

Parish Report October 2017

Councillor

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Motion to improve early years funding rejected by Council

At the meeting of Council on Thursday 19th October, our LDGI group supported a Labour motion which called on the Council to (1) lobby central government for more funding in Suffolk and (2) pass the full amount of funding received on to providers. Unfortunately, the Conservative majority refused to back the motion.

Since September 2017, working families are entitled to 30 hours of free childcare, whilst all families are entitled to 15 hours of free childcare. Suffolk is one of only 37 local authorities which this year had a reduction in early years funding, receiving a total of £31 987 186. This equates to £4.41 per hour. However, childcare providers receive a base rate of only £3.87 per hour, and many are struggling to run their businesses on this low rate.

The motion highlighted the difficulty faced by childcare providers across the county, and questioned why the Council did not pass through a higher rate of funding to providers.

Councillor Gordon Jones (Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills) stated that the Council only retains £2.1m, which is used to meet their statutory duties. He has yet to provide a full breakdown on how this money is spent.

Home to School Transport – workshops announced

In September, the LDGI Group successfully "called-in" the Cabinet's decision to go to consultation on changes to the Home to School Transport policy. We questioned the nature of the pre-consultation period, and argued that more research needed to be done. The Scrutiny Committee agreed with us, and voted to refer the decision back to Cabinet for further consideration. It has not yet been announced when Cabinet will reconsider the proposals.

Suffolk County Council has announced that two workshops will be taking place next month, to further discuss the challenge and help develop proposals for Cabinet to consider. However, invitations will only be sent to 80 randomly selected representatives. If you have not been invited, and feel that you should be a part of these workshops, you can contact either myself or schooltravel@suffolk.gov.uk.

School admissions consultation

Suffolk County Council is seeking views on its proposed admissions policy for the 2019/2020 school year. The consultation, which started on Monday 2 October, will run until Monday 13 November 2017.

There are proposals to make some minor changes to the admission arrangements and co-ordinated admissions scheme for schools in Suffolk for the 2019/2020 school year. The amendments relate to:

- The sibling criterion
- The definition of "ordinarily resident"
- The offer of a school place when preferences can't be met
- The procedure for dealing with late applications

To view the consultation documents and to have your say on the proposals, please visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations.

The governing bodies of voluntary aided, foundation, free schools and academies are responsible for admissions to their schools. If you want to view the arrangements for these schools you should contact the school directly.

Suffolk Fostering Service launches first in a series of fostering recruitment campaigns

Suffolk County Council's Fostering Service will launch a series of campaigns over the coming months to encourage more Suffolk residents to become foster carers.

820 children currently live in care in Suffolk and there is an urgent need for more people to come forward to foster. The first campaign will focus on the need to recruit more foster carers for teenagers.

Suffolk Fostering Service will also be hosting pop-up events across Suffolk. In November, the events are:

- Saturday 11th November, 9.30am - 12.30pm, Stowmarket Leisure Centre
- Saturday 11th November, 12.00pm - 6.00pm University of Suffolk, Ipswich

More information can be found at: www.fosterandadopt.suffolk.gov.uk

Freston Crossroads

At a recent meeting of the Speed Limit Panel I was able to put the case for a 40 mph speed limit in the area around Freston Crossroads. This was agreed by the panel and details of the scheme will be drawn up at a later date once finance has been agreed.

Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB

Natural England have agreed that public consultation on the proposed extensions to the AONB will commence on the 8th January 2018. This will initially be for a twelve week period and cover the area on the Southern side of the Stour and other areas on the peninsula as indicated in the recent pre public consultation.

Unfortunately we were unsuccessful in our bid to Heritage Lottery for the Landscape Enhancement Project on the Shotley Peninsula. Out of the 20 bids only 8 were successful, we have yet to decide if we will re submit the bid again next year and will be talking to the National Lottery with regards alterations required.