

A report for Groton Parish Council meeting on 1st September 2021

From James Finch – County Councillor for the Stour Valley

Tel: 01206 263649 Mobile 07545 423796 Email: james.finch@suffolk.gov.uk

➤ **Suffolk health chiefs alarm as Covid19 cases shoot up ahead of sunny bank holiday weekend**

The number of Covid cases in Suffolk have risen by 22% in the last week and this increase is set to continue, prompting Suffolk's Director of Public Health to issue an urgent warning ahead of the Bank Holiday weekend. Stuart Keeble made the warning after Suffolk's weekly case hit 231.1 cases per 100,000 population.

➤ **COVID 19 infection rates over August**

There is now a start of an upturn again of infection rates in South Suffolk. In the 7 days up to 31st **August** there were **1782 new cases of COVID-19 in the wholes of Suffolk**. Locally in the area of my Division, there were 14 cases up to the seven day period ending 28th August in our MSOA area of 18 villages. **BUT** in the Sudbury, Hadleigh and East Bergholt areas which surround the Stour Valley division, they are more than ours.

I continue to urge all those of you who are travelling locally and mixing with more people for work and / or pleasure **to take a Rapid Flow Test twice per week.**

➤ **Statement on behalf of all Suffolk councils regarding Afghan refugees**

"On Wednesday 18 August, the Government announced its new resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees. Whilst the full details are yet to be confirmed, it is crystal clear that the Government needs local authorities everywhere to step up and support this national effort.

"All councils in Suffolk are committed to this cause. We have already helped a small number of Afghan interpreters and their families to resettle in Suffolk, in addition to ongoing work to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children and other refugees entering the UK. In the coming days and weeks, the district, borough and county councils will continue working with the Government to do what we can to provide assistance to vulnerable refugees.

"Times like this call for acts of humanity. Suffolk will play its part."

➤ **Suffolk targets devolution talks with Government**

It was announced on August 17th that public sector leaders in Suffolk say they welcome early discussions with Ministers about a possible devolution deal for Suffolk.

In a joint letter sent to Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, the leaders of all of Suffolk's six councils and Police and Crime Commissioner Tim Passmore, said:

"Suffolk has already demonstrated its credibility as a place where Government will find strong and ambitious delivery partners. The Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) group has a track record of effective partnership working. These robust relationships enable more innovative ways of working, including exploring opportunities for devolution as part of a County Deal.

"Suffolk...is an ideal place to help Government demonstrate how levelling up can work in diverse geographies. Suffolk has a strong offer to make to Government and we would welcome early discussions with MHCLG Ministers to explore proposals for a County Deal ahead of the White Paper being published."

The Government wrote to councils in July 2021, setting out its ambition to make available to county areas the kind of devolved decision-making powers and public funding currently enjoyed by larger cities and urban areas. It's part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda and will see a White Paper published in the coming months.

➤ **Suffolk plans climate change events ahead of COP26**

It was announced on August 11th that in the build-up to COP26, events around Suffolk will showcase local businesses and people who are tackling climate change, to inspire others to follow. The events aim to encourage businesses and residents to do more personally and professionally to reduce carbon emissions and therefore slow the increase of climate change.

One of the events confirmed to be taking place in Suffolk is the visit of the national Zero Carbon Tour, organised by Planet Mark. The Tour sees a fully electric 'Carbon Battle Bus' making visits around the country before arriving at the COP26 conference.

Suffolk's collective campaign of Creating The Greenest County is to be net zero by 2030. As part of the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan, these events look to encourage collaborative action by educating and engaging with residents and businesses to develop net zero journey.

Other events which are being planned in Suffolk in the lead up to COP26 include:

- August/September – Webinars for Suffolk's voluntary sector (Suffolk County Council)
- 1 September – Zero Carbon Tour visits Ipswich
- 12 October – Ten Steps to Net Zero (Suffolk Chamber of Commerce)
- 21-22 October – Local Energy Showcase (Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council)
- TBC October - A Greener NHS day
- 12 November – Greenest County Awards (Suffolk County Council)
- 23-25 November – Low Carbon Homes

➤ **Virtual Fostering and Adoption Sessions for the Stour Valley**

The Virtual Fostering and Adoption session have been reviewed and are reported to have been very successful. IN the light of this, it is intended to continue with these virtual sessions. Since the incidence of COVID 19 sadly the demand for this service has increased significantly. Therefore, those who would like to join one of the following events please email for the log in codes:-

The Foster Carer recruitment Event is held the 1st Wednesday of every month, and the Adoption Event is the 1st Thursday. all 7:00pm in your home.

To book a place please email Claire.Gwatkin@suffolk.gov.uk. She will then send instructions on how to join the virtual meeting. As always, the team will be happy to answer any questions you have about fostering or adoption! They normally will have a foster carer or adoptive parent available to help you too at these events. For more details to find out more refer to the website - <https://www.fosterandadopt.suffolk.gov.uk>

Please continue to spread the word.

➤ **My Priorities**

Education - Supporting Vulnerable People - Jobs and Growth - Localism and the Stour Valley - Building on Suffolk's Strength all underpinned by strong financial management and low council tax.