

# Parish Report October 2019

## Councillor

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### Hundreds of children still unsure about school transport arrangements

In September 2019, Suffolk County Council's new Home to School transport policy will be implemented. Children moving to a new school will only receive free transport from the council if it is their nearest school and more than 2 miles from their homes. All eligible parents were asked to opt-in and apply for transport, and those who were not eligible for free transport were offered the opportunity to buy a spare seat on SCC school buses.

However, 472 applications for home-to-school transport remained outstanding at the end of August, with families unsure of whether they would be allocated a seat on an SCC school bus in time for the start of the new school year.

### First stage of Boundary Commission Review

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is currently undertaking a review of Suffolk County Council, to determine both the number of councillors and the boundaries between divisions.

For the first stage of the review, the Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group submitted a proposal to keep councillor numbers in Suffolk at a minimum of 75, with the potential for an increase to 80. This was based on the need to ensure proper local representation and encourage diversity amongst councillors, which consequently requires a more manageable workload. Furthermore, given the predicted population growth in Suffolk and the reduced funding that local government is receiving, it is likely that councillor workloads will only continue to increase in the future.

The Conservative and Labour Groups submitted a joint proposal asking for a reduction to 70 councillors. The next stage of the review will determine the new division boundaries and will include two public consultations. The review is expected to be completed by July 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.

### 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.

## **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.

## **Keeping Suffolk Villages safe with Lorry Watch**

Two new Lorry Watch schemes have launched aimed at reducing the number of HGV drivers ignoring weight restrictions on the county's roads. The villages of Fornham All Saints (near Bury St Edmunds) and Barnham (near Thetford) join nine other similar schemes across Suffolk, set up in conjunction with Suffolk County Council's Trading Standards and Suffolk Highways.

Suffolk's Lorry Watch started in 2012 and to date has reported nearly 3,000 incidents of HGV vehicles exceeding weight limits, where clearly marked restriction signs are in place. The existing schemes have been a great success with only four repeat offenders being issued with a warning, meaning that drivers are taking notice when they are first contacted.

Weight restriction orders make it an offence to drive a vehicle through the restricted area where the vehicle exceeds the weight limit imposed unless they are exempt, for example when delivering or collecting within the restriction zone. If drivers from the same haulage company are being reported, that firm will receive advice on training their staff. The offence remains with the driver unless the haulage firm has caused the offence. Trading Standards can enforce weight restriction orders under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

If you are interested in joining Lorry Watch in an area which HGVs are abusing a weight restriction, contact [lorrywatch@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:lorrywatch@suffolk.gov.uk) or **01473 264859** (option A).

## **Sudbury Care Home Crowned Olympics Champion**

Red House Residential Home in Sudbury has been crowned 2019 Suffolk Care Home Olympics champions. They beat 38 other care homes from across the county to win the title. The annual competition, now in its third year, aims to give care home residents a fun and enjoyable experience of sport whilst highlighting the importance of physical activity within social care settings.

428 residents in 39 care settings across Suffolk competed in 3 sports (Boccia, fishing and curling) for a total of 239 hours over the winter and spring months with the top three homes then competing in a 'super-final' to decide the outright champions.

The Suffolk Care Home Olympics is delivered by social enterprise Elatus Sports in partnership with the Suffolk County Council led Most Active County Partnership.