

Little Waldingfield Parish Council

Approved Minutes of the Remote Council Meeting held on Thursday 9 July 2020 at 7.30pm via Zoom

Present: Cllr Barbara Campbell (Chair), Cllr Chris White (Vice-Chair), Cllr Matt Foster, Cllr Tim Sheppard and Cllr Delme Thompson

Attendance: Cllr Clive Arthey (District Councillor), Cllr Margaret Maybury (District Councillor), Cllr Colin Spence (County Councillor), Bradley Smith, Community Wardens Supervisor (Sudbury Town Council), Simon Ashton (Parish Clerk & RFO) and one Member of the Public

1. Apologies and Approval of Absences

Apologies were received from Cllr Stewart Braybrook and his absence was approved.

2. Declarations of Interests by Members and Requests for Dispensation

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

3. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting on 14 May 2020

Minutes of the previous meeting of the Parish Council on 14 May 2020 were received and approved as a true record. It was agreed that arrangements would be made for the minutes to be signed by the Chair once the restriction on physical meetings was removed.

4. Reports by the District Councillors and County Councillor

The Parish Clerk had shared a copy of the county council report received from Cllr Spence with Members in advance of the meeting for their information. A district council report had not been received from Cllr Maybury in time to be shared before the meeting. Copies of these reports have been made available at the end of these minutes for information. A district council report had not been received from Cllr Arthey.

5. Contributions by Members of the Public

A member of the public queried the limited time available to members of the public to raise any issues during this item. It was noted that the times published on the agenda had been in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders. A consideration was also offered about the use of fence post holders when replacing the no parking posts (see Item 10b). It was noted that such specifications would be determined by Suffolk County Council.

6. Presentation by Bradley Smith, Community Wardens, Sudbury Town Council

Bradley Smith, Community Wardens Supervisor at Sudbury Town Council, was welcomed to the meeting. He described the services his team was able to provide to local parish councils under a service level agreement. This could be to purchase a number of hours in advance for redeeming against services later procured. There was

flexibility with the arrangements. Following discussion, Members agreed to consider the possibilities for the Council and the purchase of any services at the next meeting.

7. Neighbourhood Plan

(a) Members were updated on the Neighbourhood Plan consultation which was planned to end on 24 July 2020. An outdoor drop-in session had taken place at the playing field for members of the public to raise any issues and provide feedback on 8 July 2020. Members would be updated on the results of the consultation at the next meeting.

8. Finance

(a) Members noted the receipt of bank account interest of £0.32 during the period from April to June 2020.

(b) Members noted the receipt of a BDC precept (1/2) (2020/21) payment of £4,334.00 on 15 April 2020.

(c) Members noted the receipt of a VAT refund (2019/20) of £1,073.56 on 20 May 2020.

(d) Members noted the receipt of a venue refund of £54.00 relating to bookings during the period from March to April 2020 on 22 May 2020.

(e) Members noted the receipt of a SALC overpayment refund of £30.00 on 25 June 2020.

(f) Members noted the Lloyds Bank account balances of £22,896.75 and £2,523.86 as at 31 May 2020.

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

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

(i) The Council's Statement of Accounts (2019/20) prepared by the RFO was reviewed and approved by Members.

(j) The Council's Asset Register (2019/20) updated by the RFO was reviewed and approved by Members.

(k) The AGAR Section 1 Annual Governance Statement (2019/20) prepared by the Parish Clerk was reviewed and approved by Members.

(l) The AGAR Section 1 Explanation of Negative Responses (2019/20) prepared by the Parish Clerk was reviewed and approved by Members.

(m) The AGAR Section 2 Accounting Statements (2019/20) prepared by the RFO was reviewed and approved by Members.

(n) The AGAR Section 2 Explanation of Variances (2019/20) prepared by the RFO was reviewed and approved by Members.

(o) The AGAR Part 2 Certificate of Exemption (2019/20) prepared by the RFO was reviewed and approved by Members.

(p) The Notice of Public Rights (2019/20) prepared by the RFO was reviewed and approved by Members. The six-week consultation period was due to commence on 13 July 2020.

(q) The RFO confirmed that the Council now had the ability to make payments online and that the availability of other Members to authorise such payments was encouraged.

(r) Payments were authorised in favour of the Parish Clerk's wages and office and personal expenses (£535.76), Information Commissioner for annual registration (July 2020 to June 2021) (£35.00) and Suffolk Association of Local Councils for the internal audit (2019/20) (£186.00). These payments were approved by Members.

9. Governance

- (a) A list of members' responsibilities (2020/21) was prepared by the Parish Clerk following discussion with Members who then approved a final version for publication on the web site and noticeboard.
- (b) The Parish Clerk had shared details of the forthcoming SALC AGM on 30 July 2020 in advance of the meeting. Members were happy to accept Cllr Campbell's offer to represent the Council at the meeting. The Parish Clerk agreed to make the booking with SALC.
- (c) The Parish Clerk confirmed that the status of the Swan Inn as an asset of community value was due to expire on 19 August 2020. Following discussion, Members approved the move for a renewed application by the Parish Clerk by the due date with the assistance of Cllr Sheppard.

10. Highways

- (a) Members thanked Cllr Spence for pursuing the successful cutting of the hedge on The Street following a site visit which has created improved visibility for pedestrians and a reduced need for the dropping of the kerb.
- (b) Following a discussion about the replacement of no parking posts and the views of residents on Church Road, Members approved a payment of £300.00 to contribute towards the funding by Suffolk County Council which had been arranged by Cllr Spence.
- (c) Cllr Campbell confirmed that she had been supplied with a large amount of traffic data by Sudbury Town Council. Members agreed to discuss this further at the next meeting.
- (d) Following discussion, Members agreed to consider the appointment of a Little Waldingfield Speedwatch Co-Ordinator further at the next meeting.

11. Consultations

- (a) Following discussion, Members agreed to submit individual responses to the LGA Code of Conduct consultation by the due date of 17 August 2020.

12. Matters for Future Consideration

There were no matters raised for future consideration.

13. Dates of the Next Meetings

- (a) 10 September 2020 (Urgent Items & Documents Received by 2 September 2020)
- (b) 12 November 2020
- (c) 14 January 2021
- (d) The meeting finished at 9.05pm.

Simon Ashton, Parish Clerk
clerk.littlewalingfieldpc@hotmail.co.uk
10 September 2020

District Councillor Report June 2020 Margaret Maybury

My apologies for the tardiness of this report – I just blame the hot weather.

I have had a question from elsewhere regarding rent and council tax arrears monies due to the district council. There is no clean slate for this, in that I mean that the debts will not automatically be written off. However, payment plans and deferment can be arranged but BDC do and will require the monies to be paid, as an example for the public to appreciate, other businesses, societies, etc need their money too.

Bonfires: although the District Council asked for these to be avoided, bonfires have and are becoming a nuisance. I have an example where real concern was raised within the Ward and environmental officers have taken a strong stand to complaints and notice has been given to landowners that a bonfire is not to take place and any infringement will attract enforcement action.

I added to public objection at the planning application last week involving the land at the Plough and Fleece, Cockfield. I have consequently put forward suggestions to planning officers for a sustainable development (after outline approval was declared) to be considered when the reserved matters come back to the planning committee. It was heartening to find that the planning officers thought this significant enough to ask for my permission for these details to go to the developer which I agreed to.

I have also emailed the parish councils within the Ward the details of the planning application appeal which was dismissed in Lawshall due to the fact it did not meet the directions of their Neighbourhood Plan. The NP therefore took precedence in planning matters. Well done Lawshall.

Within the Ward we have had difficulties with social distancing at a take-away public house service which required intervention. Hopefully the licensing officers have now had a word with the licensee for this never to happen again. We have also had an issue with the social distancing and road safety measures in Lavenham which took intervention from your SC Councillor to correct. My thanks to Cllr Lindsay for his help with this.

There has also been an increase in rubbish/mess around recycling bins involving mainly glass products. If the bin is full the message is to store the glass at home until the bins are emptied. Any failure to do this will be classed as fly-tipping as it is unsightly, attracts vermin, wasps etc, someone has to clear it up and it is a cost to the District Council, money which the council is currently short on. Just be considerate to all.

I am sure residents will be aware of the CIFCO part of the District Council which is a financial arm trying to raise funds to meet demand at the council (these are my layman's terms of explanation). CIFCO after media coverage came under Scrutiny on Monday and the results of this are concerning over losses but are being projected as on paper only. I have had my concerns on this issue for some time and asked diligent questions months back from Officers and the CEO. My biggest concern is that our advisors are looking at ways to mitigate losses. Today (25th June) media is covering the reports of gaps in budgets for councils across the country (involving millions of pounds) and I am sincerely hoping that Government will be stepping in to help.

We are in a situation of easing lockdown which will have its own merits and demerits and areas of clarification will be needed from officers at both District and County. If in doubt I would always suggest gaining advice from the appropriate authority.

To end, our CEO has produced a list of officers in charge of particular recovery cells covering such items as people, customers, environment etc. If parishes need help do please ask myself (or Clive) for assistance.

Suffolk County Council

June 2020 Monthly

Town/Parish Newsletter

Visit suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus for health advice, service changes, business support and schools' guidance.

Keep up to date on the latest guidance on COVID-19 from central government here: www.gov.uk/coronavirus

COVID-19 related news

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Now that more people are returning to their workplaces and children are going back to school, it is important that we take steps across the county to protect passengers. It is vital we help bus operators balance the need to get people to work and children to school, while maintaining social distancing and adhering to Government guidelines, so this means staggering the times when passengers travel.

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

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

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

Looking after the vulnerable is top priority

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The number of people who have died in care homes in Suffolk due to Covid-19 is decreasing on a weekly basis. However, this doesn't take away from the fact that people have died because of this virus. It is a tragedy that families are losing their much-loved relatives and friends to this virus, and my deepest sympathies and condolences are with those who are grieving during this most difficult time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stuart Keeble, Director of Public Health Suffolk, said:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Other news](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

First business benefits from council’s free solar panel scheme

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

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

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

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

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

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

“This is a very exciting project to assist Suffolk’s businesses with the costs of installing solar panels. I have heard from businesses who have previously considered solar panels, but the cost of equipment and

installation put them off. With this new fund, they do not have to find this initial injection of cash; we'll do that for them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Council presses government to provide lifetime benefits from large energy project

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“We will continue to lobby government ministers at every opportunity and represent the interests of Suffolk’s residents.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Minister for Digital Infrastructure Matt Warman said:

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

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

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