

GREAT BLAKENHAM PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES

2025

Minutes of Gt Blakenham Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 13th March ~~2024~~ at Parish Rooms. Present: Chair Cllr Nick Leonard, Vice Chair Cllr Debbie Kemp, Cllr Will Durrant, Cllr Matthew Powell, Karen Grimwood (Parish Clerk), SCC Cllr Chris Chambers, MSDC Cllr Adrienne Marriot and 2 members of the public

1. To receive and approve any apologies for absence. **None**
2. Declaration of any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests
 - a. Councillor's declaration of interest appropriate to any item on the agenda. – **Cllr Leonard 8e**
 - b. To receive written requests for dispensations for disclosable pecuniary interest (if any)
 - c. To grant any requests for dispensations as appropriate.
 - d. Co-option of parish councillor(s) / to sign declaration of acceptance. **Karen Wheeler was co-opted as councillor by all members**
3. Public Forum
 - a. To receive the report from the County Councillor – **See attached report.**
A member of the public inquired about Suffolk County Councils decision not to extend the contract for library management by Suffolk Libraries, expressing the belief that the organisation had performed well and that 20,000 people had signed a petition for Suffolk Libraries to be reinstated. Cllr Chambers recognised the valuable contributions of both volunteers and staff but indicated that he was unable to elaborate on the reasons for the decision to return the service to Suffolk County due to legal constraints. He anticipates that additional information will be released in the coming days.
 - b. To receive the report from the District Councillor – **See attached report.**
Cllr Kemp thanked Cllr Marriott for her assistance in resolving the flooding problem affecting the residential cottages on Stowmarket Road.
 - c. To receive questions from members of the public –

Question - Could we please receive an update regarding the Meadows? The site remains under the ownership of Port One, with its management being supervised by MSDC. MSDC has asked Suffolk Wildlife Trust to develop a management plan, but to our knowledge, it is still in the processing stage.

Question – Could we have an update on the boulders in Blue Barn Lane? Clerk will contact Highways again to obtain a response on a resolution of this issue.

4. Planning
 - a. To consider the following planning applications.

DC/25/00800 - SCP	Snoasis Site At Masons Quarry, Bramford Road, Great Blakenham, Suffolk	Request for an Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Opinion under Regulation 6 (2) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) - Proposal to extend Port One to the northwest OBJECT
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The councillors raised many many concerns regarding this application and its potential impact on the village and its residents. It was decided to formally object to further industrial expansion in the rural area.

5. To approve the Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 13th February 2025 **Approved**

Signed  Date 10.04.2025

6. To note the Clerk's update from previous Meetings.

- a. Thank you letters received from EAAA, Chinwags, Citizens Advice and Headway for donations received. **Noted**
- b. SALC confirmed that we can just keep electronic copies of information. **Noted**
- c. Tenders have been sent out and had some interest already. **Noted**
- d. Clerk has posted awareness posters for dog fouling and contacted environmental health for advice **Noted**

7. Growth, Highways, and Infrastructure

- a. **Street Lighting - Suffolk Highways** has informed us that street light units 81, 83, and 84 on **Stowmarket Road** are malfunctioning and require new lamp heads, as replacement parts are no longer available. The cost for replacing the lamps is £1,440 plus VAT, while the total cost for renewing both the poles and lamps is £2,385 plus VAT. The councillors agreed that the lamps should be replaced but expressed the need to inspect the lamp poles first to determine if they also need replacement before making a final decision. Highways reported that the street light unit 203 on Chalk Hill Lane is inaccessible because of overgrown plants. Additionally, units 312 and 313 are out of service and require new lamps. There seems to have been excavation work done between these two units, which has resulted in exposed and damaged cables. Highways has been advised to reach out to the landowners regarding the excavation and the overgrown vegetation, as this area does not belong to the Parish. Councillors will wait for a response before making a decision on replacing the lamp heads.

8. Governance

- a. Discuss email domains - **NALC** has been promoting the adoption of .gov.uk domains for parish councils, as this provides a more professional and secure form of identification. **Suffolk.cloud** has proposed to facilitate this transition for a fee of £30 for clerks' email addresses, with additional charges for extra emails. Cllr Powell will explore whether the parish council can implement this change independently at no cost or at a lower price. The councillors also considered the possibility of establishing a secure shared email inbox for councillors, which would eliminate the need to purchase additional laptops for new members.
- b. Parish Rooms flooring – **Deferred until next meeting**
- c. Gipping Valley Bowls Club Update – **Bowls club** have now obtained funding for a new kitchen and flooring but have asked for support for the heating instalment. Decision deferred until next meeting.
- d. Internal Audit – **Audit booked with SALC week commencing 14th April 2025**
- e. Sea Cadets Donation request – **Deferred until next meeting**

9. Allotments.

- a. Email from concerned plot holder. **The plot holder expressed great disappointment over the license expiring and offered assistance in any way possible to maintain the allotment past October 2026**
- b. Allotment site – **Councillors reached a decision to register a Community Asset Notice with MSDC concerning the land.**

Signed.......... Date 10.04.2025 2

10. Village Maintenance

- a. Bank Clearance – **NSK Landscape** has provided a quote of £1,476.00 for clearing the bank on **Bramford Road** during the Spring and Autumn seasons. This quote has been approved, and the clerk will inform the contractor accordingly.
- b. Working party plan – **Deferred until next meeting**

11. Churchyard and Cemetery –

- a. Topple testing – **Stability testing of headstones in the churchyard and cemetery was conducted in compliance with regulations by Cllr Leonard and the Clerk on February 17, 2025. Several headstones were identified as being quite unstable, prompting the decision to lay them flat on the ground to eliminate any risk of falling. The Clerk will reach out to the appropriate relatives to notify them of the circumstances and arrange for the safe reinstallation of the headstones.**
- b. Untidiness at cemetery - **The condition of the cemetery on Chalk Hill Lane has raised concerns, as it has become quite cluttered with unauthorized items left on the gravestones. The decision has been made to send a letter to relatives, informing them of the regulations regarding what can be placed at the site, emphasising that all unapproved items will need to be removed. The parish council understands the sensitivity of this matter for everyone affected, but maintaining a safe and aesthetically pleasing environment for the remembrance of loved ones is of utmost importance.**
- c. Churchyard maintenance - **Deferred until next meeting**
- d. Cemetery shelter – **Deferred until next meeting**

12. Training and Development for Councillors and Clerk

- a. New Councillor training – **Clerk to book basics training for Cllr Powell and Cllr Wheeler**

13. Finance

- a. To consider approving and making the following payments: **Approved**

Payroll	B	Ending 31.02.2025	£1050.22	LGA 1972 s111
Nest	DD	Month 10 Ending 31.01.2025	£50.61	LGA 1972 s111
EE/K Grimwood	B	WIFI/mobile reimbursement	£28.04	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Maintenance/street cleaning as per tender Inv 2627	£507.50	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Hackneys Corner maintenance as per tender Inv 2626	£135.00	LGA 1972 s111
Shades	B	Street Cleaning as per tender Inv 2625	£1316.67	LGA 1972 s111
Three	DD	Clerk phone contract	£13.00	LGA 1972 s111

- b. Payments outside of meeting – **None**
- c. Money Received –
HMRC VAT -£1,609.09 **Noted**
Coop Cemetery fees -£650.00 **Noted**

Bank Balance @ 28/02/2025

Unity Trust Current Account Balance - £172,047.88 **Noted**

Unity Trust Saver Account Balance - £11,965.39 **Noted**

14. Reports -To receive reports from Councillors assigned to the following:

- d. Village Hall – **A query was raised regarding whether the playground has undergone its annual maintenance inspection and if signs prohibiting dogs and providing a disclaimer will be installed. The clerk will reach out to the committee for further information.**

15. Correspondence – **see 9a**

16. Future meetings

- a. To note invitation for items to be considered in the next meeting.
- b. To note the date of the next scheduled Meeting on 10th April 2025 and any items for the agenda.

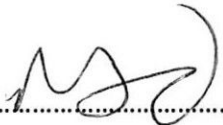
Karen Grimwood - Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer

Great Blakenham Parish Council

Email: pc@greatblakenham.suffolk.gov.uk

Phone: 07463329570

Date:

Signed.......... Date 10.04.2025



Cllr Chris Chambers

**Gipping Valley
Division**

www.chrischambers.uk

**March 2025
Report**



/gippingvalleychris

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New cabinet role to lead on devolution and local government reform in Suffolk

A new Suffolk County Council cabinet role responsible for devolution and local government reform has been created, following a reshuffle announced by council leader Cllr Matthew Hicks. The changes take effect immediately.

Cllr Richard Rout has been appointed to the role – which comes as Suffolk is one of only six areas in the country chosen by the government to be fast-tracked for devolution and local government reform.

The reforms will see all six of Suffolk's district, borough and county councils disbanded, to be replaced by one or more unitary (singular) authorities responsible for delivering all local services that are currently delivered by the different tiers of local government.

It will also see the election of a mayor (covering Suffolk and Norfolk) in May 2026, who will take control over strategic policy areas like transport infrastructure, economic development, health improvement and blue light services – along with devolved government funding to deliver positive change. The mayor would not run the unitary councils or have oversight of them. Alongside his new responsibilities, Cllr Rout will continue to lead on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), a role he held as deputy cabinet member prior to this reshuffle.

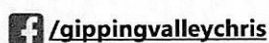
The new Cabinet and Deputies will now consist of:

- **Richard Smith** – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Economic Development and Skills
- **Beccy Hopfensperger** – Cabinet Member for Adult Care
- **Paul West** – Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding
- **Andrew Reid** – Cabinet Member for Education and SEND
- **Bobby Bennett** – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services
- **Philip Faircloth-Mutton** – Cabinet Member for Environment, Communities and Equality
- **Chris Chambers** – Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste
- **Steve Wiles** – Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection
- **Richard Rout** – Cabinet Member for Devolution, Local Government Reform and NSIPs
- **Alexander Nicoll** – Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy
- **Nadia Cenci** – Deputy Cabinet Member for Property and County Farms
- **Debbie Richards** – Deputy Cabinet Member for SEND
- **Judy Cloke** – Deputy Cabinet Member for Flooding

Chris Chambers - County Councillor for the Gipping Valley Division

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£1.6 million investment proposed following inspection of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service

Further funding is earmarked for the county's fire service following a key report by Government inspectors.

Suffolk County Council is proposing to invest an extra £1.6 million over two years into Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) following a government inspection.

Inspectors from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) found SFRS effectively operates its 35 stations, 43 fire engines and a range of specialist vehicles strategically situated around Suffolk.

The inspectors rated the service as good at preventing fires and risk, and protecting the public through fire regulation, and that it met requirements for responding to major incidents, plus managing and developing its leaders.

However, the assessment highlighted areas where inspectors feel the service needs to improve – leadership, culture, commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and IT infrastructure.

A targeted action plan is already being developed with staff to drive improvements in areas highlighted within the report.

These include IT infrastructure and staff, cultural changes and risk management.

To deliver the plan, Suffolk County Council is set to propose an additional investment of £1.6 million.

All fire services in the UK undergo inspection every two years. The last inspection report of SFRS was published in 2023.

However, new assessment criteria has since been introduced by HMICFRS that gives a more stringent evaluation, which means the 2025 report for SFRS cannot be compared with inspection gradings from previous years.

The inspection took place last autumn and assessed how well Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service performed across a number of areas.

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Funding made available for safer, healthier and accessible travel around Suffolk

Suffolk County Council has been awarded £3.7 million to continue to encourage cycling, walking and active travel across the county, and making journeys more accessible.

Government has awarded the county council £0.9 million from the Round 5 of the Active Travel Fund, and £2.8 million from the Consolidated Active Travel Fund.

Funds are available to be spent on projects such as:

- Better footpaths and crossing points
- Maintenance of existing walking and cycling infrastructure
- Improved cycle routes
- Traffic calming measures
- Improvements to the Public Rights of Way network
- Rail station access improvements

Councillor Chris Chambers, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy, Planning and Waste, said:

"We're looking forward to building on the successes of similar, previous projects such as at Ipswich Waterfront.

"Such schemes are important to the county, making it easier, cleaner and safer for people to get around.

"Cycling, walking and wheeling can help improve our health, whilst also reducing vehicle emissions to improve air quality and protect Suffolk's environment."

With the funding confirmed (12th February 2025), the county council is now considering suitable local projects, which will be announce in the coming months.

Suffolk's 45 libraries to remain open and see new investment as Suffolk County Council plans to take service back in house

Suffolk's 45 libraries would remain open, see no change to opening hours and have new mobile libraries and computers as part of a plan to bring the service back into Suffolk County Council.

Subject to a formal Cabinet decision on 18th March 2025, staff running Suffolk's library service – along with their years of experience and love for libraries - will transition to the direct employment of the council on 1st June 2025.

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The county council would invest £200,000 in replacing Suffolk's aging mobile libraries with a further £157,000 for new books and to replace public computers in libraries across Suffolk. This is in addition to the £6.6 million a year budget available for Suffolk's libraries.

It follows an attempt to secure an external provider for a new six-year contract (with the option to extend for up to a further six years) which had to be abandoned due to difficulties in aligning submissions with the service requirements and budgets.

Following the end of the procurement process, Suffolk County Council entered negotiations with Suffolk Libraries (the current provider) to reach agreement on a shorter-term contract. The intention was to secure the immediate future of the library service from 1 June 2025, while the longer-term future was considered. However, Suffolk Libraries were unwilling to accept those terms and proposed different terms which were not acceptable to Suffolk County Council and would have breached procurement law.

In addition, serious concerns about the viability of Suffolk Libraries also surfaced. The concerns included their proposal to reduce opening hours by 30% and issues with the financial stability of the organisation. There is also concern about the cost of their head office, including senior managers, which equates to 33% of their annual staffing costs. Suffolk County Council believes that more of the library budget should be invested in frontline services.

Background

- Suffolk's library services have been delivered by Suffolk Libraries IPS since 2012, with the current contract ending on **31st May 2025**.
- Suffolk County Council is the main funder of the service, with an agreed budget of £5.9 million a year. In 2023/24, Suffolk County Council increased the annual budget by £720,000 to £6.6 million a year.
- The contract to operate libraries in Suffolk had to be put out for competitive tender in 2024 as it had reached its maximum legal length.
- The procurement was abandoned due to difficulties in aligning submissions with the service requirements and budgets.
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Suffolk County Council published two open letters explaining its proposal, one to Suffolk residents and the other to Suffolk Libraries staff, volunteers and supporters.

County leaders to propose one council for Suffolk

One council for Suffolk would make delivering public services simpler, cheaper and quicker, and better meet the needs of residents and businesses, county leaders have said.

Following a recent government announcement that Suffolk's county, district and borough councils will be replaced with a single-tier system, Suffolk County Council argues that consolidating all services under one unitary authority is the only effective way to deliver against the government's criteria for local government reform.

The move would see all council services, such as waste collection and disposal, housing, social care, planning, highways maintenance, leisure, school placements and travel and street cleaning, all provided by one authority - rather than the six that currently exist in Suffolk.

Bringing together district, borough and county council functions is expected to reduce duplication, lower administrative costs and ensure a more coordinated and cost-effective approach to delivering essential services.

The council warns that splitting services among multiple bodies would force the duplication of essential functions - such as social care, highways maintenance and schools - currently managed at a county level.

The key benefits of one council are:

- **Simpler for residents** – one council would make it easier to understand and contact local government
- **Clearer accountability** – there would be less confusion over who is responsible for what
- **Better use of funding** – a more coherent, strategic, financially sustainable, county-wide approach to budgeting
- **Better alignment of services** – since everything is under one roof, services can be more easily coordinated, creating opportunities to improve services for residents

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- **More efficient decision-making** – with just one council, decisions can be made more quickly
- **Stronger leadership** – a single, visible and accountable body providing a clear strategic voice for Suffolk.

The council will submit its initial proposal to the government by 21 March, with a more detailed business case to follow later in the year.

The government will then undertake a public consultation.

The government's plans will also see the election of a mayor for Suffolk and Norfolk in May 2026, who would take control over strategic policy areas like transport infrastructure, economic development, health improvement and blue light services – along with devolved government funding to deliver positive change.

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DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT MARCH 25

Devolution Priority Programme consultations

The Devolution Priority Programme bridges the gap between the English Devolution White Paper and the forthcoming English Devolution Bill. The government is working towards mayoral elections on 7th May 2026 for the six areas that have joined it.

On 17 February, the government launched consultations in the six areas (including Suffolk) on proposals to establish mayor combined authorities or mayoral combined county authorities.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/devolution-priority-programme-consultations-launch>

The government is seeking views from interested parties, including local residents, businesses, and public sector bodies in Suffolk. The consultations will consider questions such as the proposed geographies and how the new authorities will operate. The consultations close on 13 April. There are seven questions in the consultation paper asking statements such as

“To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area?”

The tone of the questions is generally upbeat as, while people can disagree, the government want to focus on the benefits. The above consultation does NOT ask for the public's views on the format of new unitary councils within Suffolk

Local Government Reorganisation

This is part and parcel of devolution and the eventual abolition of district and borough councils but will take some time to bed in. Mayors will be in place in the six priority areas before any major changes are enacted. However, county, district and borough councils are asked to put forward interim plans describing their preferred options and justifications for unitary councils in Suffolk. For districts the interim plan must be submitted by 21st March with the final proposal going in by 26th September.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils held workshops on 3rd March to consider both reorganisation and devolution. We were told that Suffolk County Council is in favour of one unitary authority for the whole of Suffolk; however, other options are for two or three unitary authorities for Suffolk. If Ipswich were to combine with East Suffolk for one authority and Mid Suffolk, Babergh and West Suffolk formed another authority there would be roughly equal populations in each of these two areas. Another option which would give three unitary authorities might consist e.g. of a Greater Ipswich Authority taking in parts of Mid Suffolk and Babergh with other areas of Mid Suffolk combining with East Suffolk and finally a West Suffolk Authority. Ipswich Borough are obviously keen on the idea of a Greater Ipswich but for this idea to be popular with other subsumed populations, inc. Felixstowe a name change might be politic.

One of the disadvantages of one unitary authority for Suffolk is the breadth of responsibilities for individual councillors in that authority. Unless many more councillors were to be appointed, they would be spread very thin with regard to acting for residents and meeting their needs. Caroline Topping, the Green Leader of East Suffolk Council said "We do not believe that a single, vast council covering the whole county would best serve those who matter most." She felt that a two unitary East and West model would be preferable. Obviously we district councillors are not in favour of these new arrangements but we have no voice in the matter. Apparently these last time similar arrangements were mooted district councils were able to vote against

them – hence they are given no opportunity to do so again. We feel that the whole process is very undemocratic and that the public should have been consulted from the offset. However, in the current circumstances BMSDC will work with other councils to try to obtain agreement on the best ways to go forwards.

Recommendations from MSDC Council Meeting 27/2/25

The General Fund Budget and Medium-Term Financial Position were discussed and it was agreed that

- there would be no increase in 2025/26 for the Band D Council Tax of £175.03 due to the healthy position of the Council's General Fund.
- The Director of Finance and Procurement would explore increasing locality grant funding to a minimum of £10,000 p.a.

The Government has said that it will simplify the wider local funding landscape, reducing the number of grants and consolidating them into the Local Government Finance Settlement. In the meantime many grants such as the Rural Development Fund, the Minimum Funding Guarantee and the New Homes Bonus will be coming to an end – the former in 25/26 and the others in 26/27.

Following a consultation with residents last autumn the council are working on introducing new community transport services, retrofitting their council housing stock (starting with the poorest performing properties with a rating of E and below) and delivering new local cycling and walking infrastructure.

After discussing the housing plan revenue account 2025/26 budget and 30 year business plan it was agreed to implement

- a CPI +1% increase for social rents equivalent to an average rent of £2.78 for social rent and affordable rent of £4.05
- a 0.29% increase in garage rates

- a charge of £6.41 per week per tenancy in a block in respect of General Needs
- a rent tolerance of 5% on Social Rent properties.

Sheltered housing service charges and utility charges would be capped at 10% overall.

Reminder: Land use in England consultation

On 31 January, the government launched a consultation on a new strategic approach to managing land use in England to give decision makers the data they need to protect agricultural land and increase Britain's food security:

It seeks views on the type and scale of land use changes that might be needed to restore nature, support food production, improve climate resilience and deliver new housing and infrastructure, as well as the actions government could take to support this.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/land-use-in-england>

The consultation closes on 25 April.

Funding to increase number of affordable and social homes

On 12 February, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government announced that up to 2800 extra homes will be built through an additional £300 million of government funding for the Affordable Homes Programme. Half of these homes will be for social rent:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-to-benefit-from-the-security-of-a-safe-home>

An additional £50 million of government funding was also announced to the Local Authority Housing Fund, to provide over 250 homes for those in need of better-quality temporary accommodation.

Further details of future investment beyond the current Affordable Homes Programme will be set out at the upcoming Spending Review to support greater investment in new affordable housing from social housing providers.

Reminder: Action taken to protect households with poor-quality insulation

On 23 January, the government announced that it had taken action after routine checks uncovered examples of substandard solid wall insulation fitted since 2022 under the Energy Company Obligation 4 and the Great British Insulation Scheme.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/action-taken-to-protect-households-with-poor-quality-insulation>

Thirty-nine businesses have been suspended from installing new insulation in people's homes. The government has demanded that installers fund any repair work themselves, under protections in the schemes. No household should be asked to pay any money by an installer.

The Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) has been writing to all the households affected, explaining that qualified professionals have started a system of checking every installation under these schemes.

Households should check what to do if they're concerned about the insulation they've had fitted through a government scheme:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-to-do-if-you-have-poor-quality-wall-insulation>

COVID-19 Day of Reflection 2025 – resources and online map

The COVID-19 Day of Reflection will take place on 9 March this year and is one of the ten recommendations set out by the UK Commission on COVID-19 Commemoration.

To mark the fifth anniversary of the pandemic, people in the UK are invited to come together to remember and reflect on this period of our history as well as their own experiences.

The day will be an opportunity for the public to remember and commemorate those who lost their lives during the pandemic, reflect on the sacrifices made and the impact on our daily lives, and pay tribute to the work of health and social care staff, frontline workers, researchers and all those who volunteered and showed acts of kindness during this unprecedented time.

Members of the public can find more information about the day and resources to help them to mark it, see

<https://dayofreflection.campaign.gov.uk/resources/>

Councils can share their event on the online map showing events, spaces for reflection and public or private gatherings.

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/covid-19-day-of-reflection>

Public health updates

Breast screening campaign to help detect cancers earlier

On 17th February, the NHS launched its breast screening awareness campaign aimed at increasing attendance at mammogram appointments and detecting thousands more breast cancers earlier.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/2025/02/nhs-launches-first-ever-breast-screening-campaign-to-help-detect-thousands-of-cancers-earlier/>

The campaign comes as figures show more than four in ten women (46.3%) invited for their first screening don't act on their invitation.

Women invited for breast screening fall into three main groups: first-time invitees aged 50-53 who are automatically contacted, regular attendees aged 53-71 who are invited every three years, and those over 71 who can self-refer.

The Department of Health and Social Care has produced a kit to help councils share this information

<https://campaignresources.dhsc.gov.uk/campaigns/help-us-help-you-cancer/breast-screening-saves-lives/>

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV): vaccination for older adults – updated resources

In February the NHS announced that it was inviting people not yet vaccinated against RSV and aged 75-79 or turned 80 after 1 September 2024 to book an appointment with their GP.

On 20th February they published further information on the benefits of vaccination, giving resources to promote it:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/respiratory-syncytial-virus-rsv-vaccination-for-older-adults>

UKHSA warns of potential second norovirus wave – resources

The latest UK Health Security Agency data shows norovirus cases continue to rise across the country with laboratory reports at the highest levels since reporting data this way began in 2014.

Common symptoms of norovirus include:

- nausea and vomiting
- diarrhoea
- high temperature
- abdominal pain
- aching limbs

Food surplus fund now open for applications

On 7 February, the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) announced that food redistribution charities can now submit applications to a new £15 million government scheme, Tackling Food Surplus at the Farm Gate:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/15-million-food-surplus-fund-now-open-for-applications>

The scheme will help strengthen links between farms and charities to help solve the problem of food surplus on farms, with grants starting from £20,000 to help organisations.

Applicants can submit bids outlining how they intend to form relationships with farmers to access any surplus food, and how they would seek to increase their capacity to redistribute this food to communities.

The funding can go towards purchasing new packaging and labelling equipment and vehicles to move goods from farms to a redistribution organisation, as well as new equipment, like fridges or freezers, to safely store food and ensure it lasts longer.

The fund is open to food redistribution charities and any groups with an interest are encouraged to apply.

The fund closes at 11:55am on 13 March. Councils are encouraged to share this information as appropriate.

Press release:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/15-million-food-surplus-fund-now-open-for-applications>

*Adrienne Marriott
Blakenham District Councillor
04/03/24*