

# Belstead Parish Council

## Approved Minutes of the Remote Council Meeting held on Wednesday 8 July 2020 at 7.30pm via Zoom

**Present:** Cllr Richard Clift (Chair), Cllr Trevor Beckett (Vice-Chair), Cllr Christine Eade, Cllr Chris Markham and Cllr Ken Stowe

**Attendance:** Cllr Jane Gould (District Councillor), Cllr Christopher Hudson (County Councillor) and Simon Ashton (Parish Clerk & RFO)

**1. Apologies and Approval of Absences**

There were no apologies and absences for approval as all Members were present.

**2. Declarations of Interests by Members & Requests for Dispensation**

There were no interests declared or requests received by any of the Members.

**3. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting on 13 May 2020**

Minutes of the previous meeting of the Parish Council on 13 May 2020 were received and approved as a true record. It was agreed that arrangements would be made for the minutes to be signed by the Chair once the restriction on physical meetings was removed.

**4. Reports by the District Councillor and County Councillor**

The Parish Clerk had shared copies of the district council report received from Cllr Gould and the county council report received from Cllr Hudson with Members in advance of the meeting for their information. Copies of these reports have been made available at the end of these minutes for information.

**5. Contributions by Members of the Public**

There were no issues raised by members of the public.

**6. Finance**

(a) Members noted the receipt of a BDC Precept (1/2) (2020/21) payment of £3,500.00 on 15 April 2020.

(b) Members noted the receipt of a Village Hall grant overpayment of £135.00 on 3 May 2020.

(c) Members noted the receipt of a VAT refund (2019/20) of £731.26 on 20 May 2020.

(d) Members noted the Barclays Bank account balances of £18,274.27 and 6,355.39 as at 29 May 2020.

(e) The Council's internal audit report (2019/20) prepared by SALC was presented by the RFO which was reviewed and approved by Members.

- (f) The Council's internal audit report response and action plan (2019/20) prepared by the RFO was presented by the RFO which was reviewed and approved by Members.
- (g) The Council's Statement of Accounts (2019/20) prepared by the RFO was reviewed and approved by Members.
- (h) The Council's Asset Register (2019/20) updated by the RFO was reviewed and approved by Members.
- (i) The AGAR Section 1 Annual Governance Statement (2019/20) prepared by the Parish Clerk was reviewed and approved by Members.
- (j) The AGAR Section 2 Accounting Statements (2019/20) prepared by the RFO was reviewed and approved by Members.
- (k) The AGAR Section 2 Explanation of Variances (2019/20) prepared by the RFO was reviewed and approved by Members.
- (l) The AGAR Part 2 Certificate of Exemption (2019/20) prepared by the RFO was reviewed and approved by Members.
- (m) The Notice of Public Rights (2019/20) prepared by the RFO was reviewed and approved by Members. The six-week consultation period was due to commence on 13 July 2020.
- (n) Payments were authorised in favour of the Parish Clerk's wages and office and personal expenses (£691.34) and Suffolk Association of Local Councils for the internal audit (2019/20) (£186.00). These payments were approved by Members.

#### **7. Governance**

- (a) A list of Members' Responsibilities (2019/20) was prepared by the Parish Clerk following discussion with Members who then approved a final version for publication on the web site and noticeboard.
- (b) The Parish Clerk had shared details of the forthcoming SALC AGM on 30 July 2020 in advance of the meeting. Members were happy to accept the Parish Clerk's offer to represent the Council at the meeting. The Parish Clerk agreed to make the booking with SALC.
- (c) Cllr Clift updated Members on the recent acknowledgement received from Babergh District Council in connection with the Mill Farm Place open space and agreed that any further progress made would be shared with Members at the next meeting.
- (d) Members discussed the progress of development at Moyes Place in connection with the local nature reserve and agreed to discuss outstanding issues at the next meeting.

#### **8. Consultations**

- (a) Following discussion and subsequent completion of the survey, Members agreed to submit a corporate response to the LGA Code of Conduct consultation by the due date of 17 August 2020.

#### **9. Matters for Future Consideration**

- (a) Consideration of a Replacement of the Old A12 HGV Sign

#### **10. Date of the Next Meeting**

- (a) 9 September 2020 (Urgent Agenda Items & Documents Received by 1 September 2020)
- (b) 11 November 2020
- (c) 13 January 2021

(d) The meeting finished at 9.00pm.

Simon Ashton, Parish Clerk  
[belstead.pc@btinternet.com](mailto:belstead.pc@btinternet.com)  
9 September 2020

**News and information from Jane Gould, Babergh District Councillor.**

**To the residents in Orwell Ward**

**COVID 19 Newsletter 6**

**4 July 2020**

### **Easing of lockdown restrictions**

From Saturday 4 July, hospitality businesses including pubs, restaurants, hotels and hairdressers will be able to open their doors to customers.

In addition, the guidance for social distancing has been amended, and where 2 metre distances cannot be maintained, the guidance now recommends keeping '1 metre plus' distance. While these changes are welcome, it is still crucial that we continue to promote social distancing wherever possible and encouraging regular hand washing to limit the threat and spread of Covid-19.

Our work with businesses, towns and villages to support the introduction of all new social distancing measures continues, with both small and larger scale interventions being introduced across our districts to help create safer places for our communities. We are receiving regular updates from our towns where social distancing measures have been implemented to understand how they are working now more businesses have opened. This feedback will continue as lockdown measures continue to ease.

### **Help and Support**

Our dedicated social distancing web pages feature a flowchart outlining the types of small-scale interventions along with the process and template for requesting larger scale interventions. We have created some downloadable posters to help businesses encourage social distancing. These are available, along with a range of guidance for businesses, on our social distancing web page. Further support is available by emailing our social distancing team or calling 0300 1234000 (option 7).

## **Public toilets**

All legionella testing in our public toilets has been completed and we are now awaiting the results. Once the results are confirmed, the toilets will be thoroughly cleaned and opened to the public. Within all our public facilities, we will be encouraging social distancing and hand washing to reduce the threat of COVID-19 spreading.

## **Schools**

Social distancing measures for local schools are being managed by Suffolk County Council, working directly with head teachers. In the first instance, Suffolk County Council is requesting that schools consider all available options, such as pavement marking and signage, before involving the road safety team. Requests for road safety measures outside or near school buildings can only be made by schools.

## **Play areas**

Our public realm team is working to reopen play areas in our open spaces from Saturday 4 July, in line with the further easing of lockdown.

## **Discretionary Grants**

The first round of applications for the Discretionary Grant, aimed at businesses in shared spaces, market stalls and charitable properties or bed and breakfast owners, closed on Friday June 19. We received 143 applications that met the Discretionary Grant criteria and, of these, 44 have already been paid. We are continuing to review all submitted applications. Any businesses that have applied and received a claim reference will be contacted to confirm whether or not their application has been successful. The criteria for the second round of Discretionary Grant funding was launched on Friday 3 July with the aim of reaching more small businesses who have not had access to other Government grants.

## **Housing - Gas safety checks**

We are still experiencing challenges with tenants refusing access for gas servicing due to fears over Covid-19, resulting in an increasing number of out of date Landlords Gas Safety Records. To try to encourage more tenants to allow access, this week we began 'cold-call' face to face visits to properties to offer reassurance about how we can work safely to enable safety checks to go ahead.

## **Restart of non-essential repairs**

From 4 July non-essential external repairs reported by tenants have been accepted including repairing external windows, guttering, fencing and paths. Internal non-essential repairs will remain paused for the foreseeable future to continue to protect the health and safety of our residents and staff.

## **Our communities - Support for those shielding**

Last week, the Government announced the easing of lockdown measures for those who have been shielding - allowing them to leave their home, as long as they maintain strict social distancing. This will be followed by a further change from Monday 6 July, when they will be able to meet in a group of up to six people outdoors, while adhering to social distancing measures, and form support bubbles if they live alone, or are a lone adult with a dependent under 18. From Saturday 1 August the clinically extremely vulnerable can stop shielding and are able to visit shops and places of worship, while following current social distancing rules. Everybody in the 'clinically extremely vulnerable' categorisation has received a letter from Government outlining these steps. Those who have been shielding - and are in receipt of Government provided food parcels and medicine deliveries - will continue to receive this support until the end of July. Currently seven supermarkets are offering priority online delivery slots, with this set to continue beyond the end of July for those already signed up for support. Anyone who is clinically vulnerable and is yet to

register for support, should do so online at GOV.UK or by calling 0800 028 8327, before Friday 17 July to allow time for this to be put in place.

### **Village halls and community buildings**

The Government also announced that village halls and community buildings were able to open from Saturday 4 July, as part of the easing of lockdown restrictions. The guidance documents, available on Community Action Suffolk's website, provide information on the safe re-opening of village halls and community buildings including making sure the hall is kept as clean as possible and that social distancing is still adhered to. Community Action Suffolk's Governance and Community Buildings Advisor Jayne Vaughan is also offering a Zoom session, for management committees and community building trustees to raise any issues or concerns they have regarding the reopening of their facility. A separate Zoom session is being run for Town and Parish Councils who manage village halls.

### **Volunteers**

Government guidance for volunteers on how to help safely has recently been updated to contain the most up-to-date information for volunteers. The Government has also published updated guidance about how to volunteer, including guidance on how to volunteer through local authorities.

### **Armed Forces Week**

Plans for Babergh District Council to host this year's Armed Forces Week events on behalf of Suffolk, including a week of events in Hadleigh, culminating in a colour parade throughout the town, unfortunately had to be cancelled due to Covid-19, but we were still keen to pay tribute to our armed forces community. Through our social media channels we urged recognition of the armed forces, who not only continue to provide national security, but have also played a vital role in supporting public services and our communities in response to the pandemic.

## **Planning site visits**

In line with Government advice on social distancing, we will continue not to conduct site visits for Planning and Development Control Committees. If there is a specific need for a site visit, it will be conducted 'virtually' by a planning officer and the video will be available for committee members to view. We will keep these arrangements under review, in line with advice from Government. If you have any queries about site visits please contact the relevant planning officer or the Monitoring Officer.

## **Joint statement on tackling climate change from Babergh and Mid Suffolk's political group leaders**

"The political make up of our councils is varied and diverse, but we are united in our view that the climate emergency is the biggest issue that affects us all, alongside responding to and supporting our communities' recovery from COVID-19. "We recognised the part we play in tackling this global issue at local level when we adopted climate emergency motions in 2019. But we know that we cannot do this alone. While there is still much work to be done, we welcome the collaborative approach taken to produce these latest proposals; with a joint, cross-party task force exploring how both councils can deliver real environmental change in our districts and to achieve our goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. Together, we can help to ensure our communities can look forward to bright, healthy and sustainable futures."

This is a joint statement by:

Cllr John Ward, Leader of Babergh District Council and the Conservative Group in Babergh

Cllr Clive Arthey, Leader of the Independent Group in Babergh

Cllr Robert Lindsay, Leader of the Green Group in Babergh

Cllr Sue Carpendale, Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group in Babergh

Cllr Trevor Cresswell, Leader of the Labour Group in Babergh



Cllr Suzie Morley, Leader of Mid Suffolk District Council and the Conservative Group in Mid Suffolk

Cllr Rachel Eburne, Leader of the Green Group in Mid Suffolk

Cllr John Field, Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group in Mid Suffolk

Cllr Gerard Brewster, Leader of the Independent Group in Mid Suffolk

### **Babergh and Mid Suffolk's blueprint for a sustainable future**

Councillors are set to consider a raft of environmental measures to help Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils achieve their ambition of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

### **CIFCO Business Plan for 2020/21**

CIFCO's annual Business Plan is on the agenda for Councillors over the next few weeks, as the property investment company continues to weather the coronavirus storm and to provide Babergh and Mid Suffolk with vital funding to aid the districts' recovery. Property investment company CIFCO, which is wholly owned by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, is presenting its third annual business plan to Councillors, detailing its performance over the last year and its investment strategy for the forthcoming year. While CIFCO has inevitably felt the impact of Covid-19, its company directors are confident that their rigorous risk management and diverse portfolio has put them in good stead to weather the storm. Through CIFCO, the Councils have benefitted from £1.633m of net income after costs in 2019/20. This is the equivalent to 10% of the Councils' annual staff costs or a 13.5% increase in council tax.

Over the last 12 months, CIFCO has acquired two additional properties taking the total number in the portfolio up to 14, located largely in the east of England and balanced across commercial sectors to minimise exposure to any one sector, tenant or location. Throughout the year the CIFCO Board considered almost 80 opportunities, rejecting most, and only

progressing those that best meet the investment criteria and most benefit the balance and risk profile of the portfolio as a whole.

CIFCO Capital Ltd was established jointly by Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils in 2017 to generate income through property investment which is then ploughed back into council services within the districts to offset reductions in funding from central government. Since its launch, almost £3m has been reinvested into council services.

Councillors are now being asked to consider CIFCO's performance and business plan for 2020/21 which, subject to approval at Full Council meetings in July, will continue to provide a framework and guidance for trading over the next 12 months. Last year the Councils approved the CIFCO fund being increased from £50m to £100m. To date, approximately £60m has been invested by CIFCO. Within this year's business plan, the timescale within which to invest the remaining £40m has been adjusted from April 2021 to October 2021 due to Covid-19 market impact.

CIFCO chairman Sir Christopher Haworth commented on CIFCO's performance and the impact of coronavirus on the commercial property market: "The impact of Covid-19 has been felt up and down the country and while CIFCO is weathering the storm, we are aware of the demands in the current economic climate. We are closely monitoring CIFCO's performance and while we predict the next quarter to be more challenging, we still expect rents received to exceed any borrowing costs that need to be covered by the councils. Our business plan is setting the parameters for investment over the next 12 months meaning we can move swiftly, invest wisely and continue to bring in income for the councils to support service delivery and aid the districts' recovery post-COVID."

The CIFCO accounts for the year ending March 31 2020 show a loss of £3.5m which is made up of one-off acquisition costs for the two new assets (including stamp duty and fees) as well as a re-adjustment on the value of the portfolio as whole. This loss would only be

realised if the investments were sold in the current market. Despite any fluctuations in the value, these are long terms investments which continue to deliver regular rental income.

Cllr David Busby, cabinet member for assets and investments for Babergh District Council said:

“CIFCO’s performance is providing significant returns to the Council, even in these unprecedented times. As with any investment, there will be initial, one-off costs and over time property values will fluctuate. In the long term, we expect our investment to grow providing a valuable revenue source for the Councils to benefit our residents and businesses.”

Cllr Peter Gould, cabinet member for assets and investments for Mid Suffolk District Council said:

“Like all local authorities, we are under unprecedented financial pressure to deliver services to our residents. The aim of our investment through CIFCO is to deliver a source of income for the long term rather being forced to make reductions to our services.

“The income we receive from the properties in the CIFCO portfolio can already be seen within our districts, enabling us to invest in local regeneration and in meeting the needs of our residents.”

This local regeneration includes building more than 180 new homes across Babergh and Mid Suffolk over the next two years. Work on sites for over 100 homes is due to start this year at sites across Needham Market, Shotley and Brantham, while a further 80 homes are due to be started next year in Stowmarket, Eye and Hadleigh. There is also local investment by Mid Suffolk District Council in Gateway 14, a new mixed-use business park outside Stowmarket which is set to boost local economy by providing up to 2.3 million sq. ft. of business, logistics and commercial accommodation over the next 10-15 years.

The plan was considered by Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on June 22 and it will go before Full Councils on July 21 and 23. You can view the council papers on our website and watch both council meetings live via the councils' YouTube account.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any issues that you think I can help with and all the very best to you all.

Jane Gould

Babergh District Councillor

Orwell ward

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# June 2020 Monthly Parish Newsletter

Visit [suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://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](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

## COVID-19 related news

### **New plan sets out how Suffolk will prevent and respond to COVID-19 outbreak**

A plan which sets out how Suffolk would prevent and respond to a localised outbreak of COVID-19 was published on 30 June.

Suffolk's Local Outbreak Control Plan will be triggered where there are suspected or confirmed COVID-19 outbreaks in any setting or community within the county.

The plan, a requirement of Government of all local authorities, outlines measures to prevent, manage, and contain outbreaks of Coronavirus and protect the public's health. It builds on existing relationships and processes in place with partner agencies across Suffolk.

The plan outlines how complex cases will be managed in more than 30 high-risk places, locations, and communities, particularly care homes and schools. It also outlines local testing capacity, use of data to identify and proactively manage outbreaks, and contact tracing in complex settings. An outbreak is defined when there are two or more cases in high-risk settings, or a greater than expected occurrence of COVID-19 compared with the usual level for a particular place and time.

**Stuart Keeble, Director of Public Health at Suffolk County Council, who is leading this outbreak plan, said:** "COVID-19 has had a significant impact on all of our lives and, sadly, we will be living with the threat of the virus for many months to come.

"Whilst this plan outlines how Suffolk will best respond to outbreaks, prevention of the virus is absolutely vital in making sure the number of new cases continues to decline in Suffolk. We must all continue to follow social distancing guidelines and ensure we wash our hands regularly, to avoid a second wave of the pandemic. If you develop symptoms of coronavirus, make sure you get a test and isolate at home."

Delivery of the Local Outbreak Control Plan will be co-ordinated by the Suffolk COVID-19 Coordination Centre. All information (including outbreak notifications) and national guidance will be received here, which enables a co-ordinated response and allows tasks to be allocated to the most appropriate partners.

Suffolk has received £2.79million from a £300million Government fund to support delivery of the Local Outbreak Control Plan.

A copy of the plan can be available [here](#).

## Suffolk's resilience partners continue to provide PPE equipment where most needed

As Suffolk's response to the Covid-19 pandemic enters its fourth month, the team set up in March to source and distribute personal protective equipment (PPE) to support service providers across the county continues to operate from Suffolk County Council's offices in Ipswich.

To date, this PPE 'cell' of the Suffolk Resilience Forum (SRF) has distributed over 2.3 million items of PPE across Suffolk. Over 1.9 million of these items have been distributed for use in the care sector to support some of Suffolk's most vulnerable residents.

This equipment is directly supporting a range of staff every day, providing them with the masks, gloves and other disposable protective items needed to ensure safe working and effective infection control in care settings, social care, special schools, emergency services, and health organisations.

As service providers increase contact with residents and reopen, or plan for buildings to reopen in weeks to come, Suffolk's PPE team will continue to purchase and distribute equipment where there is a shortfall in supply, or where organisations identify an urgent need.

### **Speaking on behalf of the SRF, Suffolk's Director for Public Health, Stuart Keeble said:**

"As the pandemic really took hold in late March, it was vitally important that we quickly established a team to source and distribute PPE where it was needed most. This was especially important given the increased demand for personal protective equipment across the UK, and the world at that point.

"Suffolk's team continues to operate and the SRF is keeping a close eye on levels of demand to understand if, and when, we need to scale back operations.

"We have worked hard to source and supply PPE equipment where it is needed across Suffolk and have been able to provide PPE to all those who have requested it, to continue to protect residents and staff and reduce the risk of infection."

## Temporary relaxation of concessionary travel arrangements in Suffolk to end next month

As more people return to work, public transport operators face the challenge of meeting this extra demand and ensuring adherence to Government guidance.

Passenger numbers are highest at the beginning and end of the day, so people who need to make essential journey for shopping, care or health reasons are being encouraged to travel after 9.30am when buses are currently quieter.

Suffolk County Council and bus operators in the county have agreed to **end the temporary relaxation of concessionary travel rules from Monday 6 July 2020.**

The relaxation was introduced across Suffolk in late March and allowed those with concessionary passes to travel on buses for free before 9:30am. The aim was to provide more flexibility for older people, and those with disabilities, to visit supermarkets during the lockdown.

**Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Rural Affairs, said:**

"Now that more people are returning to their workplaces and children are going back to school, it is important that we take steps across the county to protect passengers. It is vital we help bus operators

balance the need to get people to work and children to school, while maintaining social distancing and adhering to Government guidelines, so this means staggering the times when passengers travel.

“The relaxation of the concessionary travel scheme was a temporary measure to address the situation at the time. The situation has changed, and we are now facing a new set of challenges. Therefore, I urge people to only use public buses for essential journeys and to travel after 9:30am where possible.”

From Monday 6th July concessionary bus passes in Suffolk will only be valid Monday to Fridays 9.30am to 11pm, and all day on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. Also, all passengers are now required to wear a face covering on public transport. For more information about concessionary travel in Suffolk, visit [suffolkonboard.com](https://www.suffolkonboard.com).

An alternative travel option for elderly and vulnerable passengers is the county’s Connecting Communities demand responsive services, which operate Monday to Friday 7am to 7pm. Further details can be found at [communities.suffolkonboard.com](https://www.communities.suffolkonboard.com) or by calling **0345 606 6171**.

## Looking after the vulnerable is top priority

**Article by Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger, Cabinet Member for Adult Care. Published 23 June 2020.**

Nationally the focus of Covid-19 within the care sector has been on care homes. In Suffolk, we recognise that the experience is the same in all care settings, including extra care housing and supported housing, although the prevalence has not been as great. Care settings have been on the frontline in terms of our local response to Covid-19. News of cases, the need for testing, and sadly people passing away as a result of this virus, has been widely reported.

I want to share what has been happening within homes to protect residents and give an update on the support the county council is continuing to provide care homes as they face this challenge.

While we are seeing a gradual decrease in the number of cases within Suffolk’s care homes, and the number of deaths due to Covid-19 appear to be reducing, providers are still in the response phase of this pandemic.

Suffolk’s care homes continue to care for residents with the utmost professionalism and kindness. They are following national guidance regarding social distancing, hygiene standards and the correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Testing is available for all care homes - for the entire home, including staff and residents who are not displaying any symptoms.

Ahead of a national testing site being available, we started testing residents in care homes. Since testing began in mid-April, over 2,300 people have been tested across all care settings and testing continues.

With more testing taking place, infection control and prevention measures can be more effective.

The county council, with its health partners, continues to have daily contact with care homes to support them and respond to their needs and concerns. This support has included help to source agency staff where there is staff absence, obtaining PPE, a dedicated infection prevention and control enquiry line, and a package of financial support.

While providers are responsible for sourcing their own supply of PPE and financial support has been provided to help meet the additional costs, the Suffolk Resilience Forum has supplied care providers with 1.7 million items of emergency PPE when they have encountered difficulty in sourcing their own supply.

The number of people who have died in care homes in Suffolk due to Covid-19 is decreasing on a weekly basis. However, this doesn’t take away from the fact that people have died because of this virus. It is a

tragedy that families are losing their much-loved relatives and friends to this virus, and my deepest sympathies and condolences are with those who are grieving during this most difficult time.

In Suffolk, we are continuing to see a higher percentage of Covid-19 related deaths within care homes compared to some other areas. The reasons for this are complex, but factors we think are contributing to this are more people choosing to die in their usual place of residence and the high number of nursing beds that we have within care homes. These provide care for people with complex care needs who may be approaching the end of their life, and I would like to assure people that we have very good practices for providing end of life care in Suffolk.

Dying within a care home setting often reflects a person's wish to remain in their usual place of residence, in comfortable surroundings, with people around them who are familiar, as opposed to being in an unfamiliar hospital setting.

Although we no longer have any council-owned care homes in Suffolk, they are all privately owned and run, the county council still considers looking after the most vulnerable to be its top priority. The council is standing shoulder to shoulder with our care providers as we continue to face this crisis, and I want to take one final moment to praise their monumental efforts and their continued dedication and professionalism. The kindness and warmth that they show our most vulnerable each day, despite the pressures they face, is deeply moving.

I would ask people to please do what they can to protect our most vulnerable by continuing to follow government guidance around social distancing and hygiene to reduce the spread of the virus in our communities. Thank you for doing your bit and, please, Stick With It Suffolk.

## **Improving Suffolk's wellbeing and mental health with a simple 'thank you'**

A new, colourful way for people across Suffolk to show their appreciation for others, is underway in Suffolk.

Suffolk Says Thanks recognises the small acts of kindness taking place across the county in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The initiative was launched on 4 June by the Suffolk Resilience Forum, which has a specific group tasked with looking at emotional wellbeing in the community related to the pandemic.

As a direct result of the current situation, people may be experiencing mental health issues, or their emotional wellbeing may be affected. To help with this, the simple act of saying 'thank you' is known to have a positive effect on both the person giving thanks, as well as the person receiving it.

### **Stuart Keeble, Director of Public Health Suffolk, said:**

"Coronavirus has changed our way of life in so many ways and, consequently, more people's mental health is likely to be affected.

"Suffolk residents have a huge range of mental health support available to them, and there is always someone available to talk to, 24/7. But sometimes, a simple 'thank you' is enough to make someone's day and can be the small boost that they need.

"Suffolk Says Thanks builds on the appreciation that we as a nation have been showing to key workers and NHS staff

"So let's say 'thank you' across Suffolk: the neighbour or volunteer who has put out your bins, the friend who collects your shopping, or the person on your street that waves every morning as they pass by your house."



Posters, cards and other colourful materials can be downloaded from [www.suffolksaysthanks.com](http://www.suffolksaysthanks.com) to provide inspiration for saying thank you in different ways. People are invited to share their messages with others, through the website and on social media, using the hashtag #suffolksaysthanks.

**Gemma Levi, chair of Suffolk Resilience Forum's Emotional Wellbeing in the Community group, said:**

"As a nation we've been great at thanking others and seen the positive impact it's had on our key workers. We now want to acknowledge the small acts of kindness and Suffolk Says Thanks gives people the materials and inspiration to thank those in their local community.

"We would like people to post their 'thank yous' as photos and videos on social media, to download materials to colour in and display in windows, or even print out one of the template letters to pop through someone's door.

"Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that demonstrating an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing.

"The act of giving is one of the 'five ways to wellbeing', which is an established framework setting out simple steps for improving day-to-day mental health."

If you are experiencing something that makes you feel unsafe, distressed, or worried about your mental health you can call the FirstResponse service on 0808 196 3494. This phonenumber is provided by Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It provides immediate advice, support and signposting.

## [Other news](#)

### **Joint statement from Sizewell C Joint Local Authorities Group – acceptance of DCO**

In a joint statement, published on 24 June, East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council outlined that, whilst EDF Energy has formally met the legal requirements for consultation on the Sizewell C proposals, they still have serious concerns about EDF Energy's consultations to date and its compliance with the Government's guidance and advice on the pre-application process.

The Councils were asked by the Government's Planning Inspectorate to provide their views on the adequacy of EDF Energy's consultation so far. In their 'Adequacy of Consultation Response', the Councils conclude that EDF Energy has complied with the legal requirements of the Planning Act 2008. However, the lack of a comprehensive set of documents up to this point has compromised the engagement that has taken place, and the Councils do not feel they have been able to complete their pre-application work with the Applicant (EDF Energy) to the extent set out by the Planning Act 2008. In their response, the Councils refer to several statutory consultees and many Town and Parish Councils having raised similar concerns about the level and quality of information that has been made available throughout the consultation exercises.

Given the ongoing lockdown restrictions relating to Covid-19, the councils strongly believe EDF Energy should carefully consider how and when the engagement period on the Development Control Order submission documents should take place, to ensure that all of the community can have their say.

**Suffolk County Councillor Richard Rout, Chairman of Sizewell C Joint Local Authorities Group (JLAG) said:**

“Whilst we accept that EDF Energy may have passed the legal requirement they needed to meet in regards to public consultation for their proposed development at Sizewell, we strongly believe that the consultations to date have been hindered by significant gaps of information in the documentation provided. There is still much more that needs to be done before EDF Energy can fully satisfy a range of outstanding questions and issues that remain unanswered up to this point.

“Our local communities have very strongly fed back to us their concerns about the consultations to date. It is now especially important that EDF Energy gives the local communities the fullest opportunity to ask relevant questions and understand plans for the new development at Sizewell C, given the period of lockdown and social distancing we all continue to experience in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

“We will make our feelings clear to EDF Energy in regards to public engagement arrangements for such a development (known as Section 56) and if EDF Energy do decide to press on and start the process, we will be asking them to commit to an extended 84 day period at the very least.

“In advance of the DCO submission, stakeholders had not seen a full Environmental Statement relating to this proposal, nor draft copies of some of the most critical pre-planning documents EDF Energy will rely upon during construction. “Whilst we recognise EDF Energy’s engagement with the Councils on the principles and strategic approaches, we would have expected much greater detail of what they have in mind.

“I hope that we can have constructive discussions with EDF Energy and the Government’s Planning Inspectorate to address the important unresolved issues we have raised throughout the consultations that must be tackled if the development is going to be a success.”

**East Suffolk Council Councillor Craig Rivett, Vice-Chairman of Sizewell C JLAG said:**

“At last we have the opportunity to review and assess EDF Energy’s submission in full, including the complete Environmental Statement, which we had not seen to date. I acknowledge that there is a great deal of unease in some communities regarding the next stages of the process and I look forward to discussing with EDF Energy when it will be appropriate to start the public engagement and what measures they should take to ensure this engagement is effective so that everyone can understand the significant detail in the submission and make their views and concerns known.

“We shall be putting in place a rigorous programme of assessment and continuing our discussions with EDF Energy in advance of the examination in public. We will continue to listen to our towns and parishes and look forward to speaking with them in greater detail once we have all had an opportunity to review the submission in full.

“The decision on this application will be made by the Government’s Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, having regard to national policy and so, if it is consented, we need to ensure we get the best outcome for the communities of East Suffolk, both during construction and beyond, during the station’s operation for the next 60 years. The role of the Councils is hugely important to secure the best outcomes and we appreciate that there are many in our communities who object to the proposals in principle and/or have significant concerns on aspects of the proposal that will directly affect them. Be assured those concerns are understood and our role is to challenge the evidence against national policy, and the local impacts, and negotiate the best outcomes for the project as a whole but if the evidence does not stack up we will resist.”

The Adequacy of Consultation Response document, submitted by East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council, can be viewed in full alongside other related correspondence by visiting [eastsuffolk.gov.uk](https://eastsuffolk.gov.uk)

## First business benefits from council's free solar panel scheme

A Lowestoft-based charity is the first organisation to benefit from free solar panels, as part of Suffolk County Council's Renewable Energy Fund.

Nirvana Health and Fitness, on Pinbush Road in Lowestoft, is now hosting a 70kWp solar panel installation and is benefitting from zero-carbon electricity.

The council's £400,000 Renewable Energy Fund is open to eligible businesses looking to reduce their energy costs and carbon footprint through solar power. Successful applicants will have solar panels supplied and installed for free.

Once the panels are installed, the business is sold electricity at a better rate than their existing tariff, so they will see immediate savings.

The Fund itself benefits from income generated by the sale of the solar-generated electricity. This means money goes back into the pot, allowing more solar panel applications to be considered by the Fund and installed across Suffolk.

**Councillor Richard Rout, Cabinet Member for Environment & Public Protection at Suffolk County Council, said:**

"This is a very exciting project to assist Suffolk's businesses with the costs of installing solar panels. I have heard from businesses who have previously considered solar panels, but the cost of equipment and installation put them off. With this new fund, they do not have to find this initial injection of cash; we'll do that for them.

"Now, more than ever, as local businesses look to recover from the impact of coronavirus, every penny counts. So not only will businesses be working towards a greener future, they can save overhead costs on their energy bill.

"Suffolk County Council has invested in its own buildings for a number of years, generating energy from solar power and finding ways of storing that energy. The Renewable Energy Fund gives Suffolk's businesses the opportunity to benefit from solar power too.

"The council declared a climate emergency last year and this fund is yet another way that we are working towards a carbon-free future, and also supporting local businesses recover from coronavirus."

The fund complements the council's and the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership's other established projects, which are supporting the county's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030. For example, Business Energy Efficiency Anglia and the Carbon Charter have been helping local businesses to reduce their carbon emissions for a number of years.

In further support of local business, the solar panel installation at Nirvana Health and Fitness has been carried out by Ivy Solar, a Woodbridge-based solar PV specialist.

Businesses with a relatively high daytime energy demand and large roofspace, and who are interested in applying to the Renewable Energy Fund, can contact Sarah Gill at Groundwork Suffolk [sarah.gill@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:sarah.gill@groundwork.org.uk) or call **07720 098980**.

## Council presses government to provide lifetime benefits from large energy project

Local communities and businesses should get the best possible deal, if projects such as offshore windfarms land in the county.

The council made its position clear as part of the government's recent consultation on its *Contracts for Difference* programme, which is associated with the nation's low carbon and renewable energy projects.

The response explains how local communities should receive the maximum financial benefits for the lifetime of these projects, not just while they are constructed. This is in addition to developers making the most of local suppliers and businesses, whilst developing the skills of local people so they can work on the projects too.

The response also included the need for more robust and structured relationships between developers and the communities that accommodate these large projects.

**Councillor Matthew Hicks, leader of Suffolk County Council, said:**

"Energy projects have always had the potential to boost our local economy – and they should be a key part of the post-Covid-19 economic recovery in Suffolk. But if they are realised in Suffolk, we must make sure that our affected communities are protected and see genuine benefits.

"There must be proper measures in place so that developers don't just roll into town and fail to support the local economy and residents. We must see long-term financial settlements, skills development for local people and contracts for local businesses."

"We will continue to lobby government ministers at every opportunity and represent the interests of Suffolk's residents."

**Councillor Richard Rout, Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection at Suffolk County Council, said:**

"I have always said that these large energy projects will not be at any cost to Suffolk and my position hasn't changed. Our latest response to the government is part of our wider campaign to protect our county, should these projects get approval – such as our demands earlier this year for better co-ordination of offshore windfarms, which was well-received.

"We share the commitment to being a net zero nation by 2050 and understand the importance, both locally and nationally, of low carbon and renewable energy projects. But I continue to uphold my responsibility to protect both the county's residents and natural environment."

## **Better Broadband for Suffolk reaches 100,000th customer as third phase contract is agreed**

More than 100,000 households across Suffolk are already using faster broadband, thanks to the council-led Better Broadband for Suffolk programme.

The partnership - between Suffolk County Council, Openreach, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) and local councils – has made faster broadband available to around 150,000 premises since being launched in 2010.

It means the current total superfast broadband coverage in Suffolk stands at more than 96 per cent, with plans currently in place to reach 98 per cent coverage before the end of the year.

The team has plans to go even further, after announcing, on 3 June, an additional phase of work to provide connectivity to approximately 5,000 more premises, including over 550 businesses, in some of the most rural parts of Suffolk.

The work will be carried out by Openreach – operator of the UK’s largest phone and broadband network, used by the likes of BT, Sky, Plusnet, and TalkTalk – and is set to start as soon as deployment under the current contract ends. Work will continue until September 2022.

Faster broadband provides many benefits including staying in contact with friends and family through video conferencing services, easier web browsing and online shopping, the ability to stream high definition video, and work from home. Covid-19 has led to many of these benefits becoming even more crucial during times of social distancing and will have a large part to play during the recovery phase.

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

“It is incredible to think that over 100,000 homes and businesses in Suffolk are now using Superfast Broadband as a result of this project. Faster and more reliable broadband is more important now with many of us using digital devices to stay in contact with family and friends or working from home. As Suffolk, and the rest of the UK, begin to move into the recovery phase, Superfast Broadband will continue to play a crucial role. To find out if Superfast Broadband is available in your area please contact your service provider or visit the Better Broadband for Suffolk website.

Our ambition has always been, and will always be, to achieve total Superfast Broadband coverage across Suffolk. With the contract now being signed on the third phase of the programme, we are closer to realising that goal. This will mean that some of the most rural and hard to reach premises in Suffolk will enjoy equal or faster speeds than some major cities and towns across the UK.”

**Laura Whelan, Openreach’s regional director for the East of England, said:**

“We’ve already made a great deal of progress across Suffolk, making faster broadband available to thousands for the first time. We know there is more to do connecting up the most remote areas, and that’s why we’re delighted to be working with Suffolk County Council on extending that reach even further. Openreach has an important role within the East of England, with more than 3,400 of our people living and working here. We’ve also recently announced a great deal of work to build full fibre in some of the most ‘hard to reach’ rural areas, including Bungay, Saxmundham and Kentford.”

**Minister for Digital Infrastructure Matt Warman said:**

“We’ve invested almost £30 million into this project to deliver faster broadband to rural homes and businesses across Suffolk. I am pleased so many people have taken up superfast and full fibre internet connections for the economic and social benefits they bring.

“But there are more homes to connect in Suffolk and across the UK, so we have pledged a further £5 billion to make sure people in hard-to-reach areas get the high-quality broadband they deserve.”