



Foxhall Recycling Centre redevelopment completed ahead of schedule

The new and improved Foxhall Recycling Centre in Ipswich is now fully open to all customers as construction works have been completed ahead of schedule.

Work on the project began in October 2022 and was originally anticipated for completion in early 2024. The site remained open throughout the build, but service was reduced for business and trade customers and there were temporary restrictions on some waste types while space was limited.

The new site, designed by Concertus Design and Property Consultants and built by R G Carter, increases capacity for vehicles on site, improves access from Foxhall Road and reduces queuing on the highway.

It also has a new raised-level construction, giving better access to containers for users without the need for stairs.

Improvements have also been made to the site's Re-use shop, which sells furniture, sports equipment, kitchen supplies, books, toys and bric-a-brac collected at Suffolk's recycling centres and which would otherwise have been disposed of as waste.

The project was originally expected to cost £7.8 million, but the increased cost of materials and high inflation since the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine resulted in the final cost of the refurbishment being £8.3 million. The construction work was all completed within the agreed contract price and the scheme benefitted from a £958,914 contribution from East Suffolk Council through the Community Infrastructure Levy on development schemes.

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/waste-and-recycling/book-a-recycling-centre-time-slot>

Appointments are not needed to visit the Re-use Shop, which is open 7 days a week.

Suffolk Residents invited to help shape the future of library services

A public consultation has been launched (Monday 30 October), encouraging Suffolk Residents to tell Suffolk County Council what they want from their library services in the future.

Suffolk County Council's contract with Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) Limited, the independent charity that runs the library service, comes to an end on 31 May 2025, with a new contract set to begin in June 2025. The Council is therefore seeking views from the public about what is important to them, ahead of awarding the new contract.

The 13-week consultation will be followed by a competitive Tender Process, before the new contract is awarded in November 2024.

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To inform the consultation, the council has undertaken engagement with over 30 organisations including Suffolk's Libraries IPS Limited staff, key service users, schools and partner organisations.

A key focus of the consultation is the council's Library outreach services, which include three mobile library vehicles, serving more than 500 stops across rural parts of the county each month, for the pickup and exchange of books.

The mobile library vehicles are coming to the end of their life and the council therefore needs to consider the best way to continue to deliver these services to people in rural areas of the county going forward.

Library Outreach services also include Pop-up Libraries and a home library service, run by local volunteers, for Suffolk residents that find it difficult to access a library building or mobile library.

The consultation is made up of two parts. Part one gives residents an opportunity to tell the council what they value in their library service and what they would like to see more of in the future. Part two seeks views on how Library Outreach services could be run in the future.

The council is keen to hear from people who currently use library services and those who do not, to better understand the needs across the county. This feedback will help to inform the requirements for the future contract.

The value of the new contract will be £6.8m per year, increased from the previous contract value of £5.9m. The increase takes into account increased service costs, management of the Library Outreach service, and to allow for innovation in future years.

The term of the contract will be 6 years, with the option to extend for a further 6 years.

The consultation is open from today, Monday 30 October, until Friday 26 January.

Residents can have their say by visiting www.suffolk.gov.uk/LibraryConsultation

Alternative formats of the consultation are available on request, please email: Libraries.consultation@suffolk.gov.uk

Those who cannot access the consultation online can request a printed copy or assistance with completing the survey by calling 0345 603 1842.

The results of the consultation will be considered by Suffolk County Council at its meeting of the Cabinet in March 2024.

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More public money for adult and children's care, but difficult decisions are needed to balance the books

In the next two years, Suffolk County Council needs to pump almost £74 million extra into protecting the county's most vulnerable residents.

- £74 million extra needed to protect most vulnerable over two years
- £64.7 million savings to be made over two years
- Council set to reduce workforce, services and use savings

As part of financial plans to prioritise those in greatest need, an additional £42.7 million for children's services and £29.9 million for adult care are being proposed.

Along with local authorities up and down the country, the council has been hit hard by inflation and rising demand for services such as children's care, special educational needs and disabilities and home-to-school transport. It means having to make difficult decisions about the services it provides, including £64.7 million of savings in 2024/25 and 2025/26.

The two-year savings proposals, which have been published on the council's website, include:

- £11 million of staffing costs through changing the way services are delivered and restructuring across the council.
- £30.6 million of additional savings from an extension of the council's hugely successful Adult Social Care Transformation programme, which has focused on reducing demand for more expensive social care options by boosting people's independence and ability to stay well for longer through innovative methods including cutting edge care technology. This transformation programme has already saved £30.7 million over the last six years
- £0.5 million of savings by stopping core funding to Art and Museum sector organisations. To assist with the transition, £528,000 of COVID recovery money will be made available to Arts and Museum sector organisations for 2024/25 which will fully cover the funding reduction for one year.
- £140,000 of savings by centralising Suffolk Archives to The Hold and closing the branches in West and East Suffolk. In February 2023, the council committed £3.4m to relocate the West Suffolk Archives branch to the proposed Western Way development. Remaining at its current location would have required over £5 million to protect the historic records and meet modern archive standards. West Suffolk Council has since decided not to progress with the Western Way development, ending that opportunity. Centralising the three branches into one brings Suffolk in line with the majority of archive services across the country and is better value for taxpayers' money.
- £15.9 million of reserves will be used to balance the 2024/25 budget.

Following the recent funding announcement from the Government, Suffolk County Council will not receive enough funding to keep pace with inflation or the level of demand for services. The council has joined national calls for additional funding and lobbied the Chancellor of the Exchequer direct.

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Full details of Suffolk County Council's financial plans for 2024/25 will be presented to its Scrutiny Committee meeting on 11 January.

The proposals would give the council a budget of around £752 million for 2024/25, made up of funding coming from Government, business rates, charges for services and council tax. The proposed budget would require a 4.99% increase in council tax in next year. This would be made up of a 2.99% increase in general council tax and a 2% increase dedicated to funding adult care.

This means the costs for a household would be:

- Band B property: £23.50 per week (£1.12 per week increase from 2023/24)
(Band B properties are the most common in Suffolk)
- Band D property: £30.21 per week (£1.43 per week increase from 2023/24)

The budget proposals will be discussed at the council's Scrutiny Committee and then presented at the Cabinet meeting on 30 January. At the Full Council meeting on 15 February, the proposals will be debated, with a vote taking place on the budget for 2024/25 – the first year of the two-year budget proposals.

The Scrutiny Committee meeting will be available to stream on Suffolk County Council's YouTube channel, and public questions can be submitted in advance, details are available at www.suffolk.gov.uk.