

## New highways services arriving in Suffolk as multi-million-pound contract awarded

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Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, has been awarded Suffolk's new highways services contract, which will begin on 1 October 2023.

Following an extensive procurement exercise, Suffolk County Council has confirmed Milestone will be its new contract partner for up to 20 years. The new partnership, which is worth in the region of £800 million - £1 billion, will be delivering highway projects and improvements across Suffolk, including but not limited to maintaining roads, pavements and rights of way, drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting.

When searching for its new highways partner, the county council worked with leading industry analysts to understand the different types of arrangements that other local authorities have in place, to look at which specialist providers are in the marketplace, and to find out what aspects of contract agreement may work best for Suffolk.

The council wanted the new contract to focus on delivering greater social value, utilising local skills and talent, giving young people the opportunity to work in the sector as well as building on the council's commitment to carbon reduction and protecting the environment.

A rigorous procurement exercise was carried out over many months, with various stages of discussions with service providers, to evolve their solutions to meet the various contractual requirements and deliver an effective and efficient highway service for Suffolk. Final submissions were evaluated and extensively moderated before the final winning contract was awarded.

## Fire service finalises plan to protect Suffolk's communities

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Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, brought the CRMP to Cabinet (Tuesday, 21 February) to seek approval for its adoption from April 2023.

*“We have listened to residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders about what matters to them and where they feel we should direct our resources; without this being to the detriment of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service staff, who already work tirelessly to prevent and respond to emergencies.*”

Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection

The plan details Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's priorities until 2027, including:

- Updating how response times are reported to include from the time of call and focus on the areas of highest risk, such as dwelling fires
- Addressing climate change to support Suffolk County Council's ambition to be a carbon-neutral authority by 2030, with a view to introducing more non-fossil fuel vehicles in the fleet
- Developing preventative safe and well visits, including continued work with the National Farmers' Union to tailor advice to rural and farming communities
- Assessing how the service works with partner agencies, such as supporting the ambulance service when appropriate and if capacity and resources allow for this
- Reviewing the recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters and specialist support staff to ensure Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service remains a diverse employer of choice

These priorities were identified during extensive research and pre-consultation engagement with staff and stakeholders. In addition, hundreds of Suffolk residents helped to inform the final document by providing feedback on proposals during the CRMP public consultation, which ran from October to December 2022 and included a series of public events held at six supermarkets across the county.

## Future of popular Ipswich sports centre secured by Suffolk County Council

Vivify, a school's lettings company, will replace Ipswich Borough Council in the management of the public sports facilities at Northgate. The company has extensive experience of running more than 500 sports facilities across the country. It will manage the bookings system and out of hours service.

### **Paul West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich at Suffolk County Council, said:**

“When Ipswich Borough Council handed back its 25-year commitment to run the facilities, we were left in a challenging position.

“Traditionally we have no knowledge or experience of running sports facilities – this sits at borough level. However, we knew we had a duty to pick up responsibility for the popular venue and ensure its future. Hundreds of people use the site, whether running clubs or for racquet sports, so we accepted that - despite the unilateral decision of the borough council - we could not let the site close.

The facilities will be formally handed over on April 1<sup>st</sup> and will reopen on April 17<sup>th</sup> following site maintenance and cleaning. The final details of the agreement are currently being worked through.

The new agreement will cost Suffolk County Council in excess of £235,000 until July 2024. During this contract period, Suffolk County Council will continue to review the longer term business case.

## Other Announcements

### ***1. Volunteering at Suffolk Archives***

Suffolk Archives are looking for volunteers in their branches in Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft and Ipswich.

‘Volunteers bring the archive to life for researchers and local communities, making more archives accessible and connecting people to the places they live. By volunteering you will develop new skills, make new friends and conserve Suffolk’s history for the next generation.’ – Suffolk Archives

There are a range of roles available from remote volunteering to in-person.

If you would like to join the remote volunteer team at Suffolk Archives visit the [Suffolk Archives website](#) for more information.

**Chris Chambers - County Councillor for the Gipping Valley Division**

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## *2. Hosts for Ukraine*

It has been over a year since the start of the war in Ukraine. Suffolk County Council is still in need of a wide range of host homes for Ukrainian refugees.

Potential hosts can sign up directly with the County Council by [completing our online form](#) or emailing [refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk).

Learn more here: [Support for Ukraine - Suffolk County Council](#)