

**Shimpling Parish Council**

**Minutes of Meeting of the Council**

**Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024, 7:00pm at Shimpling Village Hall**

**Present:**

**Councillors:** David Dunkley (Chair), Gerry Shrimpton, Nathalie Brown, Liz Brunwin

**County Councillor:** Richard Kemp

**Clerk:** Natasha Byford

1. **Apologies for absence:** Apologies from Cllr Holt and Cllr Plumb, these were noted and accepted. No apologies received from Cllrs Engstrom this was noted.
2. **Declarations of Members Interest(s):**
  - a) **To receive disclosure of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest(s) including gifts of hospitality in excess of £25:** None received.
  - b) **To consider requests for dispensation for the agenda item(s) under discussion:** Cllr Brunwin wished to be excused from item 16 on the agenda which discussed the potential PC donation to the Church for the window as Cllr Brunwin is also Church secretary. This was agreed.
3. **Public Participation session**

One member of the public (MOP) attended.
4. **Approval of minutes of the previous meeting:**

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were approved.

**Action: Clerk to publish these on the website and Social Media.**
5. **Chair's report:**

Cllr Dunkley's read the below report from his last couple of months as Chair:

The Budget for 2024 has been derived and agreed and is to be confirmed later in this meeting. As with most, if not all, councils the overall size of the budget has risen to cover the increased costs of most of the services being provided. Naturally, all services have been reviewed to see where, if possible, savings could be made.

One area we have tried to reduce the cost to the council is in the production of the Newsletter. From 2024 advertising will be chargeable, which will help defer the cost of production, whilst maintaining what is a very valuable village asset.

Following a successful open event at the Village Hall in October, the inaugural meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan group occurred in January. Since then, a Building Design Criteria consultation has taken place so it feels like we are finally getting started. There is still room for more people to join the group for those that are interested.

Now that all parties are finally communicating, solicitors for both parties are now engaged with drawing up a new lease and it is expected that this will be completed before the current lease expires in April.

Additions to the Shimpling Website are continuing. There is still a lot of information to be loaded and further advertising of its existence and value is planned for 2024.

**6. District Councillors report:** The Chair noted their report had been circulated with the papers and there were no further questions on this. The report is in Appendix A below.

**7. County Councillors report:** Cllr Kemp read out his report and there were no further questions on this. The report is in Appendix B below. Cllr Kemp mentioned to the Church that they could write to him and he may be able to find a donation from the Locality Budget towards their Church window funds.  
Cllr Kemp left the meeting at 7:22pm.

**8. Village Hall:**

**a)** Cllr Brown (Chair of VHC) circulated the following update prior to the meeting;  
We had a busy Christmas period with a kids party and Christmas film night (both were well attended). Wreath making, panto rehearsals, the PCC Christmas fair and end of year classes. Sadly our Thursday evening yoga class will not be resuming in January but I hope to find a replacement soon.  
We have a few exciting events planned for the coming year, including the Panto in March, Shimpling celebrates in May and a fund raising event in the summer.

**Maintenance**

The exterior overhead light has been replaced and we are awaiting a quote to repair the pillar lights.

The water heater in the kitchen and in the ladies toilet have broken down but repair is in hand.

**Update**

The Village Hall Committee have had the porch light replaced with a modern LED light and Sensor, the cost was £143.00. We have also replaced two water heaters, kitchen and ladies toilet - the heaters cost £216.43 + Vat £43.29 = £259.72.

Laurence Rooke and Ted Pine carried out the installation FOC.

Total spend £402.00 approx.

As you are aware the three pillar lights up the drive are not in working order, this is an inconvenience to hall users especially at this time of year. We have spoken to an electrician (James Brown) who can source and instal the lights. If we choose budget lights, which he says are fine, this part of the work would be a maximum of £500.

Peter Rix is prepared to work with the electrician and carry out the removal and installation of the new lights, he estimates his charges would be less than £500. Total cost approximately £1000, but a more accurate budget can be supplied after James and Peter have looked at the job.

The pantomime is in a months time and Peter is not available until after the event, but he can make some temporary lighting arrangements.

Solar panels, double doors etc are on hold until funding is approved.

The PC discussed the external pillar lights and it was agreed that the VHC would organise the repairs for these and the VHC and PC would pay half each – this should be no more than £500 from the PC. This money will come out of the Village Hall Reserve line.

**b)** It was noted that we are still awaiting funding to be sorted before we can go ahead with the new patio doors.

**c)** We have applied for Capital Funding and are just checking the up to date quotes, we are now awaiting to hear back regarding funding.

**d)** Members discussed funding between the Village Hall and the Parish Council. It was thought that the original constitution in 1953 and the update in 2010 with an accompanying letter in 2012 are now outdated and a new agreement is required. The VHC will discuss this at their next meeting in March and then the PC and VHC will have a working party in March to agree the details.

## **9. Responsible Finance Officer's Finance Report:**

- 9a)** The Clerk gave a finance report, details of which were circulated to members prior to the meeting. The Clerk stated which invoices (please see below) needed to be paid.

Leaving balances as follows:

Treasurers Account	£10,182.19
Business Account	£25,220.42
Including CIL of	£3,318.06
Earmarked Reserves of	£25,952.17
General Reserves of	£4,698.00
COVID Grant of	£1,038.87

**9b)** To acknowledge payments made outside the meeting

- **Zen Internet (16 Oct-15 Nov)** **£38.99**  
(LGA 1972, s.111)
- **Zen Internet (16 Nov-15 Dec)** **£38.99**  
(LGA 1972, s.111)
- **Zen Internet (16 Dec-15 Jan)** **£38.99**  
(LGA 1972, s.111)
- **Insurance** **£879.18**  
(LGA 1972, s.111)
- **Grass Cutting** **£1,389.60**  
(Open Spaces Act 1906, ss9-10)
- **Install of 30mph sign by Mark Marsh** **£60.00**  
(RT Regulation Act 1984, s.72(1))

**9c)** The following amounts were approved for payment:

- **Clerk's Net salary after Tax** **£402.32**
- **HMRC Tax payment** **£100.60**
- **Clerk's expenses (Fuel)** **£8.55**  
LGA 1972 s. 111 (ancillary Powers)
- **Lucy NP Landscape Architect** **£1,375.00**  
(Town and County Planning Act 1990, s.61F(1)(2))

The above payment schedule was approved by members.

**9d)** The Clerk noted that The Council have received money from bank interest £27.78 and £28.71.  
We have also received £50 from Newsletter advertising.

**10. Clerks Report:** A full copy of the Clerk's report was circulated to members prior to the meeting. The following matters were considered for resolution:

**Summary of Progress:** During the period (6<sup>th</sup> Nov 23 – 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 23), I have worked 4 hours under the given time frame of 5 hours per week, and taken 8 hours Annual Leave, this included organising all the paperwork for the November meeting, agendas, actions from the November meetings, organising payments, quotes and grant applications, neighbourhood plan correspondence, newsletter advertising correspondence, as well as general administration. This was approved by members.

**11. Budget:**

Members were still happy that the recommendation that the precept for 2024/25 would be set at £12,700.00. As the January meeting was cancelled but the precept and budget were agreed at the November meeting the Precept form had been signed by the Chair and Clerk in January. The Clerk noted that the precept form has been sent off as it needed to be in by 31<sup>st</sup> January.

**12. Newsletter:**

The Clerk updated members that 5 advertisers have said yes but only 3 of the 5 have paid and the deadline was last week. If they all pay it would generate income of £231.25 which would help towards the cost of the newsletter. We could do with a few more paying adverts so Cllr Brunwin said she could notify people on the round robin.

**Action: Clerk to chase the last 2 advertisers again and notify Sarah.**

**Action: Cllr Brunwin to put out a notice on the round robin regarding advertising.**

**13. Neighbourhood Plan:**

The Chair updated members that they have had the first working party for the Neighbourhood Plan and they also had the design guidance visit. The next step is the meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> February where the working party will draft a resident survey. The Chair expressed how important it was that the whole Village has a say and noted that there are no plans for major development in Shimpling.

**14. Odd Job Person:**

Members discussed that they believe Steve was happy to do this. The PC agreed that it would be better as a self-employed position where Steve invoiced the PC. This would need management and a list of jobs that would be required to be drawn up, ideas were looking after the SIDs, cleaning the playground, keeping the footpaths clear. Chair Dunkley requested that members send him any jobs they could think of that required doing and he would prepare a list.

**Action: Chair Dunkley to put together an odd jobs list.**

**15. Planning:**

Planning Decisions: None

Planning Applications: None

**16. Covid19 Emergency Fund:**

Application received from the PCC towards the new church window. Members discussed this and agreed that in principle they would like to donate something but would need to check on PC funds before agreeing to anything. Jenny Pine thanked the PC and noted that the work was

planned for September 2024 so any contribution would need to be between now and September 2024.

**17. SID**

Clerk updated members that the first SID is away to be fixed and cleaned and should be back next week.

Maintenance contract for both SIDs is a 3 year contract (can pay in 3 yearly instalments) and is £1,172.65 ex VAT so £390.88 per year. Members agreed to go ahead with this contract.

**Action: Clerk to agree to this contract.**

**18. Village Hall Lease:**

Chair Dunkley gave an update regarding the lease. Birkett Solicitors have all the documents, there are no issues with the lease and we are just waiting for it to be drawn up by Ashtons. However today we received the costs for both Solicitors – Ashtons was £3,000 plus VAT and disbursements and Birketts was £1,750 plus VAT and disbursements. In light of these costings members agreed it may be better to see if we can just continue with what we have as we now know its just a lease on the area surrounding the Village Hall, as the PC own the Village Hall itself. A new and longer lease would involve land registry amongst other things. If we did need to agree a new lease and therefore these fees, then members agreed to take £1,000 out of election reserves and £2,000 out of playground reserves to add to the £3,000 that is already in the lease reserves in order to make that £6,000.

**Action: Cllr Dunkley to speak with Birketts to see if continuing what lease we have is an option and if not to agree the fees and carry on overseeing this.**

**19. Halifax Trust:**

Members confirmed the appointment of Tina Campan as the new Halifax Trustee.

Members reappointed the current Halifax Trustees; Richard Weller-Poley, Jenny Pine, Darren Hickey and Stuart Palmer.

**20. WIFI:**

Members discussed changing WIFI suppliers for the VH. Members said that it wasn't much of a saving and it may be worth checking what other quotes are out there. We need to be sure what bandwidth we are getting.

**Action: Clerk to get some costs for this and report back at the March meeting.**

**21. Correspondence Received:**

Just to note that the application we submitted to participate in the bus improvement strategy came back and could be positive news. Chair Dunkley thanked Cllr Shrimpton for his continued work around buses for Shimpling!

**Action: Cllr Shrimpton to keep liaising with this.**

Cllr Brunwin stated that the Village Litter Pick would happen on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

Cllr Shrimpton reported that he applied on the PCs behalf for a free EV Charger for the PC car park. Cllr Brunwin suggested Cllr Shrimpton to liaise with Bernard Essery who was also putting in an application just in case this was detrimental to our application

**Action: Cllr Shrimpton to keep members updated on this.**

**22. Urgent Matters to be brought to the attention of the council:**

It was brought to the attention of the PC that the issue of dog poo was getting bad in the Village. It was suggested that we put something in the newsletter regarding it and possibly stick the signs we have on the bins or on the footpaths where it's a particular issue.

**Action: Chair Dunkley to ask Steve to put the signs up. Cllr Brunwin and Chair Dunkley to word something for the newsletter.**

The VHC asked about the Welcome Newsletter and whether this should come from the PC or the VHC. Cllr Brunwin was going to find out the history of the welcome letter, members believed that Katie Haselhurst used to send it out, on behalf on the PC. Members to have a copy and make any changes required then to discuss the maintenance and distribution of the letter at the March meeting.

**Action: Clerk to add to the March meeting the maintenance and distribution of the Welcome Letter and to send a copy round to the PC.**

**There being no further business the meeting concluded at 9:10pm.**

## **Appendix A: District Councillors report:**

### **New Year in new homes – council housing boost**

Tenants have picked up the keys to more than 120 new affordable, high-quality council homes across Babergh and Mid Suffolk over the last 12 months.

### **Councils award funding to provide warm spaces this winter**

31 community projects have received a share of more than £36,000 to help their communities this winter.

### **Councillors to consider tax premiums for second homes and empty properties**

Councillors at Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are considering higher tax premiums for owners of second homes and long-term empty properties, following the introduction of new government rules.

### **Parking back on the agenda for Babergh as it seeks to balance books**

A significant budget gap for 2024/25 has forced parking back on the agenda for Babergh District Council. Options for the implementation of new parking tariffs are to be discussed with affected town and parish councils, pending cabinet agreement at a meeting on January 9.

### **Last chance for parents to claim free tree before January**

Applications for a popular free tree scheme for new parents who welcomed arrivals in 2023, will close on January 10.

### **£2 million pledged to accelerate climate emergency action in Suffolk**

A further £2million has been pledged by Suffolk Public Sector Leaders to tackle the climate emergency.

### **Homelessness and rough sleeping strategy open for consultation**

The councils are asking residents and organisations for their view on tackling homelessness and rough sleeping to help shape their future strategy. The consultation runs until January 14.

### **'Building in Babergh? Be a good neighbour'**

Babergh District Council expects developers and commercial builders to follow the 'gold standard' of working practices to protect nearby residents from construction site disruption.

## **February**

### **Babergh urges Government to fix 'broken' funding for councils**

Council leaders are calling for the Government to address a local authority funding crisis. A proposed 2.99% increase to Babergh's element of council tax bills would mean a £5.46 a year increase for residents in a Band D home.

### **Further engagement over parking charges in bid to balance finances**

Babergh District Council is to conduct further engagement over plans to introduce short-term parking charges in its market towns with all town and parish councils, district councillors, and other recognised groups.

Engagement is already underway with the directly affected town and parish councils in Sudbury, Hadleigh, Lavenham and Chelmondiston.

Director of Operations Mark Emms is due to contact all other councils via their parish clerks over coming days with further information on how they can also have their say ahead of recommendations going back to cabinet. Please look out for further information soon.

### **Funding available for community action on climate change**



Applications are being invited for The Suffolk Climate Action Community Match Funder. It is available to charities, community interest companies, parish councils, voluntary groups and other not-for-profit organisations, whose projects contribute to Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan.

#### **£230,000 awarded to community projects across the districts**

Projects across Babergh and Mid Suffolk have received a share of £230,000 in grants and funding as part of the councils' commitment to residents' wellbeing and ensuring communities have access to local community facilities.

#### **Councils award funding to provide warm spaces this winter**

More than 30 community projects in Babergh and Mid Suffolk have each received a share of more than £36,000 to keep residents warm and connected this winter.

#### **New café and toilet block for Belle Vue Park**

Plans for a new cafe and toilet block in Vue Park have been approved.

#### **New public toilets for Sudbury**

Public toilets in Gaol Lane in Sudbury have undergone a complete refurbishment.

#### **Babergh and Mid Suffolk building control wins prestigious national award**

The Babergh and Mid Suffolk building control team is celebrating after receiving a prestigious national award for its work at Black Pheasant Barn, near Sudbury – which judges described as “an impressive, modern and environmentally conscious barn conversion delivered on a tight budget and under tight timelines”.

#### **More Brits overseas can now vote**

British citizens living abroad are now eligible to register to vote in UK general elections, regardless of how long they've been living outside the UK.

## **Appendix B: County Councillors Report:**

### **Information Updates**

Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infoLink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infoLink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and support:

<https://infoLink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infoLink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>

For information on supporting Ukrainian refugees in Suffolk, email: [refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk) or [ukrainesupport@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk](mailto:ukrainesupport@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk)

### **Flooding in Suffolk**

Recent high rainfall has led to many Suffolk residents' homes being flooded, and flooding more generally on roads. At Council on 7 December, a motion was passed for the council to review the frequency of drain and gully clearance in areas at risk of flooding, and to work closely with districts and boroughs, Anglian Water and the Environment Agency to help prevent future flooding. My group had hoped to introduce further measures on regularity of maintenance, but this was not supported by the Conservative administration. The motion that was passed was preceded by an announcement by the council of £1m in extra funding to investigate flooding incidents in the county.

Details of a government-funded scheme from DEFRA whereby Suffolk residents can apply for up to £5,000 to help protect their property from future flooding can be found at this link, with applications from January 2024: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

### **DEFRA's Property Flood Resilience Grant**

As well as the initial £500 grant payment and council tax/business rate discounts, residents whose homes have been flooded may also be eligible for up to £5,000 from the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Grant, which the government requires Suffolk County Council to administer on their behalf. The application process will begin in early 2024 and after initial eligibility checks by SCC, property owners will be responsible for sourcing an independent surveyor and PFR contractor. Payment of up to £5,000 including VAT will be paid retrospectively to the property owner once the Council receives proof of the completed installation and invoicing for the approved measures.

Further information about the grant eligibility, conditions and the forthcoming application process can be found here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/property-flood-resilience-grant>

### **Getting Children Ready for Education**

On Thursday 14 December, the council's Education and Children's Scrutiny Committee met to review the support the council provides to prepare children for school. This includes the county's nurseries and early years providers, health services for 0–5-year-olds and Family Hubs (formerly children's centres). In recent years the council has worked with the National Literacy Hub to try and engage children with reading, after research in 2020 concluded that educational attainment for Suffolk children was much lower than it should be.

The Committee acknowledged the good work that was going on in a challenging area and urged that recruitment of health visitors be prioritised by SCC to fill the current vacancies (21%). There were also plans to improve the council's digital platform - in partnership with parents - so they were able to find information and support more easily.

### **SCC Carbon Net Zero Ambitions**

The council's Scrutiny Committee met on Monday 11 December to review the council's progress towards becoming carbon net zero by 2030. Overall there had been a 10% reduction in emissions in

2022/23, due to reduced energy use for street lighting (a recent upgrade programme) and reduced gas consumption at SCC property and schools.

However, the council is not on target to be carbon neutral by 2030, at least partially due to the third scope of indirect emissions – this includes emissions by suppliers and contractors used by the council which are difficult to measure accurately and control. The supply chain represents 91% of the council's total footprint, and it has updated its contract terms and conditions to include annual reporting on reducing carbon emissions, and also requires suppliers to sign up to its Carbon Charter and Climate Change Commercial Ask.

### **Sea Link Consultation Response**

On Tuesday 12 December, Suffolk County Council Cabinet reviewed their proposed response to the National Grid's proposals to link up Suffolk and Kent with undersea cables and landfall at Aldeburgh and a substation at nearby Friston. Councillors in these areas were particularly concerned about the impact on the natural environment and the Suffolk coastline, with most councillors agreeing that engagement with the community about the proposals had been poor, and the timing of the construction coinciding with Sizewell C to create even more pressure on the county's transport routes and tourism industry.

Cabinet decided that they would not lodge a holding objection at this stage, but their response to the National Grid consultation outlined their concerns and the possibility of objecting in future once more details were known.

### **Suffolk County Council response to local government finance settlement**

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities yesterday announced its funding package to support councils in England to deliver frontline services. Responding to this, Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:

"Yesterday's council funding announcement presents more challenges than we, and many other County Councils, expected. It means next year we will have no choice but to consider changes to some of the services we provide. "The Government is facing considerable financial pressures and requests for funds from all corners of society, not least from councils across the country. We have consistently lobbied for more funding in Suffolk.

"We fully understand this position as we too have increasing demands on our services and rising costs to provide them – but the money we receive is not keeping pace with this need. Despite being a financially well-run council, we have significantly less funding than we need – especially in services like SEND, home to school transport and children in care. In order to prioritise these areas, we will have to make difficult decisions about the services we deliver, how we deliver them and council tax."

### **More than 1,700 people respond to library consultation**

More than 1,700 people have already had their say in Suffolk County Council's consultation to Shape the Future of library services in Suffolk. The consultation, which launched on Monday 30 October has so far had 1,725 responses.

Suffolk County Council's contract with Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) Limited, the independent charity that runs the library service, comes to an end on 31 May 2025, with a new contract set to begin in June 2025. The Council is therefore seeking views from the public about what is important to them, ahead of awarding the new contract.

The consultation is made up of two parts. Part one gives residents an opportunity to tell the council what they value in their library service and what they would like to see more of in the future. Part two seeks views on how Library Outreach services could be run in the future.

The council is keen to hear from both those who currently use library services and those who do not, to better understand the needs across the county. This feedback will help to inform the requirements for the future contract. Residents can have their say by visiting [www.suffolk.gov.uk/LibraryConsultation](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/LibraryConsultation) before Friday 26 January 2024. Easy-read and translated versions are available at the above website.

Alternative formats of the consultation are available on request, please email: [Libraries.consultation@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Libraries.consultation@suffolk.gov.uk) Those who cannot access the consultation online can request a printed copy or assistance with completing the survey by calling 0345 603 1842.

### **Council's Centre of Excellence to go nationwide**

Suffolk County Council has received further Government funding to continue the work of its Centre of Excellence, which supports other local authorities with NSIPs.

The council has successfully bid for £99,000 from the Government's Innovation and Capacity Fund, which will be spent on more events and materials to upskill and share good practice with councils around England, with Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

Suffolk's Centre of Excellence was established in August 2022 and has already engaged with 16 local authorities across the East of England, with 429 representatives attending webinars and a conference, held at The Apex in Bury St Edmunds. The new funding will now extend these offers across the country.

The council was recognised by the Government last year for its knowledge and expertise when engaging with NSIPs such as Sizewell C, Lowestoft's Gull Wing, National Grid upgrades and offshore wind farms.

The county council has long recognised that town and parish councils, who have limited resources, can easily be overwhelmed by the magnitude of NSIPs - the new funding will enable bespoke guidance to be published in partnership with Suffolk Association of Local Councils.

The funding will also allow previous work to continue, such as updating and creating more accessible guides for local authorities, and progress guidance materials for developers

### **February**

#### **Council Budget for 2024-25**

At Scrutiny Committee on 11 January, we got our first look at the proposed budget for the financial year 2024-25. The council has projected increased spend for areas such as social care and SEND which are statutory services – this means that the council is required to spend this money by law. As a result, important areas in the budget that can be cut have been, which will lead to cuts in Housing Related Support for those at risk of homelessness, support for people with learning disabilities and autism, and to the Skills team, who support young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). The budget also includes a proposed 100% cut to funding for museums and arts organisations from April 2025, with the funding for 2024-25 coming from government Covid monies to provide a transition period. My group opposes the arts cuts and the other savings, which will hit the most vulnerable in our county. The budget proposals will be voted on during the Full Council meeting on Thursday 15 February.

## Autism Strategy for Suffolk

At the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board on 18 January, the first draft of a Suffolk autism strategy was discussed, which will increase awareness and support for autistic people and make sure local services are accessible and meeting their needs. The plans include supporting autistic people to look for work and those who are considering self-employment, tackling health and care inequalities, improving access to education and transition into higher education. The strategy was commissioned by Suffolk County Council and local NHS providers and has been developed in coproduction with Suffolk people with autism to reflect their views and experiences.

## New Funding to Combat Serious Violence

Suffolk's Safer Stronger Communities Board has announced a fund of £150,000 from the Home Office to support Suffolk's Serious Violence Strategy. Organisations can bid for funding for specific projects which support the work of Suffolk's Serious Violence Strategy, with allocation of funding managed through Suffolk Community Foundation. The Serious Violence Strategy focuses on young people and communities at risk of becoming involved in serious violence, and the funding for projects is available to charities, voluntary sector organizations, social enterprises, parish councils, educational settings and other public bodies from April 2024. Applications are invited for grants between £4,000 and £15,000 and organisations can apply by visiting:

<https://www.suffolkcf.org.uk/grants/seriousviolencedutyfund/>

## Blue Badge Team – Change of Telephone Number

As a direct result of customer feedback, the Blue Badge phone number will be changing, and there will now be a dedicated phone line for Blue Badge customers. From 31 January the Blue Badge team will be answering enquires on 03456 066 077, this number will be visible online across the SCC Website, InfoLink and any future published materials. This is a change from the current telephone number, which is 0808 800 4005. For more information about how you can apply for a blue badge or assist someone to make an application, please visit <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/parking/blue-badge-scheme>

## DEFRA's Property Flood Resilience Grant

Those whose homes or businesses were flooded by Storm Babet and have not yet applied for the initial £500 flood recovery grant payment should do so as soon as possible as this is the first step in applying for the further £5,000 for flood protection from the government's Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Grant. The application process for the latter will begin in early 2024 and after initial eligibility checks by SCC, property owners will be responsible for sourcing an independent surveyor and PFR contractor. Payment of up to £5,000 including VAT will be paid retrospectively to the property owner once the Council receives proof of the completed installation and invoicing for the approved measures. Further information about the grant eligibility, conditions and the forthcoming application process can be found here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/property-flood-resilience-grant> For more information about the flood investigations which are due to take place in the wake of Storm Babet, please see <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/storm-babet> Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safety-advicein-the-community/preparing-for-flooding> Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

## 'Good Journey' Scheme for Visitor Attractions

Visitor attractions in Suffolk are invited to sign up for a new scheme promoting car-free days out in the county. Suffolk Growth Partnership and Suffolk County Council have teamed up with national organisation 'Good Journey' to create the scheme, which launches in March. Around 25 local tourism and visitor attractions are invited to join the Suffolk Good Journey scheme offering residents and visitors discounts and incentives to leave the car at home and explore more of the county on foot, by bike or using public transport. Participating attractions will be supported and will feature on [goodjourney.org.uk](http://goodjourney.org.uk) which provides travel information and discounts to domestic and international visitors and there will a marketing campaign to promote it. Visitor attractions and venues interested in joining Suffolk Good Journey can find out more details by contacting Loretta Jones at Good Journey on [loretta@goodjourney.org.uk](mailto:loretta@goodjourney.org.uk) or [info@suffolkgrowth.co.uk](mailto:info@suffolkgrowth.co.uk)

#### Sizewell C Construction Begins

Construction begins this month of the controversial new power station at Sizewell, a project that is forecast to take 17 years to complete. This will have a massive impact on local communities, the coastal environment and transport routes in the county. Suffolk County Council has secured £250m in mitigation monies for Suffolk communities, but this will still create a lot of upheaval in the county and the council has a role to play in making sure Sizewell C make every effort to minimise its impact and listens to the concerns of residents and local businesses.

#### Council to propose new funding for arts & heritage in Suffolk

Suffolk County Council has announced its intention to create a new funding pot open to all arts and heritage organisations in the county. • Core funding for nine arts and heritage organisations still to cease after 2024/25 • New £500,000 funding pot proposed from 2025/26, open to all arts and heritage organisations in Suffolk • Proposal to be tabled at Cabinet meeting on 30 January Following this week's announcement from government that £600 million of further funding will be available to local councils, the council intends to propose a new £500,000 project fund to which all Suffolk's arts and heritage organisations can apply. However, this does not alter the difficult financial decisions the council is having to make so that it can prioritise spending on services like SEND, home to school transport and children in care. An extra £74 million is still needed over the next two years to protect the county's most vulnerable adults and children. Proposals to end the core funding of £528,000 of nine arts and heritage organisations after the 2024/25 financial year, are still in place. This funding will be replaced with the new £500,000 project funding pot, open to all arts and heritage organisations, from April 2025. The new £500,000 fund would contribute to delivering on the council's ambitions such as looking after the health and wellbeing of Suffolk's residents, particularly those most in need of extra support to live as safely, independently, and healthily as possible. The impact of the government announcement for further funding for councils will be discussed at Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Meeting on 30 January 2024, where proposals will be explored.

#### Fake university website shut down by Suffolk Trading Standards

A bogus website for a non-existent college in Suffolk offering fake courses costing thousands of pounds is closed down by Trading Standards. A website for a fake university aiming to scam money from overseas students has been shut down by Suffolk Trading Standards. Calling itself the College of Suffolk, the website claimed the university had been founded in 1990 and was located on Queen Street in Ipswich. Quoting yearly fees ranging from £3,500 to £8,900, it claimed to offer courses in acting, musical theatre, dance and performance. The site used images of the real University of Suffolk and even had a page promoting the county, saying how it was home to its own breed of horses, breweries and famous celebrities such as singer Ed Sheeran. A foreword by college 'President' Dr Stephen Spinks talked of how it provides "exciting learning opportunities in business, human resources, accountancy, finance, musician (sic) and art – all critical areas for the world of work." It is

the second time such a fake college has been foiled by Trading Standards – an identical scam using the same name and information was closed down in 2019. The website was being run from Hong Kong and while Suffolk Trading Standards have had no reports of victims in the UK there may be some overseas. Trading Standards says anyone considering applying for a college course can beat degree fraud through the Higher Education Degree Datacheck (HEDD) website <https://hedd.ac.uk/> where people can:

- Check whether a university or college is an official degree awarding body by using the look-up service
- Download free toolkits allowing employers, universities and colleges to tackle degree fraud
- Check original degree certificates with the issuing university
- Degree fraud can be reported to the HEDD fraud team on 020 8148 2400. If you have concerns about a website, please report it to Trading Standards via 0808 223 1133