

Parish Report January 2018

Councillor

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School Travel Consultation launched

Despite parents, governors and councillors voicing serious concerns over proposed changes to the School Transport policy, Suffolk County Council has decided to move the process forward and go to public consultation. This was launched on Tuesday 12 December and will run until 28 February 2018. The consultation survey, along with more information on the proposals, can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel.

A number of workshops have been organised, where the proposals will be discussed and questions answered. You will need to book to attend any of these events. The timetable for these is as follows:

Venue	Room	Date	Time
Kesgrave Conference Centre <i>Twelve Acre Approach, Ipswich IP5 1JF</i>	Orwell Room	16 Jan 2018	19:00-20:30
Eye Community Centre <i>Magdalen Street, Eye, IP23 2DH</i>	Main Hall	17 Jan 2018	19:00-20:30
River Stour Trust - the Visitor Education Centre <i>Dove House, Great Cornard, CO10 0GF</i>	VEC	18 Jan 2018	19:00-20:30
Beccles Public Hall <i>Smallgate, Beccles NR34 9AD</i>	Main Hall	22 Jan 2018	19:00-20:30
Lakenheath Pavilion <i>Eriswell Road, Lakenheath IP27 9AF</i>	Main Hall	23 Jan 2018	19:00-20:30
West Suffolk House <i>Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3YU</i>	WSH – GFR12 – Meeting Room	26 Jan 2018	5 sessions between 14:00- 19:30

In addition to the workshops, there will also be a *Have Your Say* event. This is an opportunity for members of the public to present alternative options to a panel.

Venue	Date	Time
West Suffolk House Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3SP	30 Jan 2018	19:00-22:00

To book your place at any of the above events and for full details, visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel or call 0345 603 1842 (Mon-Fri 08:30 – 18:00).

I would strongly urge you to respond to the consultation survey and attend one of the events if possible. If you would like any further information or clarification on the potential impacts of changing the policy, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Suffolk County Council signs the Woodland Trust's Tree Charter

The Lib Dem, Green and Independent Group proposed a motion to Suffolk County Council on 7 December, asking them to sign the Woodland Trust's Charter for Trees, Woods and People. I am pleased to report that this received unanimous support.

The Charter was launched on 6 November to mark the 800 year anniversary of the influential 1217 Charter of the Forest. The Woodland Trust is leading a call with more than 70 organisations from across multiple sectors, and hopes the Charter will bring the discussion of the importance of forests and trees back into public consciousness. There are ten principles which underpin the charter:

1. Thriving habitats for diverse species

2. Planting for the future
3. Celebrating the cultural impact of trees
4. A thriving forestry sector that delivers for the UK
5. Better protection for important trees and woods
6. Enhancing new developments with trees
7. Understanding and using the natural health benefits of trees
8. Access to trees for everyone
9. Addressing threats to woods and trees through good management
10. Strengthening landscapes with woods and trees

Unanimous support for LDGI Group's motion on plastic recycling

Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for the Environment, announced in October that he would be examining the possibility of introducing a plastic bottle Deposit Return Scheme in the UK to improve recycling rates.

At the meeting of Suffolk County Council on 7 December, I proposed a motion calling on the Council to pledge support for the introduction of such a scheme, and to offer Suffolk as a pilot area should one be needed. This was met with unanimous support. Both the Cabinet Member for the Environment and the Lib Dem, Green and Independent Group will be writing to the Secretary of State, urging him to implement this new recycling scheme in the UK.

Deposit Return Schemes work by adding a small deposit charge to the cost of plastic bottles, which is refunded to the consumer when the bottle is returned for recycling. These "reward and return schemes" are already in place across Europe, including in Germany and Denmark, and evidence suggests they are an effective recycling method. The recycling rate for countries with a Deposit Return Scheme stands at over 90%, whilst Britain currently recycles just 57% of plastic bottles.

Suffolk County Council to write letter in support of WASPI women

Cllr Caroline Page, the Lib Dem, Green and Independent Group Spokesperson for Women, seconded a motion asking the Council to offer support to the 35,000 WASPI women in Suffolk who are suffering from changes in state pension age. Once again, this received unanimous support, and the Interim Chief Executive will be writing to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions calling on the government to reconsider transitional arrangements for these women.

Women Against State Pension Inequalities (WASPI) is a national campaign, which highlights the unfair impact that state pension age changes have had on women born in the 1950s. Many women expected to receive a state pension at 60 and were not properly informed by the government of the age increase, leaving them stranded without income or forced to delay retirement plans. WASPI agrees with the equalisation of state pension age, but does not agree with the unfair way the changes were implemented – with little or no personal notice, faster than promised, and leaving no time to make alternative plans. If you would like more information, please visit: <http://www.waspi.co.uk/>

Potential Ipswich City Bid

The Leader of the Council, Colin Noble, proposed a motion calling on Suffolk County Council to work with Ipswich Borough Council, Ipswich Vision and other partners to support a bid for Ipswich to gain city status. This was passed, although not unanimously, with some councillors expressing concerns over the costs that may be involved in a bid.

There are currently no opportunities to gain city status, but Cllr Noble anticipates that there may be one in the near future to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. He stressed the need to be fully prepared should the opportunity arise.

Review of Autism and ADHD Strategy

The Labour Group called on the Council to improve the delivery of high needs services for children and adults with autistic spectrum disorders and ADHD. The Council agreed to this unanimously, and proposed

that it should be a priority piece of work for the newly-formed Care, Health and Wellbeing Cabinet Committee.

This will involve: refreshing the Autism & ADHD Strategy and developing an action plan to implement the new strategy; exploring the possibility of developing a centre of excellence in diagnosing ASD and ADHD conditions; inviting bids to develop a school in Suffolk specifically for those with ASD/ADHD conditions; and exploring ways to limit the number of out-of-county residential placements.

Council requests extension of Adult Social Care Levy

Cllr Beccy Hopfensperger, Cabinet Member for Adult Care, called on the Council to lobby government to extend the National Adult Social Care Levy and explore other mechanisms to support social care.

Although we supported this motion, and agree that social care requires an urgent funding review, we questioned why the Cabinet Member had not already been lobbying the government. The challenges facing social care are not new.

Suffolk chosen as pilot scheme for 100% Business Rates Retention

In the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, released on 19 December, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced that Suffolk had been chosen as a pilot scheme for 100% business rates retention for the 2018-19 financial year.

Suffolk is one of only 10 pilot areas announced. Both the county council and the district/borough councils will be part of the scheme. However, until more information is released from the Department for Communities and Local Government, it is not possible to say exactly how much additional income this could generate into the Suffolk system.

Primary School application deadline approaches

Parents and carers have until Monday 15th January to make their application to secure their child's place at a Suffolk Primary, Infant, Junior or Middle school for September 2018.

Any child born between 1st September 2013 and 31st August 2014 is due to start primary school from September 2018. An application for a full-time school place must be made, even if a child is already attending a nursery class in an infant or primary school, a pre-school or a children's centre next to a school site.

Information to help parents and carers make their application is available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions.