

Suffolk County
Councillor
January 2023
Town and Parish
Newsletter

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**

Calculating the council's carbon emissions is a complex process. Papers released last month, ahead of a Council Scrutiny Committee meeting on 9 January, explain the work that the council has been doing in the last year, as it works towards net zero by 2030.

The council is reducing the emissions that it is directly responsible for, following a £12.8m 'spend to save' investment to decarbonise its buildings, making them more energy efficient and cheaper to run.

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.

"We can't control the carbon emissions produced by the businesses we work with, but we can choose who we work with. We seek out businesses who provide good value, offer social value, but also have their own net zero ambitions."

“We understand that small and medium size businesses may need help on their journey, and we can help them through our Carbon Charter scheme. This supports businesses to deliver carbon reductions and recognises that many of them, like us, need to reduce their energy costs at this challenging time.”

“There is also support available from the Free Net Zero Business Advisor service for any Suffolk-based business. This is funded through the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan, where we work with all Suffolk councils, coming together to help people across the county to play their part.”

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

The Carbon Budget will be presented at a Scrutiny Committee meeting on 9 January, and will then be discussed at the Full Council meeting on 9 February 2023.

More information on support available to businesses and residents can be found at www.greensuffolk.org

Working to reduce our energy consumption and costs

A column by Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment

One year ago, I announced that Suffolk County Council will begin presenting a carbon budget alongside our annual finance budget.

Our finance budget underpins everything we do - it outlines how much money there is to spend, where that money comes from and how we plan to spend it.

A carbon budget is equally as important, as it allows us to measure the council's carbon emissions, monitor our environmental impact, and identify actions and costs needed to reduce emissions.

Papers released last month, ahead of yesterday's Council Scrutiny Committee meeting, explain the work that the council has been doing in the last year, as it works towards net zero by 2030.

Data from the last couple of years has been interesting, with Covid playing a big part. With many staff working from home and not travelling as much, we saw a notable drop in our carbon emissions. Naturally, this has risen again slightly as staff have begun to come back into office, but levels are declining.

Over the last couple of years, we have reduced our carbon emissions by 15%, or 4,000 tonnes of CO2 equivalent. That is really encouraging progress, but I'm 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 that you are experiencing too. Our work to reduce emissions also has an important role to play in making our buildings more efficient and cheaper to run.

Some of the changes we are making, are really an extension of some of the things we have all been doing around our own homes to save energy. For example, monitoring temperatures and adjusting the level that heating is set to, switching off electrics that don't need to be on all the time, not heating unoccupied rooms, and installing more efficient LED lighting.

We have closely monitored the gas consumption in one of our properties, Constantine House near Ipswich Town Football Club, and have managed to reduce it by 80% over a 12-month period. We can take learning from that project to apply to many of our other

buildings, to save even more energy and money. However the challenge is that the 90 or so buildings that we own are all different!

There are many other technical things we are doing and looking at installing, such as de-stratification fans, thermal insulation improvements for buildings, remote energy metering, installing micro-louvres, digital twin computer modelling of hydraulic systems, hybrid boilers and heat pumps.

Again, this is the same approach many of us are taking in our own homes – investing in energy efficient changes now to save money in the long term. As a council, it's particularly important that we continue evaluating and reviewing our systems and are aware of future technologies so that we can continue to invest in the right way to deliver savings and value for money to Suffolk's residents.

Talking of investment, that brings me on to our plans for how we spend money in the new financial year. I'd like to thank all of you once more, who took part in our budget survey late last year – over 2,600 of you.

Adult and children's care were at the heart of our budget setting last year, and are again this year. This is exactly what you told us in the public survey too, so we are all in agreement about investing more in these areas, and it meets one of our four ambitions for Suffolk - to look after people's health and wellbeing.

This year, it's a case of being prudent across all areas of the organisation. Even though we have created £15.5m of savings, our frontline services are protected and receiving more funding.

Alongside an increase in our funding from Government, and a history of excellent financial management at the council, I'm proud that we've been able to navigate our way through the extremely turbulent, economic waters caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and Vladimir Putin's illegal war in Ukraine.

We will be able to ensure that the services which mean the most to people, are still provided.

Suffolk's tress and hedgerows to receive boost

The authority will develop its work to manage and inspect trees and hedgerows on its estate, and on highways. It will have more resource to manage mature and declining trees.

In partnership with The Woodland Trust, the council has planted around 50,000 trees and hedges this planting season, which is in addition to the 200,000 planted in the last couple of years.

“Planting thousands of trees in Suffolk is one of the ways we are working to reverse the decline in Suffolk’s biodiversity, by providing habitats for our wildlife. As a council, we have made a commitment to improve the biodiversity on at least 30% of our own estate by 2030.”

“I’m delighted to support this additional money to enhance the work we are already doing to protect our trees and hedgerows. We have a dedicated team which oversees all our natural environment work and we recently recruited to a new position, a Senior Arboricultural Officer, to help deploy our tree management strategy.”

“Along with the support of The Woodland Trust, Suffolk Tree Warden Network and local communities, we continue to care for our new and existing trees and hedgerows, and the wildlife that depends on them.”

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

The investment helps work towards the council’s ambitions of being a Net Zero organisation by 2030, and supporting the recovery of Suffolk’s nature that is so vital to this.

People are the priority in working out new ways to provide social care

A column by Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

Anyone who has had even a cursory look through this year's County Council budget recommendations, will have seen some large savings associated with adult social care under the heading of "Transformation". So, I thought I would talk a little bit about what this means and why it really shouldn't be looked at as just a money saving exercise.

Adult social care has been successful over the last 5 years at finding new and innovative ways of working. Of course, right in the middle of that was the need to work entirely differently during the pandemic, but beyond that, teams across the council have been outstanding at finding new ways to deliver the very best care they can, whilst at the same time managing to save around £33M so far which has been used to support other services under pressure.

Let me be clear - value for money matters, especially when you consider that with the additional money recommended to be invested this year, adult social care will have a net budget of £326M - that is over half of the entire County Council net budget. Every penny spent in adult social care could potentially support a child with special educational needs, help maintain the road and infrastructure of the county, or support any of the other essential services the council provides, so yes - the money really does matter. However, I assure you saving money is never the main focus of finding new ways of working in adult social care. That has always been, and will always be, to do all we can to help people to live fulfilling and independent lives in their community.

So when the council talks about transformation within the budget recommendations, what exactly do some of those new ways of working look like? One of the best examples of working in a new way, that not only provides better care for people but also saves money, would be our Cassius digital care service. Cassius was created in partnership with leading technology experts 18 months ago. We've achieved an incredible amount since the launch, with over 2,500 referrals and currently around 1,900 people being supported with care technology either as part of their package of care or as a standalone way to help them live well. This has helped maintain their independence, boosted their confidence, and given peace of mind to their families - truly incredible outcomes for people. But Cassius has also been able to generate over £2.5m worth of savings by using technology to better manage people's care needs, delaying or avoiding entirely more expensive traditional care options.

Another new way of working, included within this year's proposed budget, is to explore the use of some simple technology to better monitor the time spent by carers during home care visits. Our hope is that this will ensure carers are spending the correct time with people. This technology is already used by some private care providers, and widening this out could potentially benefit others who would be able to better manage the rotas and routines of their own staff. It will certainly benefit the people being cared for, who will always get the care and support they need and are entitled to. At the same time the council would be able

to ensure people are well looked after, whilst also only paying for the care that is being delivered, getting best value for money for the taxpayer.

I am really proud to say that in all my discussions with officers over the various transformations happening within adult social care in Suffolk, I am constantly impressed with their eagerness to find better ways to support people. For them the person and family receiving the care and support is always their first priority.

Sometimes others like to portray the budget process as a pure numbers game, where investment is good, and savings are bad. They create a myth that services can only be improved if you just spend more money on them. Well that simply isn't the case, certainly not in Suffolk.

This year, if the budget gets approved next month, we will be spending over £30M more on adult social care, but most of that new money will be used to support the care sector with inflationary pressures and helping to provide higher care fees. Ultimately, it will be the various transformation programmes, those exciting new ways of working, that will be the catalyst for better services and even better care for the people of Suffolk, and I for one am looking forward to seeing them develop and grow.

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 in light of the current cost of living pressures.

“We recognise the additional pressures the Citizens Advice and other voluntary organisations are under as more people are seeking support with the rising cost of living. People look to Citizens Advice in times of need, to provide friendly, non-judgemental and impartial advice, to help them find a way forward. This is why we have set out additional support for the Citizens Advice at this crucial time.”

“We will continue work with the Citizens Advice and others to support our residents in the current financial climate.”

**Councillor Bobby Bennett, Cabinet Member for Equality and communities
In a joint statement, the Local Citizens Advice in Suffolk said:**

“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.”

Councillor Bennett added:

“This is an increase to the core funding Local Citizens Advice receives from the county council and we will continuously seek further opportunities to provide support for one-off projects in the future - for example, last year we were able to give an additional £150,000 for a specific project.”

Local Citizen Advice officers across Suffolk are supporting Suffolk residents who need support in applying to the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme. The scheme was relaunched in October 2022 with an online application form. Suffolk residents can visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/LWAS to find out whether they may be eligible for financial support through Suffolk's Local Welfare Assistance Scheme.

Citizens Advice provides free, confidential, independent and impartial advice on a wide range of topics. Find your local office at www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Temporary changes with next phase of £7.8m redevelopment of Foxhall Recycling Centre

Users of Foxhall Recycling Centre near Ipswich are being advised of major works that will temporarily mean fewer parking spaces and reduced access as part of a £7.8 million redevelopment programme.

Starting on January 26 this phase of work is scheduled to last until the summer and will raise the site level to allow for the removal of steps when using containers for recycling, making it easier for users and improving access from Foxhall Road.

The redeveloped Foxhall Recycling Centre will provide increased capacity for vehicles on site, reduced queuing, improved access from Foxhall Road, and greater capacity to meet future growth.

It is the largest part of the construction work taking place and will temporarily limit the amount of space available for public use.

During this time, cars and car-derived vans, plus those with small trailers, can continue to use the site as usual through the [online booking system](#).

However, vans, vans with trailers, cars with large trailers and trade waste must use an alternative site.

The nearest are in Carr Road, Felixstowe, or Portman's Walk, off Sir Alf Ramsey Way, in Ipswich.

There will also be no collection bins for textiles, glass, or paper recycling at Foxhall during this time.

Alternative banks for glass and textiles can be found all over the county by using the [Suffolk recycling bank locator](#), while paper can be disposed of through household recycling bins.

The redevelopment of Foxhall began last October and, once complete, will provide increased capacity for vehicles on site, reduced queuing, improved access from Foxhall Road, and greater capacity to meet future growth.

This phase also sees the recycling centre's charity Re-use Shop temporarily re-locate to The Ancient House in Ipswich.

The shop on site closes from January 23 and will open at the Ancient House on January 30. It is anticipated to move back to site in the spring.

The move will allow it to continue to sell items such as sports equipment, kitchen supplies, books, and toys collected at the 11 recycling centres across Suffolk and which would otherwise have been disposed of as waste.

Proceeds from sales go to [The Benjamin Foundation](#), which has been supporting young people in Suffolk and Norfolk for more than 25 years.

Councillor Richard Smith, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Transport Strategy and Waste, said:

“Once complete the redeveloped Foxhall site will be a state-of-the-art facility serving the people of Suffolk for many years to come.

“This is a big project and we are doing everything we can to minimise disruption to users, and while we are sorry for any inconvenience we must introduce these measures as a result of the work required.

“I would urge users to please be patient and to plan well in advance if they need to use this, or other, sites.”

Fire service celebrates Government inspection outcome

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has been rated “Good” for its effectiveness and how well it manages staff by inspectors from His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

An independent inspection undertaken last spring saw inspectors conduct a comprehensive review of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, from how it responds to emergencies to its equality, diversity, and inclusion policies.

Colleagues from across Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service were involved throughout the inspection process to give an accurate representation of the service.

In a report published today (Friday 20 January), HMICFRS praised many aspects of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, with inspectors highlighting that “the service is good at identifying risk in the communities it serves” and “works well with others to reduce the number of fires.”

The report adds that “Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is good for how it promotes the right values and culture. There is a positive working culture throughout the service.” Inspectors also commented that “a culture of continuous improvements is promoted throughout the service and staff are encouraged to learn and develop.”

“I am delighted with the outcome of our latest inspection, which reflects our staff's loyalty, commitment, and tireless work to protect Suffolk’s communities, as well as the incredible achievements made by all teams since our previous full inspection in 2019.”

- **Jon Lacey, Chief Fire Officer for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service**

Jon Lacey added:

“There have been many improvements in this time, especially in our protection work with businesses and landlords which has seen us recruit additional staff and target the areas of highest risk, enabling Suffolk to remain a safe and healthy place to live.

“Progress has also been made behind the scenes to ensure that we have the right people in the right jobs. We want Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service to continue to be a diverse employer of choice, where staff can receive support with their health and wellbeing and have the career development opportunities they deserve.”

Whilst the inspection was mostly positive, it also identified areas where Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service can improve, specifically in terms of its efficiency and how it can make the best use of staff across its prevention, protection, and response activity.

The service was commended for “increasing staff numbers in important areas of work to improve performance”, but inspectors felt that improvements needed to be made in

productivity and ways of working, including making better use of flexible contracts for firefighters.

“Our inspection report includes much to be proud of, and I am pleased that Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service received commendation on its effectiveness and how well it manages staff.”

- **Councillor Andrew Reid**

Councillor Reid added:

“However, we do acknowledge that we could be more efficient at keeping people safe and secure, with work already undertaken to address this, including further investment in our Prevention team, which has resulted in a 60% increase in our home safety visits compared to 2020/21.

“We remain committed to making continuous improvements not just in our efficiency but in all areas of our work to enable us to maintain the highest standards of excellence and provide the best possible service to our county, regardless of whichever challenge may arise.”

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service was last inspected in August 2020 on its response to Covid, during which inspectors commented that they “were impressed with how the service adapted and responded to the pandemic effectively” adding that “the efficient use of staff was notable.”

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

On January 24th, 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.

The decision was made at a meeting of Suffolk County Council's Cabinet this afternoon.

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.

Investment in new fire vehicles will help drive service's continuous improvement

A column by Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection

Many of you may already be aware that Suffolk County Council is in the process of setting its budget for 2023/24, following a public consultation where over 2,600 Suffolk residents completed our budget survey.

This feedback helped to inform our proposals for the next financial year, which will be discussed by Cabinet today before being voted on at next month's full council meeting.

Providing value for money for our residents remains a priority for our council, not just when budget setting but in every decision we make, with this being even more pertinent during the rising cost of living experienced nationally.

Suffolk County Council has not been immune to the increased costs, and we have had to create £15.5m of savings whilst still protecting our frontline services. But we are not just exploring savings; we have also made decisions on where to invest in our council to benefit people in Suffolk and ensure the best use of our money.

I am pleased that our proposed budget for 2023/24 includes significant funding for new equipment for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service. Over £5.3m has been allocated to fleet replacement, which includes the purchase of 20 state-of-the-art fire engines, including nine new vehicles ready for use by the end of 2023.

The fire engines will be strategically placed across Suffolk to help deliver the fastest response to our county's communities in an emergency.

One will replace a high reach aerial fire appliance at Bury St Edmunds Fire Station that is nearing the end of its operational life, enabling us to continue to attend incidents at height, such as in high-rise buildings.

Another will be based with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's Driver Training team, providing a dedicated training vehicle to equip both new and current staff with the tools needed to help develop their skills.

These new fire engines complement the four dedicated rescue vehicles purchased in 2021, containing specialist equipment for undertaking rescues and making the scene safe at incidents ranging from car crashes to building collapses. Solar panels and more fuel-efficient engines were also fitted to these engines as part of our council's aspiration to be a Net Zero authority by 2030.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service remains committed to helping address climate change, having seen its impact first-hand when firefighters worked tirelessly to respond to a record number of incidents during last summer's heatwave.

The service recently replaced six of its pool cars with electric alternatives and has invested in installing electric vehicle charging points at some of its fire stations to accommodate this. New emergency officer vehicles, due to be introduced later this year, will also be electric, supporting Suffolk County Council's continued ambition to protect and enhance our environment.

To help achieve this, we must also dispose of our old equipment responsibly and ensure that it is reused where possible.

In the spring of 2022, we donated two of our former fire engines to our counterparts in Ukraine. Six Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service staff travelled over 1,000 miles across Europe to hand over the fully operational vehicles, which are still being used in Ukraine today and have been vital in the country's response to its invasion by Russia.

Last year also saw an inspection from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service, who undertook a comprehensive review of all aspects of our work, from how we respond to emergencies to our equality, diversity and inclusion policies.

Our inspection report was published last Friday, and I am delighted that Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service was rated as "Good" for its effectiveness and how well it looks after its staff.

Inspectors commended the service for working well with others to reduce the number of fires and praised the positive working culture, which includes promoting the right values and encouraging staff to learn and develop.

Whilst the report was largely positive, it also identified areas where Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service can improve, specifically in terms of its efficiency and how it can make the best use of staff across its prevention, protection, and response activity.

I am pleased to share that work is already well underway to address these points, with recent improvements resulting in a substantial increase in our home safety visits and fire protection audits of businesses and landlords.

This continuous improvement, along with the proposed investment for Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service outlined in next year's budget, will enable our county to remain a place where people lead safe and healthy lives.

Who is your environmental champion?

The Awards, hosted by Suffolk County Council, celebrate the achievements of those in Suffolk who are protecting our environment, reducing their carbon emissions and inspiring others.

The deadline to submit nominations has been extended by one week and will now close on Monday 6 February.

A judging panel of previous winners, sponsors and environmental experts will then choose a winner in each category, with an environmentally-friendly ceremony to be held in March at The Hold, in Ipswich.

Winners at the last Creating The Greenest County Awards event in 2021, hosted by Suffolk County Council at The Hold in Ipswich.

“The Awards celebrate those doing amazing things to protect our environment in Suffolk. If you know someone who is making a real difference, nominate them for an Award, so Suffolk can celebrate them and motivate others.”

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

The Awards categories are:

- Green Business
- Green Small Business
- Green Tourism
- Green School
- Green Hero
- Green Community
- Enhancing Biodiversity and Landscape
- Waste Reduction and Recycling

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:

“The Awards celebrate those doing amazing things to protect our environment in Suffolk. Following COP27, the challenge posed by climate change is in sharp focus but it’s also the financial climate that is a concern for us all.

“We must continue making significant changes to the way we live, by protecting our natural environment, reducing carbon emissions, making homes more efficient, and reducing our energy and water use. By doing this, we save money on our bills – it’s the right thing to do for our planet and for our pockets.

“If you, your community or business are working hard towards net zero and inspiring others, please put yourself forward for an Award. Or if you know someone who is making a real difference, nominate them for an Award, so Suffolk can celebrate them and motivate others.”

The deadline for nominations is Monday 6 February 2023.

Nominations for a Creating the Greenest County Award 2023 can be submitted online at www.greensuffolk.org/awards

Free talks at The Hold to commemorate 'When the Sea Came in' 70 years on

The coastal floods of 70 years ago are widely acknowledged as the worst peace time tragedy to have occurred in Britain during the twentieth century. The floods, caused by a tidal surge and storms in the North Sea, claimed the lives of over 2,500 people in Europe – more than 300 of them in the UK.

'When The Sea Came In,' at The Hold on Ipswich Waterfront on Saturday 4 February, will focus on the impact the floods had in Suffolk. The event will feature contributions from historians and flood emergency professionals and will highlight lesser-known aspects of the flood and its consequences.

Speakers include Dr John Greenacre, Dr Harvey Osborne and Denise Parkinson from the University of Suffolk, Dr Christopher Hilton from Britten Pears Arts and Peter Langford MBE from the Suffolk Resilience Forum.

The talks will explore a number of questions:

- What made the floods of 1953 so deadly?
- What were the implications for Suffolk's coastal landscape and agricultural economy?
- What was the emergency response in 1953 and how effective was it?
- Is such an event likely to occur again? How well prepared is Suffolk to face a similar challenge?

Suffolk Archives is also hosting an exhibition of archive material related to the floods in the Wolfson Learning Space at The Hold from 11am on the day of the talks.

'Suffolk's Green Story - Reflect | Learn | Act' will also be open in the Exhibition Gallery to visit for free. The exhibition explores the changes and challenges that have shaped the environment in Suffolk and what we can all do to make a difference today.

Councillor Bobby Bennett, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Equality and Communities said:

"The floods of seven decades ago are an important event in not just our county's history, but regionally, nationally and across Europe. This event offers the opportunity to remember on this sombre anniversary, but also look at the present and the future and the risks of tidal flooding as a coastal county."

For more information and to book tickets visit: www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/whats-on/

Suffolk Archives is also looking to enhance its collections, and have set up an online survey dedicated to collecting memories and experiences of the 1953 Flood in Suffolk.

Councillor Stephen Burroughes, Deputy Cabinet Member for Children & Young Peoples Services with responsibility for Fostering and Adoption

Few people realise just how vital foster carers are in Suffolk, there are 900 children currently living in loving foster homes across the county and this number continues to increase each year.

Against this backdrop there is an urgent need to recruit more foster carers for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) who make the brave and harrowing journey to flee war and destruction in their home countries and find refuge and safety here in the UK.

Tracey is a Foster Carer with Suffolk County Council and regularly shares her home with Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. I have invited her to talk about her experiences, in the hope it may inspire others to consider becoming a foster carer for UASC children;

Why did you decide to become a foster carer?

I started fostering seven years ago when I was working in the local upper school's exclusion department. I realised an awful lot of children were children in care. I started at an agency and was an approved foster carer with them for a couple of years, and then transferred to Suffolk County Council. It was a very smooth transition – I haven't looked back.

What led to you fostering Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children?

I didn't go into fostering thinking that I would like to foster UASC but I was keen to as I had lived in Sudan for six months. Then it was literally a phone call at 11pm saying they had found a lovely young boy in the back of a lorry at Mildenhall Air Force Base and would I foster him. By the time he arrived it was 3am and he walked in looking like a rabbit caught in the headlights – he was the sweetest 13-year-old boy from Eritrea and that was our first experience. There weren't the usual foster care nerves - you just want to nurture them.

How did he settle in to foster care?

All he wanted to do for a while was sleep. It was the first time he slept in a bed and the first night he fell out of his bed. The second night he had made a pallet on the floor with his duvet, but he slowly got into bed. It was a very slow natural organic process, letting him settle in and slowly introducing him to the house, the family, the village and school. In the obligatory first day at school photo, he was beaming, and he never missed a day of school in two years - he would even go if he was feeling poorly because education to him was so important. He was soon signed up to a football team and became their star player.

Was there a language barrier?

He didn't speak a word of English, so it was lots of gesticulation and lots of stickers over the furniture. I would say he was fluent within six months, and he wasn't in school for a while.

The first two or three months we used to sit at the table and practise handwriting with primary school books. I just thought let's pretend he's five and it was lovely.

What support do the children receive from the fostering team?

Foster children are immediately assigned a social worker, who are fantastic. The social worker provided a translator and explained what was going to happen to him regarding Home Office interviews, solicitors' interviews, biometrics and asking him a little bit about his journey. My involvement was getting him registered with schools, doctors and dentists.

Do you have a network of support?

Through social media I connected with fostering support groups, so my network expanded, and it is invaluable. Sometimes you don't want to ring your supervising social worker because it sounds so trivial so I have called other foster carers late in the evening and said, *'what would you do in this situation'*.

Where is your foster son now?

He's at college learning motor mechanics, he also is a driver on his bike for Deliveroo. He rings me once a month and you can tell he is just so happy in his voice. He is just the perfect example of someone that came here and was grateful for everything.

What would you say to someone considering becoming a foster carer for UASC children?

I would say give it a go, because you have nothing to lose and so much to gain. It has been a lovely journey and one I don't want to get off.

To find out more about Fostering with Suffolk:

visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/fostering

call us on: 01473 264800

Attend our virtual UASC information event on Wednesday 22nd February, 7pm.

Email fosterandadopt@suffolk.gov.uk to register your interest.