

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR TJ HAWORTH-CULF March 2022

As we continue to wait for outcomes and discussions from energy matters, I am sure that you will join me in thinking about those all suffering in Ukraine, there are lots of ways that people can help and donate items such as warm clothes and torches etc. More will follow on this but thank you to all those that have already been in touch asking how they can help.

We note the changes to rules and guidance regarding Covid but there are still lots of cases around so please continue with sensible precautions. My best wishes to our Queen who as you know is recovering from Covid herself. It is hoped that those who contract COVID after isolating ceases will keep themselves away from others, but in reality, some may not, however, for those who are immune-suppressed or who look after frail or elderly family and friends it remains a different story. Many people remain concerned or worried about mixing in public spaces even if the chance of COVID becoming a simple cold, so mild it's almost missed, they still must remain cautious. For Cancer patients whose immunity might be wiped out by chemotherapy and those who are unable to take the vaccine, they are still fearful of catching it.

For some people, it might take longer for them to adjust, they might not want to change what they've been doing, who says the old way must be the new way? Hopefully, we have all learnt different or better ways to live, behave and treat others. Everyone deserves respect, kindness but especially for everyone to be mindful of others requests and actions at all times as things change and progress. The scientists are still cautious re other variants, so it remains important that we keep up to date where possible as it hasn't gone away.

Some people in the country are still dealing with the aftermaths of a very stormy few days. Whether this was the impact of Storm Dudley, Eunice or Franklin, Suffolk was battered by three storms in just four days. Many homes went without power, with many more dealing with broken roof tiles, fences and upended trees.

Suffolk faced an unprecedented deluge of strong winds and torrential rain in a very short time, but with collective responses people and organisations stood-up quickly, worked together and kept people safe and the county moving. It was an enormous endeavour and thanks to everyone involved. Suffolk's councils, including Suffolk Highways, health bodies, utility companies and emergency services were incredibly busy responding to the storms. Work continued all weekend, and the clean-up is still underway in places

Just to give you some detail, at 5pm on Friday, Suffolk police had dealt with 339 calls to 999 and 431 to 101, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service attended 51 incidents. Suffolk Highways reported one of their busiest periods with 342 reports of fallen trees and road obstructions. Teams worked overnight to clear the debris and keep the roads clear. Nearly 15,000 homes lost power at some point on Friday or over the weekend and UK Power Networks worked round the clock to restore power. One priority for Suffolk partners is making sure that vulnerable residents without power, were safe and secure. The council worked with UK Power Networks to map where these vulnerable homes were and the welfare vehicle was out and about dispensing information, hot drinks and enabling mobile phones to be charged.

You might want to display the following information on your website/notice boards/newletters etc:

In the event of bad weather, members of the public are encouraged to:

- Report fallen trees and obstructions on roads and paths to Suffolk Highways on **0345 606 6171**
- Avoid coastal areas due to an increased risk of erosion posing danger to life
- Plan their journey well in advance and check for travel disruption before leaving. Visit <https://one.network/> and using the 'Weather' layer to find out about road closures
- Following [@SuffolkCC](#) on Twitter or Suffolk County Council on Facebook
- Monitoring the weather forecast at www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/forecast/uk
- Get the latest information on Orwell Bridge closures at www.twitter.com/highwayseast
- Get advice on flooding and flood alerts at www.gov.uk/flood or on Floodline: **0345 988 1188**. More information on Twitter at [@envagencyanglia](#)
- Report a power cut by calling 105 or go to www.ukpowernetworks.co.uk/power-cut

Very best wishes

TJ

Get Nominating - A 550-mile torch relay will take place in Suffolk as part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

The relay will be part of the Festival of Suffolk 2022, which will encapsulate a number of events throughout the year to celebrate the Jubilee.

The torch will start its journey in Brandon on May 13 and end at the Suffolk Show in Ipswich's Trinity Park on June 1.

During its 550-mile journey through Suffolk, the torch will pass through 250 towns and villages - carried by local heroes along the way.

As part of its final leg, the torch will be carried along the Suffolk coast, starting in Beccles and heading south through Southwold, Aldeburgh and Woodbridge.

The torch bearers will be transported on community rickshaws, with residents across Suffolk invited to nominate worthy individuals to carry the torch.

Members of the public are invited to line the route and show their support for the torch bearers

The torch itself is currently in production and has been designed and made in Suffolk. Its design is a closely guarded secret at the moment, but organisers say it will have great symbolism for the county and the Queen.

The relay represents just one of the many events taking place as part of the Festival of Suffolk in celebration of the Jubilee.

Other events include the Aldeburgh Music Festival on June 3, Suffolk Day on June 21 and Suffolk Dog Day on July 31.

If you'd like to nominate a torchbearer, email kate.paul@suffolkcf.org.uk for further information.



Suffolk Fostering and Adoption Service swoops into The Big Hoot

Suffolk Fostering and Adoption Service has been announced as a proud sponsor for Suffolk's biggest ever mass participation public art event – 'The Big Hoot'.

The Big Hoot Ipswich 2022 is the third art trail brought to Ipswich by St Elizabeth Hospice in partnership with creative producers Wild in Art, following the success of Pigs Gone Wild 2016 and Elmer's Big Parade Suffolk 2019.

As part of the Big Hoot 2022, 50 ornately decorated owl sculptures, featuring designs celebrating all things Suffolk, will be scattered throughout Ipswich showcasing the wealth of artistic talent of the county and beyond, as part of the biggest free art event in Suffolk which attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors to the town.

Suffolk Fostering and Adoption's owl, named 'Big Hoot-Little Hoot' will represent the care that foster carers and adopters provide to children in the local community. The owl which features a baby owl nestling safely under the wings of its parent, will be painted by artist, Sandra Reynolds and perfectly depicts the loving and nurturing nature of foster carers and adoptive parents caring for Suffolk children.

In addition to The Big Hoot, Suffolk Fostering and Adoption Service will take part in the Little Hoot. The Little Hoot is predominantly aimed at schools who design their owl and fundraise for St Elizabeth's hospice. However, as a focus on Suffolk's children in care and adopted children, Suffolk Fostering and Adoption Service has been gifted an Owl by local business Highway Assurance. Children in care will be able to take part in a drawing competition to design the owl and the winning design will be chosen by The High Sheriff of Suffolk, Edward Creasy, and Highway Assurance Managing Director, Robert Watton. The owl will then be painted by a local artist to reflect the winning design before being proudly displayed at the Suffolk show along with 59 other Little Hoots, ahead of joining the trail in Ipswich over the summer, launching on 19 June.

Suffolk County Councillor James Reeder cabinet member for Children's Services said:

“I’m delighted that Suffolk Fostering and Adoption are participating in The Big Hoot to raise awareness of the fantastic work our foster carers and adopters provide for Suffolk children in the local community. We also hope that through a range of competitions and fun activities surrounding the event it will help us with our urgent need to attract more foster carers and adopters in Suffolk.”

“The loving nature of the big owl caring for the little owl beautifully depicts what being a foster carer and adoptive parent is like. With love, care and support from foster carers and adoptive parents, children and young people can truly flourish and reach their full potential before flying the nest.”

Liz Baldwin, corporate sponsorship and fundraising manager at St Elizabeth Hospice, said:

“We’re delighted Suffolk Fostering and Adoption will once again be supporting the hospice and taking part in our upcoming Big Hoot art trail.

“Suffolk Fostering and Adoption share key values with the hospice and provide vital care to children within the local community. Their participation in the event will help to raise awareness of the vital services they provide and hopefully inspire people to find out more about becoming a foster carer or adopter.”

Suffolk’s children and young people’s service currently have over 850 children in care and with more children coming into care in Suffolk every year, the need for foster carers and adoptive parents to come forward has never been greater.

These children need someone who can understand what they have been through, look at the world through their eyes and provide warmth, consistency and emotional support.

To find out more about fostering or adopting in Suffolk, visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/fosteringandadoption or call 01473 264800.

To find out more about The Big Hoot visit, <https://thebighoot.co.uk/>

Council focuses on children’s services, adult care and the environment, as budget confirmed

Suffolk County Council has approved its financial budget for 2022-23, alongside its first-ever full Net Zero carbon budget.

Both items were passed at the Full Council meeting on Thursday 17 February 2022, providing a focus on children’s services, adult care and the environment.

The council’s budget will rise by 4.5% (from £598.2m to £625.4m), with the additional money generated by a 1.99% increase in council tax, a further 1.00% from the Adult Care Precept, and an increase in grants received from the Government.

The Net Zero carbon budget will allow the council to measure its carbon emissions, and monitor and evaluate the impact of decisions it makes. This will mean it can report each year on its progress, tracking its ambitions towards Net Zero.

Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment at Suffolk County Council, said:

“Today was the first time the council chamber has witnessed a financial budget and a carbon budget being approved. It is important to give our Net Zero Carbon Budget equal weighting to our financial budget – it highlights our commitment to responding to our climate emergency declaration.

“Our financial budget means will not see any reductions in our services, and we’re further investing where it is most needed. Our aim is always to provide the best possible services for everyone in Suffolk and provide value for money.”

The overall increase of 2.99% to council tax, will see a Band D property’s bill rise by 80 pence per week. The council’s Cabinet had the option to increase the adult care element of council tax by a further 1%, but decided against this.

Councillor Rout explained:

“By paying this extra each week, we are all helping the council to provide its key services, and helping support those who need it most.

“We recognise Suffolk residents are seeing increases in the cost of living, whether at the supermarket, on the high street, and of course with energy bills. We did not feel it right to ask everyone for even more from their council tax bill - there is a balance to be had.

“We have been facing huge challenges, particularly the increase in demand on children service’s and adult care. But we are confident that our budget addresses these challenges without the need to ask even more from our residents.”

The Net Zero Carbon Budget will enable the council to more accurately measure its progress to being Net Zero by 2030, and how it can reduce its carbon emissions. Suffolk County Council has a long history of providing dedicated investment to improve the energy efficiency of its buildings and services.

This has led to reductions in carbon emissions in recent years, through projects such as replacing fossil fuel boilers with bio-mass units, installing solar panels and solar hot water systems, rainwater harvesting, updating lighting and improving insulation.

Councillor Rout added:

“Suffolk is well-regarded nationally for its response to climate change, not many other local authorities have committed the same resources to creating in an in-depth carbon budget, as we have.

“But we have much more work to do, it’s incredibly challenging to have an exact figure for every last gram of CO2 that the council emits. Our officers have worked incredibly hard to collate data so far, giving us a baseline against which we can measure our future emissions. We’ll continue to improve how we gather this data so that we can see our progress to Net Zero by 2030.”

Some of the detail of the budget, includes:

- £1.1m increase for the family services budget, specifically to address recommendations made by the recent independent SEND review
- £1m additional funding for Suffolk Highways over the next four years, for example to fund road signs and responsible verge cutting
- £10m to specifically deliver an increasing number of drainage schemes (over the next three years)
- £10m to improve footpath quality and access (over the next three years)
- £12.8m to decarbonise the buildings that SCC owns (by 2030)
- Investments this year to set up future borrowing for bigger schemes, such as SEND and carbon reduction

A net increase in Government Grants of £6.0 million, or £20.7 million once the £14.7 million of one-off COVID-19 Emergency Grant received in 2021-22 is excluded. Of this £20.7 million, £11.7 million relates to additional grant funding for social care

75p of every £1 Suffolk County Council spends goes towards supporting those who need it most through Adult Care, Children's Services, and Public Health.

The remaining 25p in every £1 is then used to cover the cost of other vital services, including Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, road maintenance, footpaths, waste services, libraries and addressing the challenges surrounding climate change, to name just a few.

£6.4 million project to 'Reclaim the Rain' and tackle flooding

Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils have been successful in winning £6.4 million to implement innovative sustainable water management projects.

Both councils placed a joint bid into Defra's 6-year Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme and were 1 of 25 successful projects chosen to take part.

The joint project, named 'Reclaim the Rain' sets out to improve flood and drought resilience in at least six small rural communities across Norfolk and Suffolk.

Norfolk and Suffolk both face considerable surface water flood risk, while also being the driest region in the UK. The project will deliver beneficial flood water reuse by agriculture, industry, communities, and the environment combined with nature-based flood management solutions.

The project will involve both partner organisations and the community in the development of suitable flood water reuse schemes. The schemes will address the community's needs in terms of flood risk and water resource requirements, and could result in provision of:

- Habitat creation and restoration;
- Rain Gardens;
- Rainwater Capture and Reuse for community, agriculture or business use;
- Retrofitted sustainable drainage systems (SuDS);
- Smart Leaky Water Butts and more...

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding, said:

"Flooding is a very real and challenging issue across many areas in Suffolk and there is much we are doing to minimise the plight this has our residents. This project will take our efforts to the next level by working with communities to capture that excess water and put it to good use. We live in the driest part of the UK, so every drop that falls on it is precious – any way that we can find a more sustainable use for this water will benefit us now and in years to come.

"I very much welcome the funding to enable us to do this, and congratulate officers and communities across the two counties, in what will no doubt be a fascinating and innovative 6-year programme."

Councillor Martin Wilby, Norfolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport, said:

“This initiative looks set to offer innovative small scale local solutions to alleviate some of the widespread flooding issues so many people in Norfolk have experienced. This should complement the work already underway to build the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance (NSFA) partnership to ensure communities and infrastructure are safer and more resilient to the risks of surface water flooding.

“We welcome this additional funding and would urge people to find out more about the Reclaim the Rain project and let us know what would help to manage and reuse water in their area.”

To find out more about Reclaim the Rain and how you can get involved, visit: www.reclaimtherain.org.

Time to dump single-use plastic - and revive our relationship with recycling

Valentine’s Day may be over for another year but it’s never too late to start a love affair with being greener.

On top of everything else, the Covid-19 pandemic has, in many ways, forced us to return to single-use plastic. We saw a rise in the use of disposable face coverings, takeaway coffee cups and throwaway polystyrene food containers, which has increased pressure on an already serious plastic waste problem.

The impacts of plastic waste on our environment and our health are well-documented; we have seen the devastating images brought to our screens by programmes such as Blue Planet II. Single-use plastics are more likely to end up in our rivers and oceans – it’s estimated that there will be more plastic in the oceans than fish by 2050 - and microplastics can find their way into our food.

We must also be careful when considering switching to other types of plastic. Degradable plastic may sound good, but all this means is that it breaks down into smaller pieces of plastic - which are still damaging to the environment. Although biodegradable plastic offers the benefit of breaking down in nature, there is no timeframe for its decomposition. Neither of these types of plastic are suitable for recycling or composting in Suffolk and will have to be placed in your rubbish bin.

I want to stress that not all plastics are inherently bad. When properly used and recycled, plastics can play a part in our efforts towards a more sustainable way of living. But we must reassess our relationship with the kind of cheap, throwaway plastic that has become so commonplace – products which have a lifespan of hours, or even mere minutes.

That’s why it’s time for us to break up with single-use plastic – to say “I’m sorry. It’s not me, it’s you.”

You can join thousands across Suffolk who are changing their relationship to plastic by:

- Using a reusable water bottle and coffee cup
- Choosing beeswax wraps and reusable tubs instead of clingfilm
- Opting for loose fruit and veg to cut down on excessive packaging, with the bonus being that this is often cheaper than pre-packaged alternatives
- Carrying reusable shopping bags and reusable cloth bags for loose items
- Buying metal straws and portable cutlery to reduce your reliance on disposable alternatives

- Shopping at retailers which offer [product refills](#) if you take your own container

At Suffolk County Council, we are committed to cracking down on plastic waste as part of our ongoing ambition to be the greenest county and as such have phased out single-use plastic in all our offices. Protecting and enhancing Suffolk's environment and biodiversity remains a priority for us and we hope to lead by example to encourage our residents and other organisations to do the same.

And where we cannot avoid plastic, we should remember to reuse and recycle when we can.

An analysis of the make-up of Suffolk's recycling bins, carried out by Suffolk Recycling, found that over half of the waste in our bins could have been reduced or recycled. We must all do our part to ensure that recyclable materials are placed in the appropriate bin, and not thrown away at a greater cost. Many items that can't be recycled at home, such as wood, electricals, and hard plastics, can be taken to one of Suffolk's recycling centres. More and more supermarkets now also offer collection points for soft recycling, enabling you to easily dispose of your bread bags and chocolate wrappers while doing your weekly shop.

Likewise, we must ensure that we are not putting the wrong items into [our recycling bins](#). In 2021, Suffolk Waste Partnership found that 20 per cent of our recycling waste had to be rejected each year because of contamination from products such as nappies, food waste, cartons, and textiles. If you are not sure, it is always best to check. Suffolk Recycling have a handy A to Z guide on their website at suffolkrecycling.org.uk.

Of course, we can also create less waste in the first place by purchasing things second hand, allowing us to reuse items that have already been producing and reducing the amount we all throw away. Doing so also reduces packaging, as many brand-new products are often wrapped in plastic. The best part? Buying used is likely to be much cheaper, saving both pounds and the planet.

It's time for us to dump disposables and move on to a more healthy, sustainable relationship with reusable and recyclable products.

Suffolk cements commitment to keeping its communities safe

A new strategy outlining how Suffolk will address Violence Against Women and Girls has been published today.

The strategy has been prepared collaboratively by the Safer Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) – consisting of representatives from Suffolk County Council, district and borough councils, the police, Suffolk's Police & Crime Commissioner, community safety partnerships, health and probation services, the Norfolk & Suffolk Criminal Justice Board and Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership.

All board members hold a shared ambition to tackle the incredibly important issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) which includes, but is not limited to, domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and revenge porn – all of which have a devastating impact on victim-survivors, families, and communities.

One domestic abuse survivor said:

“Unless you have been in this predicament, I don’t think you can fully comprehend how life changing the whole experience is and how necessary the support system is.”

Much work has been done on preventing VAWG since the launch of the county’s first strategy in 2018, which led to the establishment of Suffolk’s 24/7 domestic abuse helpline, additional accommodation for survivors and the creation of a Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Unit to help offenders address and alter their behaviour.

However, with recent figures showing an increase in sexual offences and domestic violence nationally, the board recognises the need to continue to drive forward positive change through effective partnership working.

Suffolk’s new VAWG Strategy outlines how this will be achieved in the county, with four key objectives – prevention, supporting victims, pursuing perpetrators, and strengthening the system – forming the basis for its approach.

Relevant strategies, policies, and legislation, including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the police and Government’s response to VAWG, have also been reflected to enable Suffolk to complement the national effort.

In addition, the strategy will be accompanied by an action plan for 2022 – 2025 to help ensure meaningful activity. This has been informed by members of the board, local charities, and domestic abuse survivors – who praised the system for enabling them to co-create proposals and have their say.

To support the board in implementing both the strategy and action plan, Suffolk County Council has contributed £350,000 towards this.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Chair of the Safer Stronger Communities Board and Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection and Communities, commented:

“Although Suffolk remains a safe place to live and work for many, crimes against women and girls are still happening daily, with these often underpinned by outdated attitudes and prejudice.

“Whilst much work has already been done to tackle this horrific behaviour, we will not stop until every woman and girl in Suffolk feels safe in their community or at home.

“I welcome the new Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy to help achieve this aim and would like to thank all those who have been involved in its creation, especially the survivors who have been instrumental in helping us to shape proposals to stop others from being victims of this devastating abuse in future.

“It’s great news that the strategy will also be supported by significant funding from our council – cementing our continued commitment to protecting our communities.” Whilst the strategy is focused primarily on preventing VAWG, due to these crimes often disproportionately affecting this gender, work will still be undertaken to support men and boys, as well as those that are transgender, non-binary or gender non-conforming.

The strategy is available online.

Residents urged to support Suffolk spectacular

Suffolk is set to stage a host of exciting Jubilee celebrations during 2022 – bringing the county’s communities together to mark this momentous milestone.

Her Majesty The Queen will become the first ever British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, on Sunday 6 February, after 70 years of service.

The unprecedented anniversary will be celebrated throughout the year, with a four-day UK bank holiday taking place from Thursday 2 to Sunday 5 June to enable people to commemorate the occasion.

Plans are already in place for a Festival of Suffolk – the county’s biggest ever community event. This year-long spectacular will incorporate much-loved existing events, such as the Suffolk Show, alongside dedicated Jubilee celebrations, including a race day and torch relay. Details on the latest line-up can be found at: www.festivalofsuffolk.org/.

Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk, Clare, Countess of Euston commented:

“I am delighted that Suffolk is providing a wealth of Jubilee events for everyone to enjoy.

“This will not only unite communities in joyful celebration but will also create a powerful legacy to increase the visibility of our county and improve local lives for many years to come.”

A highlight of the festival is the Big Jubilee Lunch, set to take place on Sunday 5 June. The initiative encourages people to come together and celebrate, either by hosting their own street party or simply enjoying a cup of tea with a neighbour.

To help facilitate this, Suffolk County Council has set up a dedicated webpage: www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent and will waive its fees for any road closures for events on this day, as well as providing free assistance with traffic management for all applications received before 11pm on Sunday 27 March.

The council is also supporting the Queen’s Green Canopy in Suffolk, which aims to plant over 775,000 new trees in 2022 – one for each resident in the county.

Almost a quarter of a million trees have been planted to date, with everyone urged to visit suffolk-lieutenancy.org.uk/queens-green-canopy/ and find out how they can ‘Plant a Tree for the Jubilee’ either directly or via one of the many organisations taking part in the scheme.

In addition to using the Jubilee as an opportunity to create a greener county, a focus on health and wellbeing will also form an important part of the celebrations, with plans for themed parkruns across Suffolk and a County Community Games tournament currently in development.

While primary school children across the county can participate in a Time Capsule Competition – enabling them to showcase how their school, students, teachers, and community have changed over the Queen’s reign.

Schools have until 11 February to express their interest in the competition: www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/education/time-capsule/ and must submit their entry by 25 March, ahead of the winner being announced on 1 April.

The winning school will get the opportunity to visit The Hold – home to 900 years' worth of Suffolk's history – which will also house their time capsule entry to preserve it for future generations to enjoy.

Councillor Graham Newman, Chairman of Suffolk County Council, said:

“On behalf of Suffolk, I'd like to wish Her Majesty The Queen our heartfelt congratulations on the 70th anniversary of her accession to the throne.

“Her Jubilee celebrations are even more poignant after a challenging few years, with Covid preventing us from doing many of the things that we all hold so dear.

“The Festival of Suffolk provides the perfect opportunity for us to spend time with loved ones or visit our favourite places again, and I'd encourage everyone to take part in what's set to be a splendid series of events for our county.”

Businesses can also benefit from the occasion by attending the Suffolk Business Expo, scheduled for Monday 20 June to Friday 1 July. The event – organised by Suffolk County Council, the Suffolk Chamber, and other partners – aims to showcase Suffolk businesses, whilst helping them to capitalise on the expected increase in tourists to the county and bounce back from Covid-19.

Vertas Group confirms its continued support for the 2022 Suffolk stage of the Women's Tour

Suffolk-based facilities management provider Vertas Group has confirmed that they will be continuing as a partner for the Women's Tour stage in Suffolk for 2022.

The announcement comes after a hugely successful Women's Tour in 2021, which saw over 100,000 Suffolk residents and visitors watch the final stage of the race, finishing in Felixstowe.

Ian Surtees MBA FIoD, Group Chief Executive Officer, Vertas, said: “We are delighted to announce that we will once again be a Supporting Partner of the Suffolk stage of the Tour and look forward to seeing the benefits to Suffolk businesses in the Queen's Platinum Jubilee year. With this year's stage being on a Monday, many of our client schools will get to see the Tour pass and will be able to get involved in the excitement of the day, bringing the community further together on this celebratory occasion.”

Details of this year's Women's Tour and the stage in Suffolk will be revealed by the race organisers, SweetSpot, on Tuesday 8 March, which is also International Women's Day. The race, which has continued to grow in stature and status since its inception in 2014, when it finished in Bury St Edmunds, is now considered to be the blue-ribbon event for the very best female riders and teams across the world.

Cllr Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection and Communities, said: “We are only able to bring prestigious sporting events to the residents of Suffolk by working in partnership with public and private sector partners and we are delighted that Vertas have agreed to extend their support for another year.

“The Women’s Tour provides a unique opportunity for the business sector to benefit from an association with what is regarded as the World’s biggest and best professional women’s cycle race and the extensive media profile and exposure it delivers.”

Jonathan Durling, Partnerships Director at Sweetspot said: “The support that Vertas Group provide Suffolk County Council enables them to continue to host events like the Women’s Tour and so is a great example of how the private sector can support events that benefit the whole community. We are delighted to be welcoming Vertas back to the Women’s Tour and look forward to working with them and our partners in Suffolk ahead of this year’s race.”

In its six previous visits to Suffolk, the Women’s Tour is estimated to have attracted over 400,000 spectators to the roadside and created a net economic impact for the county in excess of £5 million.

A limited number of flexible business partnership opportunities are still available and can be tailored to meet specific business needs. If you are interested in this unique opportunity to partner with the World’s biggest professional women’s bike race, please contact colin.grogan@suffolk.gov.uk for more information.

For info:

Ipswich Register Office ceremonies vow to move to Town Hall

Couples who opt for a register office ceremony in Ipswich will be tying the knot in a new location in the future.

Suffolk County Council’s register office ceremony room is relocating from St Peter House on Grimwade Street, to the historic Ipswich Town Hall on the Cornhill.

The Pickwick Room at the Town Hall will be refurbished to create a new ceremonial space for marriages and civil partnerships, and will be decorated in keeping with the era of the Town Hall.

Cllr Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection and Communities said: “The Town Hall is a prestigious building in an area of regeneration, and we are delighted to be able to offer couples this impressive new setting for their marriage and civil partnership ceremonies.

“This new location in the centre of Ipswich also reflects how we are working in partnership with Ipswich Borough Council, and taking a united approach to providing services.”

Cllr David Ellesmere, Leader of Ipswich Borough Council, said: “We are really pleased that we’ve able to work with Suffolk County Council to bring Register Office ceremonies to one of the best buildings in Ipswich. The Town Hall is a fantastic venue in a prime location and this deal will help to bring even more people into the town centre.”

The new ceremony room will offer seating for approximately 35 guests, and is close to hospitality venues that newlyweds could choose for their receptions and celebrations – including space for wedding receptions in the Town Hall itself.

A date for the move will be confirmed once work begins to refurbish the Pickwick Room. All couples whose ceremony bookings are impacted by the change will be contacted when dates can be confirmed. If any couple are not happy that the new venue is suitable for their ceremony, the council will be happy to offer to refund their deposit. Any couples that have already sent out invitations will be reimbursed for the costs for any reprinting needed.

As part of the planned relocation of the Registrars Service from St Peter House, the office functions of the service will also move. All registration of birth, death and marriage appointments will be carried out at Endeavour House, which will also offer a walk-in reception service and more modern facilities. It will also be fully accessible giving improved access for all customers, as well as there being more parking options available close by.

Ipswich Borough Council will acquire the freehold interest on St Peter's House. This is subject to a lease back to Suffolk County Council until the Ceremony Team at Suffolk County Council are relocated.

Cllr Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection and Communities said: "We are pleased that we have reached an agreement with Ipswich Borough Council about St Peter House and that the building will be put to good use."

Cllr David Ellesmere, Leader of Ipswich Borough Council, said: "I am glad we've been able to conclude this deal with Suffolk County Council which will enable us to keep the site in public use as a hub for community and voluntary sector organisations."