

June 2021 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Suffolk County Council leader vows to “build back better, stronger, and greener after COVID”

On May 27th, Suffolk County Council held their 2021 AGM. Leader of the Council Matthew Hicks laid out his vision for the future. Protecting vulnerable residents, strengthening Suffolk’s economy and a strong focus on the environment are at the heart of council's new priorities. Protecting and supporting vulnerable residents, strengthening Suffolk’s economy, a strong focus on the environment and delivering value for money for the taxpayer is at the heart of priorities outlined by Suffolk County Council’s leader today.

Councillor Matthew Hicks said that in the next 4 years, Suffolk County Council will:

Drive up educational standards through a project led by the National Literacy Trust.

Maintain the Outstanding rating for Children’s Services from OFSTED

Launch a £20m programme to spend £10m tackling highways flooding and a further £10m improving and upgrading 500 miles of pavements and footpaths.

£14.5m in upgrading or building new waste recycling centres.

Continue investing £45m building 800 new school places for children with Special Educational Needs

On education and children’s services he said:

“We are already investing £45m building over 800 new school places for children with Special Educational Needs. Working with our partners, we will drive up educational standards through a project led by the National Literacy Trust and we will create a network of Family Hubs.”

On adult social care and supporting vulnerable people he said:

“The reality is by 2031, a fifth of Suffolk’s residents will be aged over 70, and we must be prepared for that. We will harness new technology, like we did when we supported the Digital Care Phone project last year. We will also continue our unwavering support for our fantastic care workers, who do so much to make sure people get the care and support they need.

“Since 2017 we have spent over £1bn on caring for vulnerable residents. This huge level of support will continue.”

“On the post pandemic economic landscape in Suffolk, He outlined his vision for an economic recovery looking to build an economy fit for the next 30 years, describing an economy that “embraces new greener technology, that invites investment in the right training and skills and benefits everyone equally.”

On the environment, Councillor Hicks stressed that the people of Suffolk had made it clear during the election that environmental issues matter to them, along with other concerns around housing, infrastructure and their quality of life. He stressed that the environment would continue to be at the forefront of his administration’s agenda.

Councillor Hicks said: “In 2019 this council [declared a climate emergency](#) – and since then we have been working hard to meet our responsibilities to become a carbon neutral authority by 2030.

“£3m to improve heating systems in council offices, fire stations and schools. And we are investing £14.5m in upgraded or new waste recycling centres and we are promoting greater biodiversity.”

He also celebrated the increase diversity of the county council, noting that 39% of councillors were now women and the election of one of the youngest county councillors in the country.

Walk in the footsteps of Anglo-Saxon Kings on new Suffolk countryside trail

On May 11, it was announced that a new seven-mile walking trail near the site of Sutton Hoo had been created in Suffolk’s Deben Valley revealing the hidden archeological secrets of the area.

Walkers will be transported back 1,500 years and experience the landscape once home to a long-lost Anglo-Saxon settlement at Rendlesham where the East Anglian Kings once lived. Hidden gems from other periods of history will also be unveiled, such as a medieval priory, a stately home, a decoy pond and ancient woodland. The trail has been created by Suffolk County Council’s Archaeological Service (SCCAS) and is one of the activities made possible by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. SCCAS received a grant of £517,300 to fund “Rendlesham Revealed: Anglo-Saxon Life in South-East

Suffolk", a community archaeological project to uncover hidden history in the area. To guide them, walkers can download an online guide, which will point out the history along the way, as they take in meadows, open fields, woodland and riverside paths. The guide is available on the Suffolk Heritage Explorer website: heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/rendlesham

We know that our physical and mental wellbeing benefit greatly from being outdoors and being in touch with nature. As the weather starts to improve, and we are able to travel in accordance with Government guidelines, getting outside for a walk is a really positive thing to do. This new 'In the footsteps of Kings' trail in the peaceful Deben Valley countryside offers these benefits perfectly, as well as a unique and immersive experience exploring the local history. It is a great addition to the Discover Suffolk series, and available in time for the virtual Suffolk Walking Festival which begins on 22 May.

A new electric taxi-bus service launched in East Suffolk

On May 13th, SCC launched Katch – a new sustainable, electric taxi-bus service in the East of the county. Katch provides a travel solution for local residents and visitors in Wickham Market and Framlingham, as well as for those who need to meet their rail connections at Wickham Market train station in Campsea Ashe. With support from East Suffolk Council, Framlingham Town Council, Community Rail Network, East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership, Greater Anglia and CarsSmart, Katch delivers on the commitment Suffolk councils have made to grow the region's passenger transport in a sustainable way. It also plays a part in cutting carbon to help reach the Government's ambition of zero emissions by 2050 and Suffolk County Council's own target of being carbon neutral by 2030. Katch started on Monday 17 May 2021 and will run as a trial for 12 months. The service will be available seven days a week from 6.30am to 10.30pm on Monday to Saturday and 9am to 7pm on Sunday. All journeys must be booked in advance via the Katch App or telephone by calling 01728 55 44 55. The cost of a return journey is £7 and a single journey is £4. If successful and is regularly used by commuters and rail passengers, Suffolk County Council is keen to facilitate further schemes across the county. SCC is delighted to be able to offer the new sustainable, electric taxi-bus service in the East of the county. The service will provide a travel solution for local residents and visitors in Wickham Market and Framlingham as well as for those who need to meet their train connections at Wickham Market train station in Campsea Ashe. It is also hoped the service will encourage more people to consider using public transport rather than relying on the car. Following a successful trial, there is an opportunity for this type of flexible and green alternative travel to be considered across other communities in Suffolk.

Long-awaited Pride in Suffolk's Past exhibition opened at The Hold

On May 14th, it was announced that the long-awaited Pride in Suffolk's Past exhibition will open on May 17th, in line with Covid-19 regulations. This will be only the second exhibition to open in this brand-new venue - which partially opened for the first time last September - and is a fantastic opportunity for visitors to come and get a taste of what is on offer – all for free! The Pride in Suffolk's Past exhibition, which is the culmination of an in-depth two-year project, uses original documents found in Suffolk Archives and local collections to explore the hidden histories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender non-conforming people in Suffolk's past.

Due to legal and social repression these stories have all too often gone untold but now these experiences can be shared for future generations to understand how things have changed over time, as well as what work there is still to be done. Complementing the archival materials on display, the exhibition also contains contributions shared by the thriving LGBTQ+ community in Suffolk today. The exhibition is open seven days a week from Monday 17 May until Sunday 4 July. Tickets are free of charge but must be booked in advance: www.ticketsource.co.uk/suffolk-archives

Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division

Tel : 01728 628176 Mob : 07824 474741 E-mail : matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk