

February 2020 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Suffolk celebrates CQC success

Suffolk's recent Care Quality Commission statistics are in and Suffolk is now top of the table for comparator local authority areas. In Suffolk, 89.04% of Adult Social Care locations are rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission, the standards agency for adult care. When it comes to the national rankings, Suffolk is performing equally well. Ranked as fourth nationally for 'Good' or 'Outstanding' rated care locations, Suffolk shines out as a great area for adult social care. This is particularly impressive when it is considered that Suffolk has over 100 more adult social care locations than any of the other areas listed in the top ten. There are of course, still areas where we can improve and work is continuing to raise standards where it is required. More information regarding the CQC ratings of local authority areas or individual care locations can be found on the Care Quality Commission website.

A Statement from Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, on the INR

Since Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) first took the decision to pursue development of an Ipswich Northern Route (INR), I have been clear, as leader of Suffolk County Council (SCC), that the project must be fully collaborative and follow the processes set out by the Department for Transport (DfT) if it is to enjoy any realistic chance of success. This week, SCC met our commitment to SPSL to undertake phase one of the DfT process, by publishing the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). This concluded that there was a good economic business case to continue the project to phase two. However, alongside the SOBC, SCC outlined five issues which would need to be considered if SCC were to recommend whether the project proceeds. These issues are:

- The way Government allocates funding for road projects has evolved since 2016. There is now a need to provide not only a compelling business case for the road itself, but also to show how the road will enable or support additional housing growth. This need for additional housing falls under the remit of district and borough councils. SCC, as the transport authority for Suffolk, will need clarity on the willingness and ability of the district and borough councils to deliver such growth, beyond that already committed to in their respective local plans.
- The need for widespread political support, both at a national and local level, to proceed to the next stage, factoring in the levels of public support and any local changes to the political landscape as a result of the May 2019 and December 2019 elections.
- A petition received from the STOP! campaign, which is against the project, is scheduled to be responded to by a meeting of Suffolk County Council on 13 February 2020.
- Serious consideration of the climate emergency declared in 2019.
- Acceptance that the scheme has no realistic chance of succeeding in gaining government funding as a "road only scheme".

So far, we have received responses from Ipswich Borough Council, East Suffolk Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and Babergh District Council. We have also received a response from Tom Hunt, MP for Ipswich. Dr Dan Poulter, MP for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich, and Dr Therese Coffey, MP for Suffolk Coastal, have also made their views on the Ipswich Northern Route clear prior to publication of the SOBC this week. This is a complex issue for everyone in Suffolk. The SOBC suggests there is a strong business case to proceed. However, pursuing a project of this scale and financial size clearly needs widespread political support as, without this, Government is unlikely to even support the next phase when £3m is needed to complete the Full Business Case. Furthermore, without agreement of the district and borough councils to build the additional houses necessary to secure government funding (above those already agreed within their local plans), I do not believe this project can proceed with any degree of success. Therefore, after careful consideration of the above and the wider political views, along with the very real concerns of families and businesses located close to any of the proposed routes, and all the responses received, it has become increasingly clear that, as Leader of Suffolk County Council, I am now in a position to recommend to

my Cabinet that the Ipswich Northern Route should not proceed to the next phase of development. To bring the uncertainty surrounding this issue to an end for all concerned, I will be bringing a paper to a meeting of Cabinet on 25 February where the final decision will be made, which we must do as the highways' authority for Suffolk. To avoid pre-empting my own Cabinet's decision, I do not intend to offer further commentary beyond this statement.

New permit scheme aims to address roadwork disruption

On 28 January, SCC's Cabinet gave the go-ahead for a new permit scheme that they hope will reduce delays on Suffolk's roads caused by roadworks. The introduction of a roadworks permit scheme for the county's roads will give enhanced powers to place conditions on work carried out by utility companies and other organisations, including Suffolk Highways. At present, public utilities simply need to inform SCC of the dates when they are planning to do their works. Under a permit scheme, they would have to ask for permission and the council can either approve, refuse or amend their request as they see fit. Applicants would also have to pay a fee when applying for a permit to do roadworks. The cost will vary depending on the duration of the proposed work, the strategic importance of the affected road, and the time of day the work is due to take place. If roadworks occur outside of the peak congestion periods, the fee could be reduced. The permit scheme is used successfully elsewhere in the country and there is typically a reduction in congestion on the network. A permit scheme will provide more power to control proposed roadworks as it places responsibility on the applicant to better plan their work. The permit scheme will be in place from 1 April 2020.

Review of countywide Children's Centre services for families and children aged 0 to 19

SCC has launched a review of its Children's Centre service, with a view to strengthening its current family offer and expanding services. There will be no reduction in service budget as a result of this review. In fact, any savings made through the process, such as on existing building costs, will be re-invested back into the 0-19 service to strengthen the current offer to families and to help develop future provision for young people and their families. The consultation will run for seven weeks until 5pm on Sunday 1 March 2020. Details of the process and the consultation questionnaire can be found on the council's website at www.suffolk.gov.uk/ccconsultation. Anyone who does not have internet access can complete the online questionnaire at their local library for free or by calling 0345 603 1842. An extensive period of research and evaluation into current service provision was undertaken ahead of developing the proposal. As a result of this research, a proposal has been developed, which suggests the following approach:

- Develop 16 full-time Family Hubs.
- Develop 11 part-time Family Hubs.
- Re-purpose nine sites that do not offer suitable accommodation for a Family Hub or are in an area where there are not enough nursery places. The sites will be re-purposed for nursery provision or school provision.
- Increase the existing Outreach service across Suffolk
- Close two buildings that cannot be re-purposed as a Family Hub and are unsuitable for use as nursery or school provision.
- Retain and improve the existing service offer through Suffolk Libraries.

Family Hubs will be at the heart of the service going forward and will provide the location from where services are delivered and coordinated. The proposal is to have at least one main Family Hub in each area of Suffolk and provide services from other community sites closer to families.

Part-time Family Hubs will be smaller sites incorporating a number of services e.g. Midwifery, Speech and Language, Child Health Clinics, and group work delivered by the council or its partners. Part-time Family Hubs allow staff to provide Outreach services at other venues in nearby rural communities.

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