

Friston Parish Council
SCC Newsletter – February 2019

County Council sets timescale to progress the Ipswich Northern Route project

On 27 February, the Leader of Suffolk County Council, Matthew Hicks, announced the timescale to progress the Ipswich Northern Route project. Cllr Hicks has outlined the next steps in producing the Strategic Outline Business Case, which will examine and ultimately clarify the feasibility of an Ipswich northern route. Discussions about an Ipswich northern route have been well documented over the years. This announcement confirms the County Council's commitment to explore these formally with a public consultation which will inform the Strategic Outline Business Case to be put to government and published later in the year. The timescale for moving the project forward is:

- Stage 1 study and report into possible highways options was completed in 2017
- The options assessment and development commissioned in May 2018 is currently being evaluated and prepared for shortlisting, prior to consultation
- Consultation on route details, alignment and junction options with the A14 and A12 - to begin in the Summer 2019
- Completion of the Strategic Outline Business Case to be shared with government, local MPs and the public - Autumn 2019.

The options assessment forms a key part of the Strategic Outline Business Case and is required to look at all other viable transport and traffic mitigation options. This will confirm whether the road alignments published in 2017 are indeed the best solution for the county. After carefully considering the assessment and developing these options further, the next stage is public consultation to begin in summer 2019. The initial study, options assessment and the results of the public consultation inform the Strategic Outline Business Case, which will provide clarity on the feasibility of the project and will determine whether the project can proceed to the next stage. That will be shared publicly for consideration in Autumn 2019.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

“A project of this scale can only proceed by ensuring all partners are fully committed to each stage. Today, all councils have agreed the next steps for the creation of the business case. The public consultation will start in Summer 2019 to allow everyone to have their say and help assess the feasibility of taking this project forward to government and then onto the next stage. This realistic timeline clearly shows the level of commitment from across Suffolk to take this to the next step, with a public consultation to allow the strategic outline business case to inform the decision-making process.”

The County Council is working with District and Borough Councils to develop the project.

Suffolk County Council 2019/20 Budget Approved

On 14 February, Suffolk County Council concluded its budget setting process for this coming financial year (2019/2020). From 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, Suffolk County Council will spend almost £10 million a week across all its services following approval of this budget of £519.3 million. Over the period 2011-12 to 2018-19 the Council has made over £260 million of savings in response to reductions in funding from Central Government and increasing demand for services. For 2019/20 the Council has proposed a range of savings totalling around £13 million. These savings are required to help balance the budget - something that the Council must do by law. Recognising the unrelenting rise in demand and the complexity of support required by vulnerable children and adults in Suffolk, the Council are significantly increasing spending in these two top priority areas. The net budget for Adult and Community Services (ACS) will rise to £243m and the net budget for Health, Wellbeing and Children's Services (HWCS) will rise to £147m. This is an increase of just over £14 million for ACS and HWCS. ACS and HWCS will account for 75% of the total spend in 2019/2020 – three in every four pounds the Council spends. General council tax will rise by 2.99% this year. The Council are also applying the final 1% of the six per cent Social Care precept allowed over the years 2017/18 to 2019/20. The overall increase in council tax is one per cent less than for 2018/19. The four-year investment in surface-dressing our roads continues into its third year and the Council will treat 1,000 miles of Suffolk's roads by the end of 2020 as promised. The Council has also maintained Suffolk Fire and Rescue's budget and protected Suffolk's Library services. The Council is looking to maximise the financial contribution from its medium-term programmes, which focus on transforming how the Council delivers its services and works with other authorities and public sector partners. The Council's transformation programmes have saved over £12 million in 2018/19 and £12-£13 million of savings are planned for 2019/20.

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Cllr Richard Smith, said:

"There are no easy choices at this point. Every call we have to make on where to find savings is tough at this point, but we must balance the budget by law and it is right to focus our efforts on our highest priority areas to protect and support our most vulnerable residents.

"I accept that in order to protect these services that represent such a large part of our overall spend each year, we must find savings across the remaining service areas. This does mean that we are proposing a number of savings from the Council's highways budget and further staff reductions. This is the stark reality as we continue to experience significant financial challenges in the public sector."

Funding agreed for Citizens Advice in Suffolk

On 11 February, it was reported that Citizens Advice in Suffolk will no longer see any difference in their funding for 2019/20. This is due to a collaboration between Suffolk County Council, NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group, Suffolk County Council proposes to reduce the funding given to Citizens Advice by 50% (£187k), in 2019/20. Under the joint agreement now in place with the CCGs, a total of £187k will be provided by NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk and NHS West Suffolk CCGs. So, funding for Citizens Advice in 2019/20 will remain the same as the previous year (£374k).

Doctor Ed Garratt, Chief Officer for Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG and West Suffolk CCG, said:

“By working together with our colleagues at the Council, we have been able to identify future funding for Citizens Advice. This is a great example of Suffolk’s authorities supporting each other to find solutions. We are delighted that we have been able to make this joint announcement before the Council approves its budget for this coming financial year, as all parties recognise the positive contributions made by our local Citizens Advice, including to the health and wellbeing of people across Suffolk.”

The Council has continued to work with Citizens Advice representatives throughout this process, most recently carrying out a public consultation to understand the equality impacts there may be as a result of proposed funding changes, and how these might be mitigated. This consultation recognised that the Council has been supporting Citizens Advice to mitigate the funding reduction, whilst also facing its own financial constraints and increasing pressures to provide social care and many other services to vulnerable people.

Suffolk Family Information Service celebrates 20th anniversary

In 1999, the Council launched an impartial information service to provide childcare advice to families. Suffolk Family Information Service specialises in helping parents find childcare and early education, and provides information, advice and assistance to families of children from birth to 20 years (25 for young people with a disability or special need). The Service also provides advice to Suffolk based childcare providers including day nurseries, childminders, pre-school playgroups and school-based childcare. Like many Family Information Services, service planning began in 1998 in response to the government’s green paper 'Meeting the Childcare Challenge'. Originally most parents phoned a helpline for help to find childcare, now families search for childcare on the [Suffolk InfoLink website](#). This is an online directory including a comprehensive list of Ofsted registered childcare and early education providers, and Local Offer information and services for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities.

Have your say on the future of the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is asking the public for views on how it manages the risks it faces across the county, as well as five different areas of its work, from how it responds to automatic fire alarms, to firefighters' shift patterns. This eight-week consultation is part of a statutory process, with information feeding into the fire service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for the next three years (2019 to 2022); essentially a plan for how it provides its services. The fire service regularly assesses all foreseeable risks that could affect its operations. This includes considering one-off type events such as countywide flooding and terrorist attacks, in addition to the more usual responses to fires, animal rescues and road traffic collisions. A key part of this review is to invite the public to share their views through this consultation and at a number of events around the county. The particular areas which the fire service is seeking feedback on are:

- Automatic Fire Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals
- Response to Road Traffic Collisions
- Shift Patterns
- Specialist Rescue Capabilities
- Speed of Response to Emergency Incidents – Performance Measures.

The consultation will run from Monday 11 February to Sunday 7 April 2019. The draft IRMP, supporting documents and online consultation are available at www.suffolk.gov.uk

Staff from the fire service will be making visits around Suffolk, so people can find out more about their work and the consultation. All visits are from 10am to midday. Upcoming dates are:

- **4 March:** Bury St Edmunds: Sainsburys, Bedingfield Way
- **14 March:** Haverhill: Sainsburys, Haycocks Road
- **21 March:** Newmarket: Tesco, Fordham Road

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