



November 2020 Row Heath Monthly Parish Newsletter



Visit suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus for health advice, service changes, business support and schools' guidance.

Keep up to date on the latest guidance on Covid-19 from central government here: www.gov.uk/coronavirus

A message from Councillor Colin Noble, County Councillor for Row Heath.

Thank you for reading my monthly Parish report.

At the time of writing the November lockdown is coming to an end, and shortly we enter the new Tier Two restrictions and I think all of us are thinking about how to make Christmas special for young ones but also following the rules and trying to work out how to protect best those who are vulnerable around us.

At the County Council its staff have been remarkable in the way services have continued to be provided. Still, the costs of doing so have been considerable, and the pandemic has highlighted stresses, particularly in the social care services that have to be addressed. Councils cannot simply borrow money as we are required to deliver a balanced budget and over the next couple of months through the budget setting process the council is grappling with the desire to help with low council tax rises but the need to balance the books.

Over the next few pages, I outline some of the things that have been happening over the past month and hopefully some snippets of useful advice.

Have a Merry Christmas and I hope your able to spend time with those you love at what is meant to be a very special time of year. Take Care.

Remembrance Weekend

Earlier this month I had the honour and privilege to lay wreaths on behalf of a grateful County at our war memorials. Over the course of the Remembrance weekend, I attended social distanced events at West Row, Friday Street, Beck Row, Lakenheath, Eriswell and on the 11th November at Tuddenham St. Mary. These are always important moments for our communities but sadly this year only a few were asked to gather at each, to mark our act of Remembrance even in these Corvid restricted times. Next year is the one hundredth anniversary of the formation of the British Legion and hopefully people will be able to attend in greater numbers to mark the occasion.

Current infection rates and pressure on county's hospitals among reasons for Suffolk entering tier two 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.

Stuart Keeble, Suffolk's director of public health, said:

"I fully understand that many people will be disappointed that Suffolk has not emerged from the national restrictions in a lower tier, or indeed no tier at all. I am too. Suffolk has done well at keeping our infection rates lower than many other areas in the country, and for that I would like to thank people for what they have done.

"The facts facing us today are clear however. With current infection rates and pressure being put on health services, we need to do more of what we have been doing. We need to stick with it.

"We know what we need to do to get Suffolk back on track. Every one of us needs to keep following the rules to stop the spread of COVID-19. We need to ensure our hospitals can continue to care for people who urgently need help, including those without COVID. We need to be responsible today for a better tomorrow."

Rachel Kearton, Suffolk's deputy chief constable and chair of the group of public sector organisations leading the fight against COVID-19 in the county, said:

"This week's news about the success of COVID vaccine trials shows us clearly that there is light at the end of this tunnel, but there is still some way to go.

"Suffolk has been at the forefront of following Government guidance and it is precisely that which has kept infection rates relevantly low for so long.

"Now is not the time to give up and deviate from our course. Now is precisely the time to keep following the rules and stop the spread of COVID-19, so that we can get back to the social freedoms we miss so very much."

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.

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.

Dr Mark Shenton, chairman of NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group and Professor of Integrated Care at the University of Suffolk, said:

“The NHS is open to support people’s physical and mental health needs, and it’s important no-one puts off seeking help as that could lead to the condition deteriorating.

“You can seek help in a number of ways, such as NHS 111 by telephone or online. Your local pharmacy is a very good source of advice, with many open long hours and you don’t need an appointment to speak with the pharmacist. GP practice staff are there to help, and we urge you to make contact by ‘phone or online. Once you contact your practice, someone will get back in touch with you. It might not always be a GP; it could be a physician associate, a nurse, pharmacist or physiotherapist, depending on your medical need.

“There are lots of online resources to support your mental health available from Wellbeing Suffolk and, if you need to talk, Suffolk has a 24/7 mental health support line, First Response, meaning you can speak to someone anytime on 0808 196 3494.”

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** at healthysuffolk.org.uk/covidhub.

Stuart Keeble, Director of Public Health, said:

“As we head into the colder months of the year, faced with ongoing restrictions on our daily lives in the effort to control the Coronavirus pandemic and save lives, it is vital that we take steps to look after our physical and emotional wellbeing.

“This year has brought new challenges; we have all needed to adapt to a new ‘normal’. We must remember that this is a marathon and not a sprint and small changes to our daily routine can help us to feel better and more able to cope with an ever-changing environment.

“If you, or anyone you know is struggling, please remember that support is still available. Visit the Covid Hub to find the right help for you.”

Initial report published about SEND services during the COVID-19 pandemic following Ofsted and CQC visits to local authorities

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.

Chief Executive of Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, John Dugmore, said:

"We are delighted to be working alongside Suffolk Public Sector Leaders and, at a time when business confidence is at a historic low because of COVID-19 and EU withdrawal, this opportunity will help our trade team promote and enhance Suffolk's offer to the world, drive growth and investment, and help our businesses navigate the new norms ahead.

"Thanks to the work of the Chamber's Trade Advisors, Suffolk businesses feel more prepared for EU withdrawal having had access to further information, advice and strategic counsel. As part of the 53 accredited chambers in the UK, but also 60 chambers worldwide, we have the links to help Suffolk businesses grow on the international stage and help the county recover from the crippling effects of COVID-19.

"Our research to date indicates that Suffolk exports nearly half a billion pounds per annum and it is therefore vital that we continue to support businesses post 1st January. Key issues will include the UK's new border operating model, supply-chain resilience, access to new markets, and arrangements with freight forwarders and those in the logistics/shipping industries. Our offer will now be expanded to build long-term capacity and support our many businesses looking to grow and reap the benefits of future trade agreements."

Suffolk County 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.

Speaking about her experience using her new Carephone, Jeni said:

“The other day it was such a thrill as my niece showed me her granddaughter - who is just over a year old. She walked straight across the room and I saw her on the screen. It was really lovely to see her. It was the first time she had walked, and they gave me a call straight away so I could see her do it. I have only ever seen her in person once before, so it was such a pleasure.”

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)

Home, But Not Alone phonline goes live again

The Home, But Not Alone free phonline, 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.

Chrissie Geeson, Chair of the Collaborative Communities Covid-19 Board and Head of Localities and Partnerships at Suffolk County Council, said:

“The phonenumber was absolutely vital during the first lockdown and it is only right that the same support is on offer.

“The phonenumber helped thousands of people and families, who often didn’t have a network of family or friends to call upon, access emergency support such as food and medicine deliveries and befriending schemes.”

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

This Home, But Not Alone phonenumber complements The Suffolk Advice and Support Service phonenumber (0800 068 3131) which helps those with debt, benefits, employment, or housing worries. This phonenumber, 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.

And finally...

Lowestoft’s Gull Wing secures Government approval, work to start in the new year

Whilst Lowestoft is a long way from Row Heath, I mention this as it is a significant infrastructure project for our County and one, I take a very personal interest as I championed the iconic design rather than just a boring functional bridge that is now known as the Gull Wing when I was Leader of the Council. Construction of the 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.

Highways Locality Budget

I have a budget for minor highways works ranging from better signage to dropped kerbs, if there is a small highways improvement you would like to see, let me know.

Locality Budget

I have a small budget for community projects which can often help kick start an initiative with some seed funding or help to buy a new piece of equipment that a community group need. Let me know if there are any groups or projects that could benefit from a grant.

Once again Merry Christmas and here's to a far better 2021 than 2020.

Cllr. Colin Noble

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