

Parish Report September 2018

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“Staying Close” scheme launched to support care leavers

Suffolk County Council have been awarded funding by the Department of Education for a three-year pilot scheme to support young people leaving care in Suffolk. The “Staying Close” scheme was launched on Thursday 9 August.

The aim of the scheme is to help young people from the age of 15 start planning for independent living with the assistance and support of residential care workers. This planning often only occurs close to the time a young person is due to move-out, causing unnecessary anxiety and distress. Early intervention and detailed planning from a younger age should help to alleviate this.

Young people will also continue to receive emotional and practical support from their children’s home and residential workers after they have moved out and started living independently.

SUFFOLK COUNTY AGREE TO CUT FREE SCHOOL TRANSPORT FOR HUNDREDS OF CHILDREN **Opposition successfully “call in” Suffolk County Council school transport cuts**

As you will be aware, I and my colleagues within the Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group have been opposed to this policy change since it was announced in September 2018. There has also been very vocal opposition from schools, parents and carers across Suffolk.

Following the Cabinet meeting, opposition councillors from all parties united to “call-in” the decision.

This means the decision was put on hold until 9 July, when the council’s Scrutiny Committee investigated further.

The “call-in” was successful on three fronts:

1. There is concern at the quality and reliability of the financial modelling;
2. Whether the Cabinet were fully informed of the role of the Consultation Institute;
3. Whether there was enough analysis of the experience of Essex County Council, who implemented a similar policy in 2013.

However, I am very disappointed that the recommendation back to the cabinet was still to go ahead. This will have some serious repercussions I fear for parents, carers and pupil. Not least the impact on Thurston and the college.

Major review of Suffolk Highways announced

The new Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways, Cllr Mary Evans, has launched a major review of the way highways in Suffolk are maintained.

Areas due to be reviewed include:

- Existing policy which determines how resources are deployed, known as the Suffolk Highway Maintenance Operational Plan (HMOP);
- How the location of potholes on the road is considered alongside the width and depth, recognising the impact they can have on cyclists and motorcyclists;
- How utility companies coordinate roadworks and are held to account for their actions;
- How residents, councillors and businesses are informed about road repairs and how they can access information;
- Financial control and contract management;
- How town and parish councils can work closer with Suffolk Highways to make the best use of their local knowledge, skills, money and time.

LIB DEM GREEN AND INDEPENDENT GROUP CALL FOR MORE TO BE DONE FOR CYCLING ACROSS THE COUNTY; The group put 2 motions to the council meeting on 19th July calling on the council to improve facilities for cyclists and use some of the local transport money to do so. Motion 1 was agreed unanimously but motion 2 to put some money into it was not!!

Review into the Upper Orwell Crossings

On 1 August, Cllr Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, launched a review into the cost of building the Upper Orwell Crossings in Ipswich.

The project is still in the planning stages, but an internal review of costs has forecast that the total cost of completing the Crossings could be significantly higher than the original calculation of £97m.

Work on the project has been temporarily suspended whilst the review is undertaken, with an outcome expected by the end of 2018.

Reduction in recycling rates harm “Greenest County” ambitions

Recycling rates in Suffolk have dropped over the past 4 years, from 51% in 2013 to just 47% in 2017. Meanwhile, over 50% of waste in Suffolk is incinerated – much higher than the national average of 38%.

Although incineration may be a better option than landfill, it is still less environmentally-friendly than other methods of waste disposal. Furthermore, there are concerns that the level of harmful particles released by incinerators could pose a serious threat to public health.

The Suffolk Waste Partnership, as part of the Greenest County Partnership, set a target of recycling at least 60% of municipal waste by 2020. These latest figures suggest we are moving further away from this target. If Suffolk County Council truly wants Suffolk to be the “greenest county”, we need to start focusing on environmentally-friendly methods of waste disposal and ways to increase recycling levels in the county.

SUPERFAST BROADBAND; Cllr Hicks has promised that 98% of all premises will have this by 2020. This is approx.. 3000 new premises to be connected.

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The council can now say it has a 5 year land supply which will make speculative applications easier to dismiss. However as the government objective to provide more homes will continue to require the authority to give permissions .

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY; a new website will shortly be made public where anyone will be able to see how much was allocated for each development and how much of that would go to a parish.

COMMUNITY ACHEIVEMNT AWARDS; deadline 28th September.

REVIEW OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES AND TOILETS; this is being done over the next few months.

GRANTS for SHOPS; this grant pot has now been launched and will be available for shops in villages across the district.