

May 2023 report for the Martlesham Division

Competition to create virtual reality films for people with dementia

Suffolk County Council is supporting Dementia Action Week with a competition to produce virtual reality films for people living with the condition.

The competition is part of a nationwide initiative called VR Challenge UK and will be launched at a virtual event in the Metaverse on Thursday.

It is being run by Suffolk County Council in conjunction with Spark Emerging Technologies Ltd as part of the council's recently awarded contract to develop a new, bespoke virtual reality (VR) app to deliver therapeutic experiences to people living with dementia across all Suffolk care settings.

Young people and adults from across the UK will be invited to get involved with this opportunity to create meaningful and stimulating VR films for people living with dementia.

The competition is open to amateurs and professionals, as well as students from further and higher education, carers, and people living with dementia themselves.

It is hoped nursing and residential homes, day centres, as well as Further Education Colleges, universities, and charitable organisations from across the UK will grab this opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of people with dementia.

In the first round of the competition, entrants will simply be invited to submit a brief storyboard of their proposed film for one of the following six categories:

- Suffolk
- Nostalgia
- Nature
- Leisure
- Computer Generated Imagery (CGI)
- Carer content

The deadline for the submission of storyboards will be Friday 30th June. Shortlisted candidates will then proceed to the second round of the competition where they will receive exclusive support from Spark to go on and plan, film and produce their proposed films by the deadline of Thursday 31st August.

The final VR films will be evaluated by people living with dementia before being judged by a specialist panel. The winning films will be showcased at an awards ceremony in mid-October.

Winners in each tier of the competition will have the opportunity of choosing from three prizes: a brand new Insta360 X3 360 camera kit; a top of the range Oculus Meta Quest 2 VR Headset; or to gift a year's subscription to the new VR app with all the required hardware to a care setting of their choice.

More details can be found on the competition website at <https://vrchallengeuk.co.uk>

Suffolk residents urged to #ShakeltOut when recycling

A new campaign by Suffolk Waste Partnership is encouraging people to empty plastic bags and not throw them in recycling.

The #ShakeltOut campaign has been launched by the Suffolk Waste Partnership to encourage households in Suffolk to help improve recycling rates across the county by making sure black bin bags and other plastic sacks are not thrown in with recyclable materials.

#ShakeltOut is encouraging people to shake out plastic bags and keep recycling clean, dry, and loose.

The Partnership, which comprises Babergh District Council, East Suffolk Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Suffolk County Council, and West Suffolk Council, says more than a quarter (26%) of the materials in Suffolk's recycling bins in 2022/23 were not able to be processed as they were spoiled.

Items that contributed to spoiled recycling collections included:

- Materials that were not clean and dry, or contained food and drink residue
- Rubbish sacks or plastic bags containing recycling
- Non-recyclable items, such as nappies and food waste

Plastic bags and rubbish sacks are a particular problem – recycling handlers can't see what's inside them and they are often full of rubbish or other non-recyclable items.

This means bags are removed during the sorting process to avoid spoiling other good recycling. Any removed bags are then sent for disposal.

The Suffolk Waste Partnership has also released a new animation as part of the wider campaign to promote the #ShakeltOut message.

The animation aims to remind households across the country of the simple measures they can take to help improve recycling: <https://youtu.be/iBKOUFWxXdQ>

To find out more about the #ShakeltOut campaign and for more information on recycling in Suffolk, visit www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk/shake-it-out

Library services protected as Suffolk County Council approves additional funding

Suffolk County Council on the 16th May underlined its commitment to library services in Suffolk.

Suffolk County Council has underlined its commitment to library services in Suffolk, as it approved plans to increase its funding to Suffolk Libraries, to enable the service to continue operating at its current level, until the end of the contract in July 2024.

Suffolk Libraries currently receives £5.9m per year from Suffolk County Council, however the service is forecasting a deficit of £60k per month from April 2023. The service has cited increases in service costs, a reduction in income opportunities following the Coronavirus Pandemic and rising inflation, as causes of the deficit.

This means it is no longer possible for the service to continue operating at its current level of service, within its current contract value.

At Suffolk County Council's Cabinet meeting, the council has approved plans to absorb this cost pressure, funding Suffolk Libraries an additional £720k per year, through to the end of the current contract in July 2024. This additional funding will support Suffolk Libraries to continue delivering its highly valued services to Suffolk Residents.

The council has previously made a commitment to continue to support Suffolk Libraries. At Suffolk County Council's full council meeting in February, the council agreed to fund an additional £250k in the first quarter of the 2023/24 financial year to help with the increased costs Highlighted by Suffolk Libraries. This £250k for the first quarter of the year is included within the overall figure agreed by Cabinet, of an additional £720k for the 2023/24 financial year.

The council also supported Suffolk Libraries with £155,000 for initiatives to support residents with Cost of Living and support for Digital Inclusion in the 2022/23 financial year.

In addition, the Council continues to successfully access Section 106 funding to support ongoing building developments required to ensure buildings are fit for purpose and support service delivery.

Bruce Leeke, CEO of Suffolk Libraries, said:

"We are delighted that Suffolk County Council has agreed to provide us with additional funding for the remainder of our current contract. Our direct library costs have significantly increased over the last few years and the pandemic impacted our ongoing fundraising and income generation initiatives. This has combined to create a budget deficit which would have made it difficult to maintain the same comprehensive service for the people of Suffolk without additional support.

"Since 2012, we have been nationally recognised for delivering innovative and forward-thinking services which reduce inequality and improve community wellbeing, whilst saving a significant amounts of public money.

"We have a very positive and supportive relationship with the county council and this decision shows that councillors appreciate the responsiveness, skill and passion of our colleagues working at the heart of every major community in Suffolk."

Landscape gardener has fraudulent activity nipped in the bud

A landscape gardener has pleaded guilty to a string of offences, including defrauding his victims out of thousands of pounds, after Suffolk Trading Standards pursued a conviction against him.

Darren Moore, 42, of Old Warren Farm, Wimbleton, traded as Darren Moore Garden Landscaping & DIY and operated across Suffolk. He first came to the attention of Trading Standards after a consumer complained of his poor work in April 2022.

An investigation was subsequently launched into Moore, during which statements were taken from eight witnesses who alleged that he had acted dishonestly by taking payment for his services but failing to complete the work. Collectively the witnesses paid over £10,800 to Moore, £2,900 of which was refunded to three of the customers, leaving the rest out of pocket by almost £8,000.

Concerns were also raised about the quality of work carried out by Moore, with an independent chartered surveyor concluding that these “fell well below an acceptable standard” and that “the amount paid by consumers for his work was completely excessive”.

In addition, Suffolk Trading Standards uncovered that Moore had failed to return all monies owed to creditors and acted dishonestly in his communications with customers.

At a hearing at Ipswich Magistrates Court on Monday, 22nd May, Darren Moore pleaded guilty to carrying out garden landscaping work for a fraudulent purpose, contrary to Section 9 of the Fraud Act 2006, and will be sentenced in July.

Anyone who believes they may have been the victim of a fraudulent or substandard trader should contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.