

## **A Report for Edwardstone Parish Council Meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2023 From James Finch – County Councillor for the Stour Valley**

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### ➤ **Support for Ukrainian refugees moving to private rented accommodation.**

Suffolk County Council has announced a one-off £2,000 support grant for Ukrainian refugees moving on from their host into their own accommodation.

The Independent Living Payment will be available to Ukrainian Refugees, who are moving into private rented accommodation after 1st April 2023. Guests must have been living in Suffolk for a minimum of two months and be registered on the Suffolk Homes for Ukraine scheme to be eligible for the payment.

The funding can be used for any associated housing costs, including furniture, moving costs or travel to work. The support can be used towards accommodation which is furnished or unfurnished, and accommodation can be in Suffolk or out of county as long as a copy of the new tenancy agreement is provided.

Ukrainian guests can apply for the Independent Living Payment by visiting [www.suffolk.gov.uk/ukraine](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/ukraine) and completing the application form. Application forms can also be requested by emailing [refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk)

### ➤ **Council to consider new chapter for library services.**

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet is set to discuss the future of library services in Suffolk at its next meeting on 11 July. The current contract with Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society (IPS), worth £5.92 million per annum, comes to an end on 31st July 2024. The Council now needs to consider how library services will be delivered following the expiry of the contract. The report to Cabinet will recommend that a new Library Service contract is procured using a competitive tender process. To enable meaningful engagement, public consultation, and a competitive tender process to take place, the report also recommends that the current contract with Suffolk's Libraries IPS is extended by 10 months, to 31 May 2025. The public consultation will be used to inform the requirements and future development of the new service.

### ➤ **Suffolk Fire Service to bring control room back to the County.**

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has announced plans to create a new fire control centre here in Suffolk. Since October 2011, Suffolk has shared a control room with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire and Rescue Service in Huntingdon. The joint project has worked well, saving both fire services money and enabling greater cross-border resource sharing. However, the company behind a project to deliver a new IT system, initiated in 2019, has run into technical and financial problems, causing a significant delay. This, in addition to advancements in technology, has led to the decision to bring fire control back into the county by the end of 2024.

### ➤ **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.

## ➤ **Grateful to be sharing Aki's story about what fostering meant to him**

Fostering plays a crucial role in our society, providing children who are unable to live with their birth families with a safe and nurturing environment. It is a lifeline for many children who have had a difficult start in life.

Aki's story is an inspiration, and I am grateful to him for sharing his life experience with us to publish about his life with Tracey, his foster mother. He offers a unique perspective into the life of a fostered child and highlights the importance of this essential service.

So, let's hear Aki's answers to the following questions:

- **How did it feel for being cared by Tracey?**

*"The feeling of being cared for by Tracey is irreplaceable, since the first time I came to the house, she welcomed me into the family and treated me like one of her own sons. If it wasn't for this wonderful woman, I wouldn't be where I am today. Tracey is the reason why I got into college, she is the reason why I didn't get permanently excluded from my school and she is the real reason why I took the right path in life. Throughout my whole journey with Tracey, she has made me feel safe, at ease and wanted"*

- **How do you describe your experience of being fostered?**

*My experience being fostered is very hard to describe, there have been ups and there have been downs. The best advice I have is, be grateful for what you have and stay strong.*

- **What was the best part of being cared for by Tracey?**

*There is no best part of being cared for by Tracey because every moment I'm with her is the best. Even when I'm at university, she checks up on me daily and makes sure I'm okay. Knowing that I'm always part of the family, wanted and being cared for will always be the best.*

- **How were you welcomed into the family?**

*When I first came to Tracey, even though I was very difficult to handle, we always knew I'd be here for a long time. She introduced me to her family in the most comfortable way, she told me where everything I needed was, she explained the house rules and she even let me pick which room I wanted. Still to this day if I meet her new friends, she introduces me as her son. Next year will be a decade that I have been with her so there's a lot to remember.*

- **How were you supported while living with Tracey?**

*While I was living with Tracey I was supported in every single way. She always supported my education, making sure I was up to date with my work and was attending lessons. She made sure I had everything a normal kid would have like paying for my phone bill and taking me and my friends out for fun activities. She has always supported my feelings, asking if I'm okay checking up on me and respecting my space. She supported me financially, she has supported my dreams, and she has supported my health, making sure I'm up to date with dentists and eye appointments etc.*

- **How does it feel to be at university?**

*It feels like a great achievement to be at university, but it does not stop there, the journey continues.*

- **What would you say to someone who is worried about being fostered?**

*Coming from a man that has been in the foster system since a toddler, I would always say "be proud of who you are, even if you are different to other children, it's good to be different, it is what makes you stand out to other people. There will be ups and downs, but people still care for you.*

A Foster Carer Recruitment Event is held the **1st Wednesday of every month**, and an Adoption Event is on the **1st Thursday all 7:00pm** in your home.

To book a place please email [Claire.Gwatin@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Claire.Gwatin@suffolk.gov.uk) or call on: **01473 264800** to register your interest. To find out more: visit [www.suffolk.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/fostering)

## **My Priorities**

*Education - Supporting Vulnerable People - Jobs and Growth - Localism and the Stour Valley - Building on Suffolk's Strength all underpinned by strong financial management and fair council tax.*