

December 2022 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Historic half a billion pound devolution deal hands Suffolk regeneration and skills powers

A landmark devolution deal, which puts money and power over building, regeneration and skills into the hands of leaders in Suffolk was signed on Thursday. Suffolk will be devolved power over their Adult Education budget, so they can shape provision in a way that best suits the needs of the local community and will receive immediate support to build new affordable homes on brownfield sites, as well as more capital funding to improve energy efficiency in houses. The deal will also see Suffolk County Council handed control over a £480 million investment fund – this will be guaranteed for the next thirty years. This will enable the county to drive growth and plan for the long-term with certainty as it looks to level up and unlock its full economic potential. Suffolk will also get a directly elected leader of the council. This not only provides a single person who is accountable to the people of Suffolk but gives the county a local champion who can attract investment and be a stronger voice in discussions with central government. With three new devolution deals signed in the last seven days, 50% of England will now be covered by a devolution deal and reaffirms the government's commitment in the Levelling Up White Paper to offer a devolution deal to any area that wants one by 2030.

The deal also sets out the government's plans to devolve more power to SCC through:

Investment: It will bring decades of funding worth £480 million to improve the lives of Suffolk's residents and spend on their local priorities.

Housing: The deal will provide £5.8 million to regenerate brownfield land into beautiful, affordable homes and drive economic growth across the area; Suffolk will also receive greater compulsory purchase powers.

Education: The agreement devolves the Adult Education Budget so they can shape provision in a way that best suits the needs of residents and the local Suffolk economy.

Transport: An integrated transport settlement starting in 2024/25, to support the area to improve key transport infrastructure priorities.

The Environment: The new deal will help Suffolk deliver on its ambitions to be the country's greenest county with £3 million to improve energy efficiency in homes.

Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove, said:

"I said we would give devolution deals to all that wanted them and today we are keeping that promise by putting power into the hands of the people who know best what Suffolk needs so they can level up the county and unleash its full economic potential.

"It is now people in places like Ipswich, Felixstowe and Newmarket who will have a greater say on how their areas are run. Because we know important decisions are best taken by those who know their areas inside out, not by those many miles away in Whitehall.

"This new deal will empower leaders in Suffolk to shape policies and direct spending to address issues that are unique to them, and I will commit to working with them even further to help drive through that change."

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

"This devolution deal is the first of its kind between the Government and a county council, making it a truly historic moment for Suffolk. The deal recognises Suffolk's ambitions, would put more powers in the hands of local people and bring more than half a billion pounds of investment into the county.

"On the table are greater decision-making powers around transport, infrastructure, skills and more resources to help us achieve our net zero ambitions. Ultimately, this significant additional investment will improve the lives and outcomes of Suffolk's residents.

"Devolution is a journey, not a one-off event. This deal for Suffolk is the first step towards an exciting future for our great county."

£2.5m saved on energy costs as LED streetlight project nears completion

A project with the aim of replacing all 43,400 streetlights across Suffolk with sustainable, longer-lasting, and cost-saving LED bulbs nears completion. It has saved more than £2.5 million pounds so far. The change to LED streetlights supports Suffolk County Council's aim to reduce carbon, light pollution, and bring down ongoing maintenance costs for the council, all whilst providing the best value to residents. It was expected that the council would reduce costs by around 76%, however, the target was exceeded, with 77.64% savings made to date. In June 2021, Bouygues Energies and Services were announced as the partner to deliver the project to upgrade 43,400 Suffolk streetlights with new, reduced energy LED lanterns. The total number of upgraded streetlights is currently at 40,692 excluding any of the Ipswich Borough Council, or Town/Parish council owned streetlights. There are approximately 1,700 upgrades outstanding, which includes any remaining heritage lantern upgrades. It is hoped that around 1200 of the remaining lanterns will be completed by the end of the year. Prior to the commencement of the project, Suffolk Highways contacted towns and parishes to provide them with the opportunity to have their parish-council owned street-lighting upgraded at the same time. All heritage-style lanterns are also being upgraded as part of the project. The upgrade of the lighting system will include a further rollout of SCC's central management system which will allow lights to be switched on or off and dim individual or groups of lights. This smart technology will increase the control the council has over its power consumption which will further reduce costs. The system will also automatically flag any lights that are not working which reduces the need for night-time inspections. It has been very exciting to see the incredible progress made on the LED streetlight replacement over the past 15 months. Our partner contractor, Bouygues has shown such resilience throughout which has resulted in a very well-managed programme and successful project. The shift over to these new LED lanterns has enabled the council to save a considerable amount on energy costs and supported our organisation's ambition to become carbon-neutral organisation by 2030. I would like to extend my congratulations and thank you to all those working on this project and ensuring its resounding success. I look forward to seeing its continued positive impact in the coming years as we reap the benefits of stronger, cheaper, and more environmentally friendly streetlights.

New scheme 'multiply Suffolk' to offer adults a chance to improve their numeracy skills

On November 15th, new initiative named Multiply Suffolk, which will offer adults an opportunity to improve their numeracy skills, was launched in Suffolk. The scheme is for those who do not already have a GCSE grade C/4 or higher in Maths or equivalent. Adults can sign up for free courses and activities including Money Management and Numeracy for Parents/Carers. Unaccredited, informal learning as well as Level 1 and Level 2 accredited learning is available to residents on either a part-time or intensive basis and are offered in flexible settings to fit around people's lives. Multiply Suffolk has been created thanks to a £3.7m government investment from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund aimed at boosting opportunities for more people to progress and secure well-paid jobs. SCC's Multiply Suffolk Team will work with subcontractors Realise Futures and Menta to deliver the scheme. This is an exciting new initiative that will help adult learners across the county. The scheme is aimed at improving numeracy skills, and it has been widely shown that people who improve their numeracy skills are more likely to be in employment, have higher wages and have better mental well-being. We are pleased to be delivering Multiply Suffolk alongside Realise Futures and MENTA and I hope that adults in Suffolk take full advantage of the scheme. Multiply Suffolk was officially launched during the adult learning engagement event at Trinity Park, Ipswich on 9 November 2022.

For more information and/or to sign up for the scheme visit:

<https://learnsuffolk.org/multiply-coming-soon/>

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