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Remembering Caroline Page

A silence was held at the beginning of the Council meeting on Thursday 13 July to honour Councillor Caroline Page, a much-respected member of our group and a passionate campaigner for her division of Woodbridge since she was first elected in 2008. Our thoughts are with Caroline's husband and family.

Annual Safeguarding Reports

At Cabinet on 11 July, annual reports were tabled on safeguarding adults and children in the county, with numbers of referrals and trends explained by SCC officers. Some of the issues raised included mental health of children and young people, and for adults, self neglect and hoarding. If you have concerns about the safety of a child, young person or adult, you can make a safeguarding referral by contacting Suffolk County Council's Customer First on 0808 800 4005 or by emailing customer.first@suffolk.gov.uk

Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report and Children in Care Council

On 13 June, Cabinet reviewed the annual report of the Corporate Parenting Board. Suffolk County Council acts as the corporate parent for all children who are taken into care and is responsible for finding them a place to stay and their health and wellbeing. The annual report assesses how well the council is doing in this role. The Cabinet also received a report from the Children in Care council (C2C and Brighter Futures) who outlined the work they had been undertaking during the year, including interviewing applicants for CYP social care roles, campaigning for 'Care Experienced' to be a Protected Characteristic, and the Watch Your Words campaign to change some of the language used by practitioners around care experienced young people.

Suffolk Libraries

Suffolk County Council's contract with Suffolk's Libraries Industrial and Provident Society Limited ends on 31 July 2024, and a number of options were put forward at Cabinet on 13 June about how the libraries service in Suffolk should be run after this date. After some discussions, it was agreed that there should be a 10 month extension to the current contract to allow for extensive consultation with people of Suffolk and a competitive tender process to be carried out, which is essential for a contract of this size.

The public consultation period will be for 14 weeks from October 2023 to January 2024 and we would encourage everyone to have their say on what they think libraries and libraries outreach should look like in the county.

Dental Services in the County

Health Scrutiny Committee met on 12 July to look at dental services in the county, amid news reports that 9 in 10 dental practices in the UK were not accepting new NHS patients. In Suffolk, some people have reported having to extract their own teeth, and the most disadvantaged groups in the county are the worst affected.

NHS Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) in the county have been working with providers to improve services, aiming to ensure that 10% of dental work undertaken is urgent dental work. There are also plans to develop a brand new Centre for Dental Development at the University of Suffolk in Ipswich which will train new dentists and dental nurses to improve numbers of practitioners.

Motion denied on safer speeds on Suffolk roads

At Council on Thursday 13 July, our group proposed a motion for lowering speed limits on rural roads where the safe speed is clearly lower than the current National Speed Limit. The motion suggested that on these roads, a lower speed limit than 60mph would encourage many drivers to slow to a more appropriate, safer speed, thereby reducing accidents and making roads safer for all users. This motion was voted down by the SCC administration.

Motion passed on upholding minimum parking standards

The Council meeting on 13 July also discussed a motion proposed by the SCC administration to uphold minimum parking standards in new developments in the county. This motion was passed by the council, although our group observed that it was difficult for Highways planning officers to object to development plans unless the impact of the plans could be shown to be severe. It was agreed that the council had a real opportunity to shape plans for local communities by making sure residents' concerns were taken into account when in consultation with developers.

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<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

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