

December 2023 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Cabinet approved £10 million new funding to resurface residential roads

The funding will nearly double Suffolk Highways' £11 million annual road maintenance budget but be targeted at smaller residential streets which are typically maintained less frequently than busier A and B roads. Over recent years, the county council has recognised the importance of improving roads for residents, this new proposal follows the successful £21 million contribution towards the resurfacing of 1,000 miles of road between 2017 and 2021, and more recently the committed £21 million between 2021 – 2025 to increase pavement maintenance, deliver drainage improvement schemes and repair road signs. It is hoped that the extra £10 million boost to resurface some local roads, minor rural roads and urban cul-de-sacs would result in a reduction of new potholes, which in turn will reduce the overall financial burden on the council's emergency and reactive repair budgets. Between 2020 and 2023, 2 out of 3 pothole repairs were carried out on local roads, minor rural roads, and urban cul-de-sacs. During that period, more than half of all defects reported by the public were on these types of roads. The extra investment will make use of more sustainable materials such as warm mix asphalts that have a lower CO2 footprint than traditional hot mix asphalts and which include recycled materials to reduce raw material use; resulting in a more positive impact on Suffolk's environment. This major investment looks set to improve roads across the county where people live. These smaller roads are often in estates or off the beaten track in our villages and are in need of some love and attention. Our highways teams are currently prioritising sites and identifying the roads which we will target with this investment, and we will look to deliver this larger programme of works over the course of the next year.

Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care service rated Good overall by Care Quality Commission

SCC has been awarded an indicative overall rating of "Good" for the quality of its Adult Social Care services. Following a period of intense inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), SCC has become one of the first councils nationwide to achieve this standard. Earlier this year CQC announced that 5 local authorities with responsibility for adult social care, including Suffolk, had volunteered to be part of a Local Authority Assessment Pilot, to help CQC develop the new model of inspection to help assess councils against the requirements of the Care Act. This model would then be rolled out across the country with all 153 Local Authorities with responsibility for Adult Social Care being inspected by the commission. The assessment process began this summer with a request for information to each local authority taking part in the pilot. This collected the written evidence needed to allow CQC to understand how each council is delivering its adult social care services. Following on from this initial ask, the County Council was then required to arrange over 40 different meetings including 4 staff drop-in sessions, with over 150 people, including staff, partners, providers, carers, and people with lived experiences. These meetings allowed the CQC inspection team to meet people directly and ask questions to help further evidence the quality of social care services provided. CQC's final report rated the overall quality of Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care services as "Good" and highlighted areas of strength including, the quality of its leadership, the culture of learning and support for staff, the range of digital care options available, the good relationships between social care and health colleagues and locality team knowledge and understanding of community needs. I am delighted, this is a fantastic result for SCC, especially for those colleagues working within Adult Social Care. I am especially pleased to see areas like Safeguarding rated as good, this is a real acknowledgement of the hard work SCC and partners have put in place over the last few years to learn from every incident and work closely together as a system to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable in our community. I believe this rating is also a testament to the high levels of financial investment we as a council have consistently put into Adult Social Care over the years, especially during the dark days of the pandemic, and shows how through imagination and service transformation, we are delivering on our priority to put people's health and wellbeing at the top of our agenda as a local authority.

Government backs A12 road improvements with funding commitment

The government confirmed funding for a transformative package of improvements as part of Suffolk County Council's A12 Major Road Network scheme. The scheme will see upgrades to the key roundabouts from the A14 at Seven Hills, east of Ipswich, north to the A1152 at Woods Lane, and a new dual carriageway section replacing the existing single carriageway bottleneck at Seckford Hall between the B1438 and B1079. It will also deliver improvements to bus links and walking and cycling connections to reduce the issue of severance for communities on either side of the A12 – for example, where the A12 separates houses from local employment and retail areas. The Department for Transport has committed to funding up to £ 54 million of the scheme's estimated £ 64 million total cost. The remainder of the cost will be funded by local development contributions, including from Sizewell C and Brightwell Lakes. Suffolk County Council has fought long and hard for this scheme, so I am pleased that the government has announced its commitment to fund most of the cost of the project. These improvements will future-proof the A12 and deliver major benefits to local communities and to people travelling around Suffolk, the road being a link between our two largest towns, Ipswich and Lowestoft. Also, it is a critical bottleneck in accessing the East Suffolk coast, which is the location of several Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), including Sizewell C. This funding will allow us to meet the timescales of Sizewell C and minimise congestion and network disruption during its construction. I would like to thank the government for recognising the importance of this scheme, the positive impacts of which will be far-reaching.

Suffolk Highways prepared for the County's cold snap

With 39 gritting lorries, around 17,000 tonnes of salt and a winter team of over 80 people, our depots are ready to spread salt and treat over 2,000 miles of roads across the county. Suffolk Highways has been carefully planning for the arrival of the colder weather, including training and hiring drivers, checking the routes and preparing the gritting lorries for action. The service is responsible for gritting 36 Priority 1 (P1) routes, which amounts to around 1,259 miles, including all A and B roads (except trunk roads), roads to fire stations, hospitals, main bus routes and rail stations. They also have 34 Priority 2 (P2) routes, which amounts to around 843 miles of the network, this includes other bus routes, roads leading to rural villages and access to schools. The P1 routes are completed when road surface temperatures are forecast to drop below 1°C and P2 routes are carried out when the forecast predicts there to be a longer period of cold weather. Suffolk Highways has also refilled 2,100 grit bins across the county at registered locations, such as the bottom of hills, or on junctions of minor roads. Grit bins are owned by parish and town councils and to ensure that the contents of grit bins are used to make roads safer, our communities are encouraged to monitor how and where the grit is used and if more is required to report it via the reporting tool. Suffolk Highways is encouraging residents to make sure their cars are winter ready and ensure they drive to the condition of the road, as a treated road may still have some ice forming particularly in areas where there is water runoff from adjacent land. As the temperatures continue to fall, our highways teams are ready for whatever the weather throws our way. Each year, however severe, the highways teams deliver a successful winter operation, keeping the roads clear to ensure our residents are kept safe and our county moving. I encourage residents to do their bit and support our teams by driving to the conditions and parking considerately, leaving enough room so that our vehicles can grit the road - if we can't fit, we can't grit. To find out where Father Gritmas, Gritty Gritty Bang Bang, Spread Sheeran and the rest of our fleet are gritting, you can follow our whereabouts on social media. More information on gritting can be found, here: [Check which roads are gritted in Suffolk - Suffolk County Council](#), and details of which roads are gritted can be found on [one.network](#), by selecting the 3 lines on the search box, then data layers, driver information then winter gritting routes. Suffolk Highways' winter gritting efforts forms part of the county council's wider 'Winter Matters' campaign, which offers advice to help Suffolk residents.

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