

A report for Groton Parish Council Meeting on 3rd November 2021 From James Finch – County Councillor for the Stour Valley

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➤ **Extra COVID-19 support heading to Suffolk**

Public health managers in Suffolk have welcomed the Government's commitment to provide extra resources to help fight COVID-19 in the county. It comes as pressure on the county's hospitals is reaching critical levels due to more people needing treatment - and some of the highest rates of infection in the country.

The additional support will include:

- Support for the vaccination efforts by extending opening hours and
- creating pop up vaccination clinic within our communities
- Help to coordinate on the ground door knocking campaigns
- Help to reduce transmission in schools with increased testing and additional temporary powers

In the 7 days up to **31st October there were 3337 new cases of COVID-19 in the wholes of Suffolk**. Locally in the area of my division, there were 33 cases up to the seven day period ending 26th October in our MSOA area of 18 villages. **BUT** in the Sudbury, Hadleigh and East Bergholt areas which surround the Stour Valley division, **their cases in the last 7 days are in the 50's** and incidences are being recorded in the younger age groups. **HOWEVER there is some good news that the 7 day rolling average of deaths in hospitals and Care Homes are nil**. The Babergh District has the lowest number of incidences in the county and the trend of those infected is plateauing. **All in all, this demonstrates again that the vaccination programme is working well locally**. Booster vaccines have now started for those who were vaccinated before Christmas and up to the end of January. In addition the Flue Vaccination programme has also commenced.

*However 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** so that you can take precautions if you are infected unknowingly and that we can keep the good record we have locally.*

➤ **£50 million plan to boost Suffolk bus services**

On October 7th it was announced that wider coverage, cheaper fares, improved ticketing, and better evening and weekend services are among proposals forming part of a £50 million plan. *The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)* was submitted to the Government last week.

Following on from the submission of the BSIP, the council, bus operators and other stakeholders will be working together to establish a countywide Enhanced Partnership. This will enable the BSIP proposals to be delivered, building on experience gained from the existing Ipswich Quality Bus Partnership.

The funding bid is being made to the government's £3 billion fund under its Bus Back Better national bus strategy for England. Suffolk County Council will be asking for a minimum of £50m over three years - £15m each for the first two years and £20m for the third.

➤ **Independent review of aspects of Suffolk's Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) services carried out by experts from Lincolnshire.**

This team from Lincolnshire County Council published a report on 20th September of their findings. This wasn't a review of everything Suffolk County Council (SCC) does concerning SEND services, but focussed on the processes, communication protocols and family-facing elements of them. The review made nine recommendations and SCC have used these to draft an urgent action plan which can be read online [*here*](#).

SCC priority now is to implement wide-scale improvements, and to do this with pace, impact and efficiency. They have already started to make improvements to the way they do things and whilst, wide-scale improvement will take time, they are determined to make things better. There have been many positive changes to the way they deliver SEND services in the past 18 months and they are proud of these, but clearly there is some way to go.

Children's education and welfare is fundamental – I fully recognise this as a parent and grand parent myself. We all want to work together to give your children and young people the very best chance in

life. If you would like to discuss any aspect of the report or action plan please contact me or SCC via email at SendReview@suffolk.gov.uk .

➤ **Another Review of the Lorry Route Plan in Suffolk**

A technical and community led review of lorry routes that considers changes to the highway network will take place again since the plan was updated in 2011. This includes:- 1. New strategic roads, 2. New Lorry Watch areas, and 3. Air Quality Management Areas in Suffolk

It will look at a range of evidence including:

- Collision records and traffic data
- Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) for weight, width and height restrictions
- The resilient road network and its strategic road network diversions as well as GPS data showing the origin and destination of trips, routes taken and the locations of building “strikes”
- Public complaints
- Data from Lorry Watch schemes

The community led review runs **from 22 October 2021 to 17 December 2021**. Suffolk County Council is seeking the views of Parish and Town Councils about their local issues and intelligence. Information will be gathered by a survey sent to all of Suffolk’s Parish and Town Councils. Each local council will be limited to three issues within their community to ensure fair and equal representation across the county. The review will be completed in Spring 2022 where the County Council plan to publish a new interactive Lorry Route map.

➤ **New Suffolk Recycling Centres online booking system**

On September 20th it was announced that Suffolk County Council has developed a new, more user-friendly booking system which enables residents to book slots for recycling.

For bookings from 27 September, people can view all available time slots in real time, to see which booking slots are free at any given moment. The system allows you to book up to seven days in advance. If circumstances change, you can easily cancel your slot up to one hour beforehand or equally, you can click to amend your booking if required.

The system is also able to advise customers on which sites accept specific materials, such as plasterboard to ensure the correct type of booking is made to save customers’ time, and it can also be used to share real time messages with customers, for example if any site needs to close due to adverse weather or emergency situations. The new booking system is connected to automated numberplate recognition to allow for a trial of automatic entry gates.

➤ **Local Flooding**

A number of villages have suffered from flooding this last month especially in the last few weeks. I write to say I am giving this a high priority by regularly informing and pressing the Highways team to address these issues especially where this results in the internal flooding of houses. The storms at the beginning of October were particularly bad and on the morning of 5th October locally between 6.30 and 6.40, it was raining at a rate of 280 mm/hr – that is more than 10 inches per hour. This is extremely intense and challenges the capacity of any highway drainage system. (*My thanks to David Lowe, Nayland for this data*). There was again heavy rain last week. On behalf of the Council, please accept my personal apologies to those who have suffered from local flooding. I can assure you that your challenges are high on our priority list.

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 fair council tax.