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Health Scrutiny

At Health Scrutiny Committee on 17 April, we heard from colleagues in the NHS about their digital integration work, trying to join up the different IT systems they use and to make information sharing easier between health and care providers. This is especially helpful given the UK's aging population. Also, the committee reviewed an improvement plan produced by James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust following the CQC inspection of their maternity services in 2023. Maternity services were found to be inadequate during the inspection, and the report detailed the actions they were taking to address the areas where they needed to improve.

Strategy for Care Leavers

On Tuesday 23 April, Cabinet reviewed the Leaving Care Strategy which detailed the ways in which the council wants to improve the service it provides to young people leaving our care. The council acts as a 'corporate parent' to all children taken into care, and must always ask itself with every decision: 'would this be good enough for my child?'. Plans in the new strategy for young people leaving care include help with housing, employment, mentoring and extension of the current council tax exemption scheme for care leavers who are living outside of Suffolk. The Leaving Care service offers support to all young people leaving care up to the age of 25, and care leavers regularly attend meetings at the council to provide feedback and ideas for improvement.

New Appointments in Children's Services

As well as the council's new £4.4m investment in additional staff to improve SEND services (detailed in last month's report), two new appointments have been made to leadership. Sarah-Jane Smedmor will be the new permanent Director for Children's Services, with a start date of 8 July. An Independent Chair for the new SEND Improvement Board has also been appointed, Kathryn Boulton, who will start in June and lead the SEND improvement the council needs to deliver following the poor Ofsted/CQC inspection in November 2023. The council submitted an action plan after the report was published which has been approved by Ofsted, CQC and the Department for Education.

New Government Funding for SEND Schools

The council will be receiving an additional £10.9million from the Department for Education to create new specialist places for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The Department for Education also announced it was funding a new SEND school in Suffolk sponsored by the Unity Schools Partnership, which will provide 126 new places in Suffolk for pupils aged between three and 16 with severe learning difficulties. Earlier this month, the Chancellor also announced a new Alternative Provision (AP) free school, the SENDAT New AP Suffolk Free School, in West Suffolk. The sites for both schools are yet to be confirmed.

More Suffolk Homes Eligible for Energy Improvements

More families will be able to secure free assistance to make their houses warmer and more energy efficient using the Warm Homes Suffolk scheme. Residents and landlords of eligible properties can apply for energy efficient measures such as insulation, solar panels or heat pumps, with average funding of £18,000 is available for homeowners, and £12,000 for landlords and their tenants. Warm Homes Suffolk has been funding home energy efficiency improvements for two years, with funding from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. To be eligible, the following conditions must be met:

- Homes must have an EPC rating of D, or Homes are not heated by mains gas

And then either of the following conditions:

- Households have a combined pre-tax income of under £36,000
- Homes are in a certain postcode (you can use this [pre-qualified postcode checker](#)), which includes parts of Beccles, Bungay, Bury St. Edmunds, Felixstowe, Great Cornard, Haverhill, Ipswich, Kessingland, Lowestoft, Mildenhall, Newmarket, Rushmere St Andrew, Saxmundham, Sudbury (Shotley Peninsula and Brantham are not included in this..)

New Resurfacing Investment Gets Underway

Residents across Suffolk are set to benefit from 421 newly surfaced roads this year which is almost double the number of roads completed last year. This is a result of the extra £10 million investment by the council into resurfacing roads, which was announced last May immediately after the local election result. 102 roads will be surface dressed, whilst a further 319 sites will benefit from a full machine resurfacing during the year (Brantham has 4 sites included on the list currently in the design stage). Surface dressing and machine resurfacing treatments prolong the life of a road surface, remove potholes and level it out. During the last six months, Suffolk Highways has repaired over 9,000 potholes and resurfaced 41 roads, with a further 278 roads planned for resurfacing in this financial year. Having said this, winter weather always sees an increase in potholes and there is still a lot to do.

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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>

Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safety-advice-in-the-community/preparing-for-flooding>

Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

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