

## **SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19**

The **new Light Rescue Pump fire engine** was launched in April 2018. It has the latest firefighting and rescue equipment and has been specifically designed to provide flexible crewing in rural areas of between two and five firefighters. The standard fire appliance usually has four to six firefighters.

**Councillor Mathew Hicks was elected as the new leader of SCC** on May 24 2018.

Councillor Hicks confirmed focus on major infrastructure projects and stressed the need for a co-ordinated and strategic approach with partners.

In July Suffolk County Council's Cabinet approved a plan to **invest £6million into upgrading Suffolk's recycling centres.**

The plan has earmarked £3m for the Foxhall Recycling Centre – Suffolk's busiest with 20% of all recycling waste in the county – and £1m for Haverhill for "urgent improvements". The plans will see improvements to traffic access at Foxhall and measures to prevent people from having to climb steps to dispose of their waste in the containers.

Construction for improvements is expected to get underway in 2019/20.

**Suffolk's tourism trade has seen its biggest boom for a decade.** The visitor economy has reached the £2 billion mark for the first time.

Interim figures released in August 2018 by Visit Suffolk showed that tourism grew by at least five per cent in 2017, more than double the year before.

The number of jobs in the county's tourism sector rose by 6 per cent to 42,428; thus 13.6 per cent of all employment in Suffolk is in the tourism sector.

**The Care Quality Commission rated Mid Suffolk Home First, provided by SCC, as outstanding**

Mid Suffolk Home First, provides a short-term reablement service and a longer-term care service. The reablement and care services support people following a period of ill health or a significant loss in their ability to manage their day to day care needs. The service aims to help the person reach their optimum level of independence.

**The Suffolk Climate Change Partnership received a national award for supporting local communities to be more energy efficient.** The Partnership is a collaboration of Suffolk County Council, all Suffolk's borough and district councils and The Environment Agency. It supports the county's communities, businesses and residents to reduce carbon emissions, realise the economic benefits of reducing energy consumption and adapt to the future impacts of climate change. Its work has brought in significant amounts of external funding to Suffolk.

**The Sport and Physical Activity sector** is very important to Suffolk and contributes £270m a year to the Suffolk economy. Over 10,000 jobs, or 3% of all employment in

Suffolk, is provided by this sector and is almost double the proportion seen at national levels.

A report highlights the importance of continuing the drive towards increasing participation in sport and physical activity as a way of both improving productivity and reducing the spend on health and social care. It estimates that a reduction of just 10% in Suffolk employee sickness rates would give the Suffolk economy a boost of £42m annually.

Over the month of January, **Suffolk Highways deployed three thermal road repair machines** which repaired approximately 1,700 potholes county-wide. This is a more effective and longer-lasting method of repair

The process does not require excavation of the highway, meaning no dust or noise, and better still, no waste material. The result also means there are no surface joints, which can be prone to faster deterioration.

**Suffolk has risen in national league tables** and 64% of students in Suffolk are now achieving the expected standard in GCSE English and Maths, putting Suffolk in the top half of authorities achieving this standard.

The validated **A Level figures** confirm that Suffolk pupils have performed well. 98.1% of A Levels taken in the county have been awarded an A\*-E grade, compared to 97.6% nationally.

Suffolk has been at the forefront of fibre broadband rollout, via its **Better Broadband for Suffolk Program**, since 2010 and currently the county enjoys a superfast broadband coverage of 93%, with the current contract due to reach 98% by 2020. Additional funding from the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs of £1.725ml will contribute towards meeting some of the remaining 2% of the county that is not covered by the existing contracts. B

Budget proposals to increase SCC portion of **council tax for 2019/20** by 4% were agreed by Full council on February 14<sup>th</sup>. Transformation of services is currently underway and working with other authorities and public sector partners is key to reducing spend and making services more efficient. Working together in partnership will benefit services enormously.

**PATRICIA O'BRIEN**

**County Councillor for Martlesham Division.**