

## County Council report – February 2023

### Council's net zero plans making progress

The council has been keen to lead from the front with its ambition to reduce its own emissions and energy costs, while inspiring and supporting others to do the same.

It is one of only a few local authorities in the country to publish a 'Carbon Budget'. This looks in detail at its environmental impact, to identify actions and costs needed to reduce emissions.

**“The council has made incredible progress in the last few years to reduce its carbon emissions, but we are very open about the fact we still have a long way to go and much work to do.”**

**“Since March 2019, when we declared a climate emergency, I have been adamant that achieving net zero by 2030 will be tough. But it's a challenge that we simply must rise to, so that we can stand tall as an authority knowing that we're doing the best we can to reduce our operating costs as an organisation and eliminate as many carbon emissions as possible.”**

**“The council is not immune to the rising energy costs confronting residents and businesses across the country and this work has an important role to play in making our buildings more efficient and cheaper to run. For example, we have reduced gas consumption in one of our properties, Constantine House, by 80% over a 12-month period.”**

- **Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment at Suffolk County Council**

Changes it is making include moving its small vehicle fleet to fully electric by 2025, it has upgraded street lighting across the county, changed to a renewable electricity tariff, and is increasing the number of solar panels across its estate.

But one of the elements that will determine the council's progress to net zero, is the ambition shown by the businesses in its supply chain. Although these are not carbon emissions directly produced by the council, its suppliers and contractors still affect the council's target.

### Plans to boost funding for Citizens Advice to support people during Cost-of-Living challenges

Suffolk County Council plans to increase its funding to Local Citizens Advice in Suffolk by £45,000, to support Suffolk Residents during the current Cost of Living challenges.

The Council has set out in its 2023/24 budget proposals, that it plans to increase the amount of funding it provides to the Citizens Advice Bureau from £120,000 in the 2022/23 financial year, to £165,000 for the 2023/24 financial year. Suffolk County Council's budget proposals will be voted on in February.

The additional funding reflects the increased demand the service is seeing considering the current cost of living pressures.

"The Local Citizens Advice Network across Suffolk appreciate the financial support given by Suffolk County Council to their core service at a time when we are seeing an increase in demand and also in our own cost base. This funding helps us to continue to provide residents across Suffolk with the advice and support they need at this difficult time, and we look forward to working closely with the Council in the future."

## **Cabinet backs consultation on devolution deal worth over half a billion pounds for Suffolk**

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, Councillors agreed to progress to consultation on Suffolk's proposed devolution deal which would hand the county more powers and control of over half a billion pounds in investment.

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

"This proposed deal represents a big opportunity for Suffolk. By improving local transport infrastructure, building more affordable homes, and developing skills and training provision in a way that meets the needs of the local economy and local people, we could create new opportunities and raise living standards for our communities.

"This is the start of a journey for Suffolk, and if agreed, this deal would mark a step change in our relationship with Government, placing us front and centre as a key partner and allowing us to ensure that Suffolk's voice is heard in the national conversation. In time, it would open the door to further negotiations and even greater self-determination.

"I look forward to hearing residents' and businesses' views on this proposed landmark deal."

A public consultation will be undertaken in early summer 2023 which will give residents and businesses the opportunity to have their say on Suffolk's proposed devolution deal. To enact the deal, a resolution to change the County Council's governance to a Directly Elected Leader and Cabinet model will need to be taken to Council for consideration. If approved, the Directly Elected Leader's election will be held within six months of that decision.