

Parish Report - September 2019

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Hundreds of children still unsure about school transport arrangements

In September 2019, Suffolk County Council's new Home to School transport policy will be implemented. Children moving to a new school will only receive free transport from the council if it is their nearest school and more than 2 miles from their homes.

However many applications for home-to-school transport remained outstanding at the end of August, with families unsure of whether they would be allocated a seat on an SCC school bus in time for the start of the new school year.

First stage of Boundary Commission review

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is currently undertaking a review of Suffolk County Council, to determine both the number of councillors and the boundaries between divisions. For the first stage of the review, the Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group submitted a proposal to keep councillor numbers in Suffolk at a minimum of 75, with the potential for an increase to 80. This was based on the need to ensure proper local representation and encourage diversity amongst councillors, which consequently requires a more manageable workload. Furthermore, given the predicted population growth in Suffolk and the reduced funding that local government is receiving, it is likely that councillor workloads will only continue to increase in the future.

The Conservative and Labour Groups submitted a joint proposal asking for a reduction to 70 councillors.

The next stage of the review will determine the new division boundaries and will include two public consultations. The review is expected to be completed by July 2020.

Suffolk County Council announces funding cuts to subsidised bus routes

Suffolk County Council has announced that 23 subsidised bus routes will no longer receive funding from the council, in a bid to save £340,000. The decision was made in February I spoke against this cut at the time, as well as other cuts that will affect bus users such as the decision to no longer print bus timetables. More details of which routes will be affected can be found at: <http://www.suffolkonboard.com/>

I have been trying to see if there could be some form of community transport to help those affected.

The council say that they will be engaging with bus operators to determine whether the routes can continue to run without council funding. I will keep you updated if there are any further developments.

Plans to close children's centres confirmed as consultation is launched

On Tuesday 16 July, the Cabinet agreed to press forward with plans to re-organise children's centres across Suffolk. Of the 38 centres in Suffolk, two have been ear-marked for closure — whilst a further 13-19 could be "repurposed" as either early years or SEND provision.

The remaining centres would become Family Hubs, providing a range of support to children and young people aged 0-19 and their families. However, a number of these Hubs would only be part-time. There is also a recommendation to focus on outreach services, although it is not yet clear what the budget for this service would be. The proposals will be consulted on by the county council in the autumn.

Carbon strategy agreed

Following the council's declaration of a climate emergency in March, the Cabinet has now agreed a strategic framework for meeting its commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030.

A cross-party policy development panel will begin in September, tasked with investigating how the council can meet its objectives and what investment is needed to ensure the council is carbon neutral by 2030. It is expected that the panel will report back to Cabinet in early 2020.

Pension fund begins to move away from fossil fuels

Suffolk Pension Fund has agreed to move £150m into a UBS Climate Aware World Equity Fund. Although a very small proportion of the £2.9 billion fund, this is the first step the Council has taken to move investments away from fossil fuels.

This will be followed up by a valuation in November to check the performance of the fund, with the hope that a larger amount can then be transferred into the climate-aware fund.

MID SUFFOLK;

The consultation on the new local plan continues , it is important for parishes to comment, particularly if there are mistakes and policies which you feel are not included.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY; this is being reviewed how these will be dealt with.

DECLARATION OF CLIMATE EMERGENCY; The council agreed unanimously to set up a task force to make the council carbon neutral.

MOTION TO RECOGNISE CURRENT WILDLIFE CORRIDORS AND TO ENCOURAGE MORE; This too was agreed by all, and to provide advise to parishes and community landowners.

BINS!; following the change to the day for collection I have numerous emails complaining at the bins not being collected.

WEBCASTING AND STREAMING; all meetings will now be available