

Appendix C – County Cllr. Penny Otton’s Report to Full Council

Cabinet reshuffle at Suffolk County Council

On 15 October, there was a major reshuffle of the Suffolk County Council Cabinet. The key changes are:

- Cllr Gordon Jones is the new Cabinet Member for Finance
- Cllr Mary Evans remains as deputy leader and is the new Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Skills
- Cllr Andrew Reid is the new Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Rural Affairs
- Responsibility for the council’s policy on Sizewell C moves to Cllr Richard Rout (Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection)
- Responsibility for the council’s property portfolio and assets moves to Cllr Nick Gowrley (Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Housing and Enterprise)

35% cut to Health Visitors

Earlier this year, there were reports that Suffolk County Council planned to cut 25% of Health Visitors. We have now learned that the council has in fact reduced Health Visitors by 35%, without informing either the public or councillors. The staffing cuts were made as part of an internal restructure of the 0-19 Healthy Child Service in order to save £1m.

In England, it is mandatory for families to receive five visits to check on the health of children/parents during pregnancy early childhood, and the guidance states that these checks should be undertaken by health visitors. However, as a result of these staffing reductions, in Suffolk only three of these visits will be undertaken by specially trained health visitors, with staff nurses expected to take on the other two checks.

My group proposed a motion at Council on the 17 October, asking the administration to reconsider these cuts, which unfortunately was voted down.

Boundary review – extension of consultation

The Boundary Commission has extended the deadline for their consultation on new division boundaries for Suffolk County Council until 2 January 2020.

As part of this review, the Boundary Commission are proposing to reduce councillor numbers in Suffolk from 75 to 70.

You can find out more information and respond to the consultation here:

<https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/node/18495>

Review of school transport policy confirmed

A motion on this which I amended would have agreed to remove the problem of split villages and siblings going to different schools was voted down.

Cllr Mary Evans, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Skills, has apologised to families affected by the new school transport policy and has confirmed that there will be a review of the policy. However, it is likely that this review will only focus on the implementation of the new policy, rather than the inherent problems with the policy itself. This will be run by Mark Hardingham ; head of the fire service; whilst I have great respect for Mark, I believe it should be someone totally independent of the council.

Since the introduction of the new policy, there has been a large increase in the number of transport appeals: 141 appeals were submitted from 1 July – 18 October, compared to an average of just 21 for

the same time period in previous years. Furthermore, over 70% of these appeals have been decided in favour of parents who had initially been refused transport by the council.

New Recycling Centre in Bury St Edmunds

The “depot” at Rougham Hill will close end of October and be replaced by a new one on Fornham road. All containers will be on ground level and later this year there will be a charity RE-USE SHOP where materials etc can be taken for re-use.

Meeting with Network Rail

I am disappointed that there still seems no possible solution and that the mid Suffolk officer was unclear as to how many planning applications had been given permission and how CIL money could be used. Also that myself and the parish council had not been involved in previous discussions. I have asked the new cabinet member to be involved as part of his liaisons with network rail.

Appendix D –

District Cllr. Harry Richardson's Report to Full Council

At our recent meeting on Thursday 24th October Mid Suffolk District Council approved the draft our new Corporate Plan to cover the 2019-2027, which will replace our existing Joint Strategic Plan (2016-2020). The Corporate Plan outlines the District Council's priorities over the coming years and is divided into six distinct categories: the Economy, the Environment, Communities, Wellbeing, Customers, and Housing.

Much of these themes already existed in the Joint Strategic Plan, but the focus on the Environment is a new addition following our declaration of a climate emergency earlier this year. The previous Sport and Leisure strategy has now been expanded to include Wellbeing in its broader sense, incorporating both physical and mental wellbeing in line with several of the initiatives that I referenced in last month's report. The document before the Council was in its draft form, so the specifics of these strategies are still in development, but the broad aims of the Council were considered and approved. I will provide you with an update as and when the details of this are confirmed – likely to now be in the New Year.

Finally, I was very pleased to have seconded the proposal to adopt Thurston's Neighbourhood Plan at our last Council meeting and was delighted that it was passed unanimously by all Councillors present. I am very grateful to all those who contributed to the Plan's development and am positive that your efforts will have a real and tangible impact on the local community.

Our next Council meeting had been scheduled for Thursday 12th December but for reasons that I am sure are obvious this has now been rearranged to January, so there will be little in terms of substantive updates between now and then.

Across the District more broadly there have been a couple of new announcements in recent weeks and I have included summary of these updates overleaf:

Tree for Life for new arrivals

A new Tree for Life scheme means families across Babergh can join those in Mid Suffolk in claiming a free tree to mark the arrival of a child, enhancing biodiversity in the districts. The initiative, which has been running in neighbouring Mid Suffolk since 2018, offers parents with a new born or newly adopted child the chance to mark their arrival by planting a tree – benefiting families, communities and the environment by boosting the number of trees in the district.

Open to families who have welcomed a new arrival between 1 January and 31 December 2019, the scheme is also available to parents who may have lost a child during the same period to apply for a memorial tree. Any Tree for Life must be planted within the two districts, however, a plant pot grown tree will also be available for those without access to a garden.

Families in both Babergh and Mid Suffolk are now being encouraged to apply for this year's trees, ahead of the 12 January 2020 deadline.

More free swimming for youngsters

During October half term and the Christmas holidays this year, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are extending their free swims offer for under 17s to help promote healthier and active lifestyles in the districts. This follows a successful free swim offer over the summer holidays which saw thousands of under 17s take part, equating to more than 14,000 swims across the two districts.

Free swimming will now also be available during the October half term from 19 - 27 October 2019, and the Christmas holidays from 20 December 2019 to 5 January 2020 inclusive at the following centres in Mid Suffolk: Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, Stowmarket
Stradbroke Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre

Report from District Cllr. Sarah Mansel (standing in for Cllr Wendy Turner) to Full Council

New Corporate Plan - The Joint Strategic Plan (2016 – 20200) has been refreshed by the Cabinet members of both Councils. The new corporate plan includes both a vision and a mission statement and is summarised with a graphic representation. This was discussed at the October Council meeting, where the Green Group proposed an amendment to include an all-encompassing theme of environmental sustainability which should underpin all activity within the Council. This was rejected by the administration.

Environment Task Group - A cross party group of councillors from both Councils has now formed and agreed a programme of meetings to address the Climate Emergency and hopefully come up with some strategies for the Council to adopt in due course.

Housing - Mid Suffolk are delivering two completely affordable housing developments on the middle school sites in both Needham Market and Stowmarket. Both of these developments will include homes for affordable rent, social rent and shared ownership. Over the last 4 years Mid Suffolk have just about kept pace with the loss of properties to the Right to Buy Scheme.

Neighbourhood Plans - Congratulations to Thurston for completing their Neighbourhood Plan, which has now been adopted by Mid Suffolk and forms part of the statutory planning policy. Haughley's Neighbourhood Plans has also been adopted by Mid Suffolk .

West Suffolk Community Safety Partnership - The work of the WSCSP is to be discussed at Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18th November. The WSCSP is a statutory body of organisations who work together to reduce crime and disorder. Members of the group include representative from the district councils, county council, police, fire and rescue service, clinical commissioning groups. The priorities of the group are Hate Crime, County Lines, Domestic Abuse and Homicide.