the county council's 'Let's make a change for the future' campaign, which is encouraging residents to consider more active and sustainable travel options during the COVID-19 pandemic to avoid overcrowding the county's transport network and, longer-term, to experience the benefits of improved health and wellbeing, less congestion and cleaner air. The following schools and businesses have achieved their first level (bronze) Modeshift STARS accreditation, in recognition of their efforts to encourage active and sustainable travel:

Schools:

- Bosmere Community Primary School in Needham Market – for their anti-idling scheme to encourage parents to turn off the car engines when dropping off and collecting their children.
- Carlton Colville Primary School – for the work of their Junior Road Safety Officers to reduce congestion outside the school gates by promoting cycle training and providing a new cycle and scooter parking area in the school's carpark.
- The Limes Primary School in Oulton Broad – for promoting walking, scooting, cycling and park & stride to school days. They also raised money to install a new cycle parking station at the school.
- Copleston High School in Ipswich – for the work they carried out to ensure active travel was considered as part of their recent building extension. This included cycle parking, equipment storage, and a drying room.

Businesses:

- Essex & Suffolk Water's headquarters in Lowestoft - for their efforts in encouraging staff to travel to work by sustainable transport via their staff incentive schemes and active travel to work days.
- Bovis Homes' Ribbands Park in Ipswich – for providing space for walking and cycling around their new development, which links with the town's existing infrastructure. They also encourage all their new homeowners to consider the use of active travel for short journeys.
- Fred Olsen's office in Ipswich – for increasing the amount of bicycle parking, creating four charge points for electric vehicles, and installing five new showers so that those walking, running or cycling to work can freshen up when they arrive.

To find out more about how a school or business can achieve a Modeshift STARS accreditation email travelplans@suffolk.gov.uk To keep up to date with how Suffolk County Council is making it safer and easier for residents to choose sustainable travel, visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/adviceontravel

• COUNCIL DELIVERS ITS LARGEST DIGITAL CARE SUPPORT PROJECT IN RECORD TIME

Suffolk County Council has successfully delivered the largest digital care project in its history - from procurement to delivery in just 16 weeks. Working alongside care technology specialists, Alcove and Rethink Partners, the council delivered over 750 Carephone devices to elderly and vulnerable people, both in and outside of formal care settings, to help them, their families and care providers stay in touch during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Carephone service is provided through the Alcove Video Carephone, a simple communication device that allows people with little or no technological ability to have two-way video contact with care workers, family members and other approved service providers. The project also delivered comprehensive training to both the user and their care providers on how to get the most use from this new technology.

Real life success stories from the project include one from Jeni, an 83-year-old retired teacher who lives in Bury St Edmunds.

This technology is helping to keep families connected, easing the pain of separation that all families have felt at some point since the pandemic started. It also provides essential welfare reassurance for the family and is helping to reduce incidents of poor mental health on both sides of the call. There are indications that this technology can have a positive, measurable impact on loneliness in older and vulnerable people.

The technology has also helped maintain and enhance the communication between care giver and care receiver. The benefits of this project continue to be felt and have provided clear insight into using this technology to improve care outcomes, especially over the coming winter.

Download the [infographic that explains how the Suffolk Virtual Care Response Service is being delivered](#) (PDF, 1MB)

• NEW COUNTY COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S CALL TO 'STAY ACTIVE'!

A rallying cry for people to remain active was issued by Councillor Graham Newman on 10 November - his first public statement as civic head for the organisation.

Councillor Graham Newman, Chairman of Suffolk County Council, said:

"I know people are, understandably, concerned and anxious at the prospect of more national restrictions and with the onset of colder weather and darker nights the idea of being active can be daunting.

"However, I would encourage everyone, if they can, to be as active as possible over the autumn and winter months. Being active is good for both your physical and mental health and can be a great antidote to the way we're all feeling at the moment."

Councillor Newman was particularly keen to highlight the resources available through the Keep Moving Suffolk campaign as an important source of information and advice. He said:

"The Keep Moving Suffolk campaign website was a valued and trusted support for many people during the first set of national restrictions and will continue to be so for the weeks and months ahead. It has links to many great free tools to help people work out at home or outside in a safe way. If anybody is looking for ideas, or inspiration, then it's a great place to start."

"As a keen cyclist I would also recommend the Love to Ride campaign. Cycling is a great way to exercise in a safe, socially distanced way. If you haven't ridden in winter before, now is a great opportunity to give it a go."

Tim Hollingsworth, Chief Executive of Sport England, who are concerned about recent drop-offs in activity levels across the country, said:

"Being active is a vital tool to help us cope mentally with the challenges the months ahead will bring and physically to be fitter and healthier, to boost our immunity and to ward off illness."

"We know that people face real challenges right now in their daily lives, whether that's anxiety about the virus itself, financial concerns or uncertainty about what is or isn't allowed. Our message is that there has never been a more important time to take some time to be physically active."

The Keep Moving Suffolk campaign can be found at www.keeppmovingsuffolk.com and includes details and links to the Love to Ride initiative.

- **HOME, BUT NOT ALONE - PHONELINE GOES LIVE AGAIN**

The Home, But Not Alone free phoneline, which supports vulnerable people in our communities who may be struggling with the impact of Coronavirus, went live again on 3 November. The service was paused in August because of low demand and the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions. However, after the announcement of the second national lockdown, the service is up and running again.

The telephone number is freephone **0800 876 6926** and is staffed from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

This Home, But Not Alone phoneline complements The Suffolk Advice and Support Service phoneline (0800 068 3131) which helps those with debt, benefits, employment, or housing worries. This phoneline, also delivered by the Collaborative Communities Covid-19 Board, is staffed by the Citizens Advice Suffolk Alliance, which includes the eight Citizens Advice Bureaus across Suffolk, and Anglia Care Trust and Ipswich Housing Action Group.

Call handlers use resources and information from across many Suffolk organisations and specialist providers, which are tailored to individual needs.

- **SUFFOLK'S SEND SERVICE CELEBRATES WINNING NATIONAL AWARD**

Suffolk's special educational needs and disability service (SEND) has won a prestigious national award at this year's Nasen awards. Nasen is a charity that supports and champions those working with, and for, children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and learning differences. Each year, Nasen hosts an annual awards campaign, which looks to celebrate the achievements of individuals and organisations within the SEND sector. Suffolk's special educational needs and disability service won the David Ryan Publication Award, which recognises an innovative publication (including e-publications) that have had a positive impact on children and young people with SEND.

Suffolk won the award for the Suffolk SEND 16+ Transitions Guide. The guide, which was initially created in 2019, was developed to support young people aged 14-19 years to plan a successful journey towards adulthood. It was created following feedback from families of children with SEND, who said planning for adulthood was an extremely challenging and bewildering time.

Developed with the support and input of SEND Young Persons Network, the Suffolk Parent Carer Network, and practitioners across the sector, the guide has been so successful that in February 2020, edition two was produced and the team are now looking to offer further guidance through parent-led workshops. The guide is being distributed to all Suffolk colleges and high schools, including special schools and PRUs, and is being used by SEND and Inclusion services in their work with young people. [The guide can be found on the Local Offer website.](#)

THANK YOU!

Can I just pass on to everyone within the communities I represent a big 'THANK YOU' for all the work, support and help you have given to your residents during this pandemic in what has been (and continues to be) a very difficult and strange year. We will remember 2020 probably for all the wrong reasons, but one thing is certain, communities are stronger when we all work together. Although different, I wish you a Restful, Safe & Hopeful Christmas!

Stephen

For further information from my report or questions please contact me at:

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