

Parish Report July 2018

Councillor

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Opposition successfully "call in" Suffolk County Council School transport cuts

On Tuesday 19 June, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet voted to change the Home to School Transport policy so that only children travelling to their nearest school would receive free transport. The changes are due to be phased in from September 2019.

As you may be aware, I and my colleagues within the Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group have been opposed to this policy change since it was announced in September 2018. There has also been very vocal opposition from schools, parents and carers across Suffolk.

Following the Cabinet meeting, opposition councillors from all parties united to "call-in" the decision. We have received confirmation from the Monitoring Officer that the concerns presented within our call-in are valid.

This means the decision has been put on hold until 9 July, when the council's Scrutiny Committee will investigate further. If they determine that the Cabinet did not have enough information to make an appropriate and informed decision, the matter will be referred back to Cabinet to reconsider at a later date.

The "call-in" was successful on three fronts:

1. There is concern at the quality and reliability of the financial modelling;
2. Whether the Cabinet were fully informed of the role of the Consultation Institute;
3. Whether there was enough analysis of the experience of Essex County Council, who implemented a similar policy in 2013.

Consultation launched on future commissioning of specialist education services

Suffolk County Council have launched a consultation into the commissioning strategy for the development of Suffolk's specialist educational provision.

Demand for specialist education places in Suffolk for children with SEND continues to grow, and currently the county council has a much lower number of specialist education places than other similar authorities. This means that many children in Suffolk are forced to travel out of county to access the education provision they need – and often Suffolk County Council foots the bill.

At a time when the Council is attempting to reduce the amount of free home to school transport it provides over fears of escalating costs, it is vital that we begin to provide more SEND provision within Suffolk.

The 6 week consultation will look at three options for meeting the additional demand for specialist provision. More information and a link to the consultation can be found online at:

<http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/SENDsufficiencyeducation>

Major review of Suffolk Highways announced

The new Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Highways, Cllr Mary Evans, has launched a major review of the way highways in Suffolk are maintained.

Areas due to be reviewed include:

- Existing policy which determines how resources are deployed, known as the Suffolk Highway Maintenance Operational Plan (HMOP);

- How the location of potholes on the road is considered alongside the width and depth, recognising the impact they can have on cyclists and motorcyclists;
- How utility companies coordinate roadworks and are held to account for their actions;
- How residents, councillors and businesses are informed about road repairs and how they can access information;
- Financial control and contract management;
- How town and parish councils can work closer with Suffolk Highways to make the best use of their local knowledge, skills, money and time.

Suffolk residents urged to be Scam Aware

As part of Scams Awareness Month, Suffolk Trading Standards is urging Suffolk residents to not miss a trick and be scam aware.

Last year, Citizens Advice found that almost three quarters of people surveyed had been targeted by a scam in the previous two years (2015-17). It's estimated that only 5-15% of scams are reported, and some people don't even know they have been scammed.

Scammers target people by post, phone calls, text messages, emails, and they even visit homes without any warning. Scams come in a variety of forms, from lottery scams to fake ticketing and emails, but ultimately a scam is any attempt to fraudulently obtain money or something else of value.

While new scams crop up all the time, the tactics of scammers remain the same, they will often:

- Contact you out of the blue
- Ask for personal or financial details
- Put you under pressure to respond quickly
- Ask you to keep their offer secret
- Make promises or offers that sound too good to be true

Suffolk Trading Standards is advising residents to:

- Verify the identity of strangers
- Look out for grammatical or spelling mistakes in letters or flyers
- Never give out bank details
- Never send money to strangers
- Say no to persuasive sales talk

Suffolk Trading Standards has the ability to prosecute those who undertake these misleading actions and provides support and advice to victims of scams. As part of the fight against scammers, Suffolk Trading Standards implements 'No Cold Calling Zones', just one way that doorstep scams can be stopped

More information is available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/nocoldcallingzone.