

Parish Report August 2018

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Council agrees to draw up costed five-year cycling plan

At the Council meeting on 19 July, councillors from the Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group put forward two motions asking for a commitment to investing in Suffolk's cycling infrastructure. The first motion asked the council to set up a cross-party group tasked with drawing up a costed five-year cycling plan, whilst the second motion asked the council to commit to ring-fencing at least 5% of its annual Integrated Transport Block for cycling infrastructure.

Whilst there was unanimous support for motion 1, the administration would not support a commitment of funding for cycling infrastructure, and so unfortunately motion 2 was rejected.

Although the two motions were voted on separately, they are intrinsically linked: without a minor commitment of council funding, any future bids to the Department for Transport are likely to be unsuccessful. This has been the case for the past seven years, during which Suffolk has missed out on five opportunities to receive funding for cycling from the DfT. Currently, SCC spends approximately 10% of its Integrated Transport Block on cycling infrastructure anyway, so the motion was not asking for additional money – just a firm commitment that a minimal level of funding would be available each year.

We are awaiting further information regarding the cross-party group that will draw up a cycling plan, and will keep you updated as this progresses.

Final decision reached on school transport policy changes

Following the Cabinet's decision to change Suffolk's school transport policy, my group (made up of Liberal Democrats, Greens and Independents) submitted a joint "call-in" of the decision with the Labour group.

The call-in argued that Cabinet did not have enough information to make an appropriate decision, particularly with regards to the financial modelling, the experience of Essex County Council, and the potential impact on Suffolk's Greenest County ambitions.

On Monday 9 July, the Scrutiny Committee questioned officers and the Cabinet member in response to the call-in. However, they determined that the concerns we raised were not valid and so rejected the call-in. This means that the Cabinet's decision was endorsed and the planned changes to the school transport policy will be implemented from September 2019.

Additional £6m borrowed to fund improvements for recycling centres

The Cabinet has agreed to borrow an additional £6m to fund improvement works for four of Suffolk's recycling centres. The priority works have been identified as follows:

- Deliver urgent improvements to the Foxhall (estimated cost £3 million) and Haverhill (estimated cost £1 million) recycling centres; and
- Secure sites for replacement recycling centres for Ipswich (estimated cost £1 million) and Stowmarket (estimated cost £1 million).

We have highlighted to the cabinet member responsible for waste services the importance of working with local councillors and residents when attempting to improve recycling centres.