

Parish Report - August 2019

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

On Tuesday 16 July, the Cabinet agreed to press forward with plans to close children's centres across Suffolk. Of the 38 centres in Suffolk, two have been ear-marked for closure – Chatterbox in North Ipswich and Caterpillar in Woodbridge – 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.

New model for specialist speech and language education

The Cabinet also agreed a new model for the provision of specialist speech and language education services.

The model focuses on early intervention and diagnosis, by training early years and primary school staff to identify speech and language needs and providing a specialist outreach service to schools. For children with the most complex needs, a new "Communication and Interaction" education pathway has been established for children aged 4 to 16 years, consisting of specialist units and new special schools. This will replace the current speech and language units which only cater for 5 to 7 year olds.

Northern Bypass consultation launched

Suffolk County Council, along with the district and borough councils, launched a consultation into the Ipswich Northern Route at the beginning of July. The consultation identifies three potential routes for the bypass, which will link the A12 and A14 corridors.

However, I am concerned that the consultation does not provide sufficient information: the county council have acknowledged that the road would result in the development of 15,000 additional homes, but they have not included these figures or the location of the developments within the consultation. Furthermore, the data provided does not take account of “induced traffic” when calculating traffic flows around Ipswich.

I also don't think that building a new road fits with the council's declaration of a climate emergency and commitment to be carbon-neutral by 2030.

The consultation will run until Friday 13 September. You can find the consultation, along with further information, here: <https://ipswichnorthernroute.org.uk/>

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.

The report clearly states that in order to be effective, measures to cut carbon and mitigate climate change will need to be made across every department. It also includes a renewed commitment to become the Greenest County.

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.

Replacing cats eyes/road studs

Questions have been raised about the disappearing cats eyes/road studs and if they will be replaced. I raised this point at a recent Council meeting and was informed by the portfolio holder Cllr Mary Evans that:-

They will be replaced on “A” roads where they have been removed and on other roads when there are hazard markings ie double white lines and hatching. A full explanation will be posted on the SCC website in the near future.

Sponsor my 60 mile walk and help me raise funds for MSA Trust

On 13th September 2019 I will be doing a 60-mile walk along the Suffolk Coast.

I am doing the walk in aid of the Multiple System Atrophy Trust (MSA). You may be aware that my wife was struggling with what we thought was Parkinsons before she sadly passed away suddenly last August. We now know that she was in fact battling with MSA. MSA is a rare disease with around 3,300 people in the UK and Ireland currently living with it. This means that most people will never have heard of the condition, unless they themselves have already met someone with MSA. Sadly, this is also true of a lot of health professionals which is why the MSA Trust works to raise awareness and increase understanding of MSA throughout the UK and Ireland.

Since losing Rita last year I have been wanting to do something to raise funds and awareness and so walking the Suffolk Coast seemed perfect, as this area was very special to us both. I will be accompanied by Simon Amstutz and Nick Collinson and we will be doing the walk over a 4 day period (I will be celebrating a significant birthday this year, and I don't think my knees would cope with 60 miles in one day).

If you would like to support me in this venture, please click on my Just Giving page below, or thrust some money into my hand when I see you! Any donations will be greatly appreciated.

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/david-wood143>