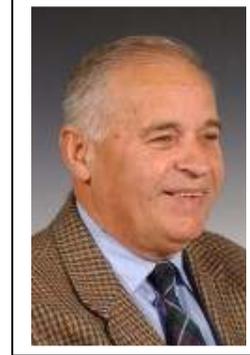


Parish Report January 2013

Councillor

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Concessionary Fares update – questions left unanswered

The usual opportunity to ask questions of the Cabinet was surprisingly refused at the last meeting when the Concessionary Fares item was discussed. Even though new evidence had been presented, the administration refused to allow opposition Councillors from asking anything, leaving many questions unanswered.

As a result of the campaign from the Lib Dem & Independent Group over the last two years, the Cabinet was forced to look again at the original decision to only provide the statutory minimum free travel with a bus pass. This meant that on weekdays pass holders were limited to travel between 0930 and 2300, the Lib Dems wanted to extend this to 24 hr free travel for disabled users and from 9am for elderly users.

Usually, with each report to Cabinet, opposition Councillors have an opportunity to question the administrations potential decision, and raise important points, however this was refused, even though the report contained new information. The new information included results from the small scale survey the Council carried out, and a letter from the Equality Human Rights Commission which stated that the processes undertaken by Cabinet in the original decision needed 'considerable improvements'.

Instead, Cllr's were unable to ask questions about these important matters, and the decision to provide only the minimum free travel entitlement was maintained without debate.

For more information, and a copy of the report, as well as the letter sent from the Equality Human Rights Commission -

<http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/meeting.aspx?d=11/Dec/2012&c=The%20Cabinet>

Ipswich Park and Ride Consultation

The County Council has launched a consultation regarding the Park and Ride service, which is available at both the current Park and Ride sites in hard copy, and online here -

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/lpswichPR2012>

There are only three questions in the consultation, which are –

1. Would it be acceptable to use buses that are not dedicated to the Park and Ride scheme to deliver the service so long as a high frequency service is still maintained?
2. If the services were changed so as not to offer the cross town link would this seriously disadvantage you as a passenger? *(Currently the Park and Ride services are linked to each other so that a bus leaving one site goes all the way through Ipswich to the other site. A proposal is that the Park and Ride scheme reverts to its original operation with buses from each site going to the town centre only and returning to the same site. This may have the effect of improving reliability but may require some passengers to change buses in the town centre).*

3. If staff were not present on site would this have an impact on your journey? (*Currently the Park and Ride sites are manned whilst the service is operating. They assist passengers and ensure that the facilities are kept to a high standard. A proposal is that the buildings could be used in a different way that still provide basic facilities (rest rooms etc) to passengers but without staff being present at all times.*)

The deadline for this survey is the 5th of January, but they will accept late submissions so I do encourage you to respond.

Fire Merger Update

Firstly a reminder that the County Council is still consulting, until the 14th of January, on the potential Fire Merger between Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Fire Services, and I would encourage you to respond to this. For more information please head to - <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/your-council/decision-making/consultations/delivering-the-best-fire-service-to-you/>

In addition to this the Council revealed that the timescale for this would now be April 2015, rather than a potentially earlier date of 2014.

December Cabinet & Full Council Round-up

As mentioned above the Cabinet meeting for December took place and discussed the Concessionary fares under somewhat controversial circumstances. However, there were a number of other items that you may find of interest –

- Suffolk Rail Prospectus – where the County has set out a number of improvements that it wants to see to the East Anglian franchise, including better trains and speed of trains to London.
- Suffolk Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
- Final Report of the Suffolk County Council Farms Policy Development Panel
- Highway Functions undertaken by District and Borough Councils
- Suffolk Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Suffolk
- Procurement of Highways Services – to award Balfour Beatty Living Places as part of a £200m contract over five years, with the possibility of extending this to ten. The company will be responsible for the design and implementation of highways maintenance and improvement works, winter gritting, street lighting, traffic signals and bridge work throughout the county.

For a copy of the papers please head to -

<http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/meeting.aspx?d=11/Dec/2012&c=The%20Cabinet>

In addition to Cabinet, there was also a Full Council in December, however the meeting did not have a significant agenda, mainly covering a number of annual reports, from the Scrutiny Committee, the Audit Committee and a report on the Councils Property. If you'd like to find out more, please head to this link for a copy of the papers -

<http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/meeting.aspx?d=20/Dec/2012&c=County%20Council>

New Youth Travel Provision on the cards?

The next Cabinet meeting will take place on the 29th of January, and discuss important items like the County Council budget before it goes to Full Council, and the Final Report of the Locality Funding Policy Development Panel.

Another very important item that is going to be discussed is the possibility of implementing a new Suffolk Travel Card Scheme for young people. I will let you know more about this as and when the papers are released in the next Parish Report.