

'Most Improved Council' – One of three national awards for which Suffolk County Council has been short-listed:

SCC is in the running for three top, national awards, which will be decided in the new year by the Local Government Chronicle. They are for 'Local Economic Partnership', 'Innovation' and 'Most Improved Council of the Year'. In the 'Most Improved Council of the Year' category, SCC has been recognised for improving local services, working with partners on joint property projects and improving its engagement with the public. The Innovation award nomination recognises SCC's pioneering work in launching its first mobile phone apps. These were developed with and by local people at a ground-breaking event known as a 'mobile hack day'. Meanwhile, the Local Economic Partnership award nomination is for the partnership which developed Suffolk's Green Economy Manifesto, with its focus on green growth. These award nominations are a vindication of the work we are doing, continually to seek out new and better ways of delivering services for Suffolk communities, listening and responding to what people say and providing value for money for council tax payers in difficult times.

Suffolk's Highways contract to be awarded this month:

A contract for the provision of Suffolk's highway services, including road maintenance, winter gritting, street lighting, traffic signals and bridge works, is set to be awarded this month. The SCC Cabinet debated the issue at its December meeting and have awarded the contract, subject to the formal legal procedures, to 'Balfour Beatty Living Places'. The reason for this process is to ensure the continuity of a high-quality highway service while saving Suffolk tax-payers around £2million a year through better efficiency. We are committed to ensuring the best service is delivered to residents, businesses and road users across the county throughout this contract.

Focus on Suffolk's Troubled Families:

Suffolk Family Focus (SFF) is a new initiative which has been set up, in which we will work with the 1,150 most troubled families in Suffolk. The scheme is Suffolk's version of the Government's nation-wide 'Troubled Families' project. The aim of this project, which is sponsored by the Health and Wellbeing Board, is not only to work with those families over the next 3 years, but also to deliver a significant change in the way we approach this difficult but crucial issue in order to be more effective and efficient. Work has begun with families in Lowestoft and Ipswich, and Louise Casey – the Government lead on Troubled Families who visited Suffolk in October – was impressed with Suffolk's commitment and progress. We are committed to supporting vulnerable adults and young people across Suffolk. This initiative not only does this, but also helps us take a vital step in unlocking the potential of children and adults from disadvantaged backgrounds, improving their chances of a better quality of life, while increasing economic and educational prospects.

Proposal for generating heat as part of Suffolk's energy from waste project

A £30 million project to build two commercial greenhouses for growing tomatoes as part of the energy from waste project has been put together by SITA, in conjunction with local farmers. It has always been intended that the Energy from Waste facility, which produces heat as well as electricity, would seek local outlets for the heat, to ensure maximum environmental benefit from Suffolk's left-over waste. This new proposal could create up to 180 jobs and produce 7,500 tonnes of tomatoes for sale both locally and to supermarket chains. A meeting for near neighbours of the project has already been held and further consultation with the local community is planned. If given the go-ahead, the greenhouses could be built and in operation by December 2014, when the energy-from-waste facility is due to open. The county's new energy-from-waste facility is a key component in our drive to make Suffolk the greenest county. When up and running, it will turn the county's non-recyclable waste into electricity and, as demonstrated by this exciting proposal, heat, to be used locally in Suffolk. At the same time, it will save the county around £350million over the next 25 years.