

## **September 2022 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks**

### **Suffolk supports you with the cost of living**

With the current cost of living pressures affecting us all, it has never been more important to ensure that people are supported to receive the right help, when they need it. In Suffolk we have a number of support services ready to help you, your friends or your family, if you are struggling. The Local Welfare Assistance Scheme helps those experiencing financial hardship, including access to items like household furniture and white goods, fuel vouchers for electricity and gas top-ups, supermarket vouchers, and contributions towards increasing costs during the winter months. Local organisations across Suffolk can submit an application for support, on behalf of an individual or family. These organisations include Citizens Advice Bureau, district and borough councils, health services and voluntary organisations. A list of these organisations, who will assess your circumstances and submit an application for you, is available at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/FinancialHardship](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/FinancialHardship)

After the recent spell of warm weather, it may feel a long way off now, but Autumn and Winter can be a time when energy and fuel costs rise. Suffolk's Warm Homes Healthy People is a project designed to help vulnerable people and families make their homes more energy efficient cheaper to heat. It can help you to access grants to help pay for insulation, basic draught proofing, or first-time central heating. It can also offer emergency support if you need it in the form of temporary heaters or support with emergency boiler repairs. If high energy bills are preventing you from putting the heating on, or you know any friends, family or neighbours who need extra help heating their home, please contact Warm Homes Healthy People on 03456 037 686 or email [whhp@eastsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:whhp@eastsuffolk.gov.uk)

There's also a wealth of support in Suffolk for families with young children. Healthy Start vouchers help parents of children under four years old, to access healthy food and milk. To check if you can apply or to find out more speak to your Midwife or Health Visitor or visit [HealthyStart.nhs.uk](http://HealthyStart.nhs.uk) Finally, if you are struggling or know someone who is, then please look into what help is available Visit [www.suffolk.gov.uk/FinancialHardship](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/FinancialHardship) where you can find a list of the support services.

### **Campaign to raise awareness of safe battery disposal**

Suffolk Waste Partnership is backing a nationwide campaign urging people to safely dispose of old batteries in a bid to avoid starting fires in refuse vehicles. The Partnership has signed up to the Stop Battery Fires Campaign launched by national safe electricals recycling group Material Focus, which aims to raise awareness of how householders can properly recycle batteries and electricals. Batteries, or electricals containing batteries, that end up inside bins or recycling and waste lorries with other materials, get crushed in the waste or recycling process. This can result in them being punctured and self-combusting, setting fire to dry and flammable waste and recycling around them. In June a fire at the Materials Recycling Facility in Great Blakenham, near Ipswich, which recycles waste from across Suffolk, is suspected to have been started by a battery dumped with household recycling. The fire was located deep within nearly 400 tonnes of waste and took firefighters and staff nearly two hours to extinguish. Electricals containing batteries that tend to be discarded the most are smaller, frequently used and often cheaper electricals like toothbrushes, shavers, chargers and toys. Lithium-ion batteries are responsible for around 48% (more than 200) of all waste fires occurring in the UK each year according to the Environmental Services Association, the trade body representing the UK's resource and waste management industry. These fires cost some £158 million annually to waste operators, fire services and the environment. Yet the Material Focus survey found 45% of householders are unaware of the fire risk if they do not safely dispose of batteries hidden inside electrical items.

### **Simple scheme to buy solar panels returns for Suffolk residents**

Solar Together Suffolk, a scheme which has helped over 1,500 homes to install solar panels and batteries, opens for new registrations on 22 August 2022. The scheme helps homeowners feel confident that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from pre-approved installers, whilst increasing their independence from the grid and reducing their carbon emissions. Solar Together Suffolk is supported by Suffolk County Council and all local borough and district councils. From 22 August 2022, Suffolk residents can register for free with the group-buying scheme, with no obligation to go ahead with an installation: [www.solartogether.co.uk/suffolk](http://www.solartogether.co.uk/suffolk).

It is open to anyone interested in:

installing new solar panels (with the option for battery storage and EV charge points)

adding battery storage to an existing solar panel array

The innovative scheme builds on four years of the highly successful Solar Together programme run across the UK. To date, Solar Together Suffolk has:

installed 17,900 solar panels at over 1,500 Suffolk households

retrofitted over 200 batteries

avoided carbon emissions totalling 28,730 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> across the county

This is the fifth year that Solar Together Suffolk has been rolled out, and I expect it will prove the most popular yet. With electricity prices continuing to climb, more and more homeowners are looking into their own solar power as a way to generate their own clean energy and reduce their bills. However, investing in solar panels and battery storage can be a daunting project to take on – knowing who to approach, comparing quotes, trying to understand the complexity of the products or how the process works. But Solar Together Suffolk does all that work for you. All you have to do is register your details, and Solar Together will send you a competitive, personalised quote from an approved installer. There is nothing to pay until you decide you want to go ahead with your installation. Solar Together Suffolk is one of the projects which contributes to Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan, to support and guide residents, communities and businesses to make the changes required to help Suffolk achieve Net Zero by 2030.

How does it work?

22 August to 26 September: registration is open, it is free and with no obligation

27 September: pre-vetted installers take part in the auction to bid against each other to offer the best deal

17 October: a few weeks after the auction you will receive a personal recommendation based on your registration details

25 November: your deadline to accept your personal recommendation and proceed with an installation

Support is on-hand throughout the whole process which, together with information sessions, will allow households to make an informed decision in a safe and hassle-free environment.

Suffolk's local authorities are again working in partnership with independent experts iChoosr to roll out Solar Together Suffolk. iChoosr has a strong track record of delivering group purchase schemes for local authorities. It has worked with 160 UK local authorities on its collective energy switching schemes. iChoosr's schemes have also been delivered in partnership with local authorities in five countries. Over 70 schemes led to 110,000 residents installing solar PV systems.

Free registration, with no obligation is open from 22 August to 26 September 2022, submit your details at [www.solartogether.co.uk/suffolk](http://www.solartogether.co.uk/suffolk).

**Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division**

**Tel : 01728 628176   Mob : 07824 474741   E-mail : [matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk)**