

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S SPECIAL REPORT – MAY 2020

Councillor Stephen Burroughes



• HOME BUT NOT ALONE - PHONELINE

Those who live in Suffolk and need urgent help during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic can contact **0800 876 6926**. This is a free service.

This emergency phonenumber is for people who:

- do not have support available from friends, family or neighbours
- are struggling for food, medicines or other essential supplies
- are feeling lonely and isolated.

0800 876 6926 (available 9am to 5pm every day, including weekends). The telephone line is not a general information line for COVID-19 queries.

The Home, But Not Alone phonenumber takes on average 1,300 calls a week, which include calls for support with food, calls for support with collecting medication, and calls relating to loneliness or isolation.

• IPSWICH WATERFRONT CLOSED TO VEHICLES DURING THE LOCKDOWN

Suffolk County Council, the county's highways authority, is one of only a handful of councils in the country to take measures to temporarily close off a road to motorised vehicles to assist local people in taking their permitted daily exercise safely, whilst maintaining social distancing.

From 29 April, Ipswich Waterfront is temporarily closed between Custom House and Coprolite Street. The closure will be in place daily for a minimum of 21 days. After this time, the closure will be reviewed in line with the country's COVID-19 response. Signs will be put up advertising the road closure and advising people to keep to a safe distance.

Suffolk County Council is keen to stress this intervention is designed to support safe social distancing and, as per the government's guidelines, members of the public should not be traveling excessively to access public open spaces.

The highway authority will also consider other locations and measures it can implement in built-up areas in our county towns that will allow more people to carry out their daily exercise and support wellbeing, whilst continuing to follow the latest guidelines from government. This may include widening existing footpaths and cycle lanes, providing temporary footpaths and cycle lanes, and changing traffic signal timings to reduce waiting times for pedestrians and cyclists.

• FIREFIGHTERS HELP PARAMEDICS TO DELIVER LIFE-SAVING CARE

Firefighters in Suffolk are joining forces with the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST) to help provide frontline care during the coronavirus pandemic.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has volunteered and trained around 30 firefighters to work alongside paramedics to respond to 999 calls over the coming weeks. The firefighters are already blue light trained and will drive frontline emergency NHS ambulances, in turn freeing up paramedics to care for patients.

The firefighters have completed an induction course at Newmarket Ambulance Station, which included familiarising them with EEAST's vehicles and equipment. They were also taught basic life support and safe moving and handling skills so that they can help transfer patients.

• GOVERNMENT OPENS COVID-19 TESTING SITE

On 17 April, as part of its national COVID-19 testing programme, the Government opened a 'Drive Thru' testing facility on the outskirts of Ipswich.

Based on the existing Park and Ride site at Copdock Mill, off the A12 and A14 Junction, this is one of up to 50 sites being created around the country. This is a Government-led programme, supported by the Suffolk Resilience Forum and partners in Essex.

The site only offers testing on a pre-booked basis.

The Government is now offering testing for COVID-19 for:

- all those working on the frontline in health and social care (with or without symptoms)
- patients in the NHS and residents in care homes (with or without symptoms)
- all other essential workers with symptoms
- anyone over 65 with symptoms
- anyone who goes into work because they cannot work from home (for example, construction workers) and has symptoms
- anyone who has symptoms and lives with someone who meets any of the above criteria.

Visit <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> for more information on testing for COVID-19.

• **STAY AT HOME AND RECORD LIFE IN LOCKDOWN**

Suffolk Archives is calling on people across the county to record snapshots of their life whilst they stay at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. 'Life in Lockdown' is a brand-new archive collection, which will preserve the history of today and help future generations better understand the lives we lead and the environment we live in.

To contribute simply visit www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/life-in-lockdown and complete the online survey. You can also sign up to keep a diary, make a scrapbook, or record the lockdown using photography or by producing artwork.

There are also activities available that can be done at home, including a challenge to create a miniature of a Suffolk building out of Lego bricks, printable colouring sheets and online jigsaw puzzles of documents from the Suffolk Archives collection.

A time capsule competition **has also been** launched by the Engagement Hub, part of Suffolk County Council's Children and Young People's services, in partnership with Suffolk Archives and The Hold. **'The Art of being 2 metres Apart!'** time capsule competition is to help children and young people to express and share their feelings during this difficult time through art, music or creative writing.

There are three categories (artwork, music or creative writing) and two age groups: 5-11 years old and 12-19 years old (up to 25 with SEND). You can enter more than one category, and the creative work submitted will be exhibited later in the year.

To enter, and for more information, visit: www.thesource.me.uk/timecapsule. The deadline is 1 September 2020, and there is a £30 voucher for the winner in each category and age group.

• **FINANCIAL ASSESSMENTS FOR THOSE RECEIVING CARE TO BE POSTPONED**

Each April, Suffolk County Council carries out an annual financial assessment review for those with care packages.

This year, in light of the current Coronavirus pandemic, a decision has been made to postpone the financial review until further notice.

On 16 April, the Council announced that those in receipt of care will continue to be charged in the same way that they are currently and there will be no change in the way in which people make their payments.

The situation will be kept under review, and customers will be informed when the time is right to consider undertaking the annual financial review. No back charges will be incurred as a result of this postponement.

• **THE FIGHT AGAINST SCAMS**

Times of distress and disruption are a magnet for scammers and, sadly, now is no different.

Action Fraud has reported that, in February alone, victims lost over £800,000 as a result of COVID-19 related scams. This figure is likely to be just the tip of the iceberg, as many will have felt too scared or ashamed to report, and others will be completely unaware that they have been duped.

Here in Suffolk both residents and businesses have been targeted by fraudsters in a variety of ways.

Trading Standards have seen emails that contain malware links and attachments, as well as those sending you to phishing sites, where the criminals attempt to steal your personal information. There have been reports of criminals knocking on doors and offering to go shopping for people who are self-isolating at home. Some purport to be from well-known charities such as The Red Cross, with others claiming to be from local community groups, including working on behalf of Suffolk County Council's Home, But Not Alone.

Other scams include online shopping scams involving sought-after items like face masks and hand sanitiser, with either no products being supplied or, worse still, products that don't comply with safety standards. There are also reports of fake websites that imitate agencies including HMRC, offering false tax relief assistance.

Trading Standards have highlighted all these scams on their social media channels as well as in their weekly email to over 700 Trading Standards Champions. Their followers on social media have helped share the information to thousands of people, who in turn have shared it with friends and family both on and offline. Consumer Champions are residents, businesses and community groups of Suffolk, many of whom share the information on their community websites or in newsletters.

You can join the fight against scams by:

- Reporting scams to Suffolk Trading Standards via the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133
- Following Trading Standard on Twitter, www.twitter.com/SuffolkTS, and Facebook, www.facebook.com/SuffolkTradingStandards, to help share messages to your friends, family and followers.
- Signing up to receive a weekly email alert by going to www.suffolk.gov.uk/JoinTheFight

• COUNCIL WORKS WITH PROVIDERS DURING PANDEMIC

As the Coronavirus pandemic continues, the county council is keen to reassure people that it is doing everything in its power to support care providers. Along with the NHS and health providers, the care system is vital to our response to Coronavirus and they are truly on the front line in terms of supporting our most vulnerable. The demand for their services has never been higher and the council is supporting them meet this challenge.

The council has changed the way in which it pays care providers in order to ensure they are able to remain operational during the crisis. The council has also moved quickly to obtain extra capacity for care needs to be met by using CQC registered providers of home care that do not normally contract with the Council and buying more beds in care homes.

The council's own Home First service is also preparing for increased demand and planning for sickness levels by initially redeploying staff from across Adult Community Services. Basic training is already underway to upskill or refresh the skills of these staff in order to be ready for redeployment. Adult Care Services are also working closely with the Home, But Not Alone hub to identify what other support can be offered to ease the pressure on carers as the crisis continues.

The council also recognises that the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) is an ongoing, national issue for care providers. Whilst care providers are responsible for sourcing PPE for their service, the high demand globally has made this increasingly difficult, adding to the pressure and anxiety of frontline workers. The council has lobbied tirelessly to ensure that care providers are given the same prioritisation as health workers in terms of receiving PPE and will continue to do so. In order to support our local care providers Suffolk County Council are providing a centralised cell for PPE in Suffolk with a dedicated email address.

The council has been collating information for Adults and Children's services, districts and borough councils, Suffolk Constabulary, and the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service and this is then fed into the stock and procurement system. The council's procurement team has established some good supply chains, both nationally and internationally. Endeavour House, Ipswich, is the central base for all PPE delivery, storage, pack prep, and distribution. Packs are being sent out to frontline services in Suffolk on a daily basis.

In the week of 6 April alone, 65 care homes were provided with the emergency PPE they asked for and the council has responded to every care provider that has approached the council for support.

- **RESIDENTS SHOW THEIR SUPPORT FOR KEEP MOVING SUFFOLK CAMPAIGN**

Residents and organisations in the public and voluntary sector have come out in support of the county's Keep Moving Suffolk campaign.

Led by Suffolk's Most Active County Partnership, the campaign supports everyone in Suffolk to get active from the safety of their homes and gardens, or during their one session of daily exercise away from their home, under the current COVID-19 pandemic social distancing arrangements.

It's all about giving people tips and advice to support a healthy mind and body. The key focus is the website keepmovingsuffolk.com which is full of local and national information and resources that have been developed specifically to make it easy for people to become, or remain, active at home during these challenging times.

The website has come about as a means to address the need to give people a range of options following the closure of gyms, leisure centres, and swimming pools and the cancellation of classes and activities. Without us all taking positive action, physical activity levels could tumble and cause a long-term impact on physical and mental health and wellbeing in the county.

The website launched on 1 April and, within its first week, the website was used over 2,500 times. There has also been great support through the Keep Moving Suffolk social media channels, where you can share with us your stories of how you are keeping active. On Facebook, visit [KeepMovingSuffolk](https://www.facebook.com/KeepMovingSuffolk) or on Twitter [@Most Active](https://twitter.com/MostActive)

- **MORE THAN 98% OF PUPILS RECEIVE PREFERRED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

On 16 April, it was reported that over 98.57% of Suffolk children were offered a place on National Offer Day at one of the schools preferred by their parents. Suffolk County Council received 7,602 applications from parents indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2020. Some 7,116 children received offers for their first preference school and 7,493 children received an offer for one of their three preferred schools.

Any parents or carers with a child born between 1 September 2015 and 31 August 2016 who have not yet applied for a school place should make an application immediately by downloading the [CAF1 application form from our website](#) or contact Suffolk County Council on **0345 600 0981**.

Once school places have been confirmed, parents need to consider how their child will get to and from school. If their child is eligible for SCC funded school travel, they will receive an email by 15 May 2020 with details of how to opt-in.

- **COUNCIL LEADERS CALL ON EDF ENERGY TO CONSULT WITH COUNCILS BEFORE ANY PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

On 9 April, Leaders of East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council wrote to EDF Energy urging them to fully consider how and when they will consult with local communities as part of the planning process for a new Sizewell C power station on the Suffolk coast.

EDF Energy plan to submit their Development Consent Order to the Government's Planning Inspectorate in the next few weeks which triggers a formal process and timescale which includes a period of formal public engagement. Whilst the two councils remain supportive of EDF Energy making the DCO submission, both councils are calling on the energy provider to consult with the two local authorities regarding their plans for speaking to the public.

There is concern that any period of consultation that begins during the current COVID-19 pandemic will not give the community the fullest opportunity possible to engage.

[Read the joint letter to EDF Energy from council leaders](#) (PDF, 190KB).

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

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