

**Occold Parish Council 8.6.2015**  
County Councillor Report

**Suffolk County Council's Ofsted**

The County Council has received its long awaited Ofsted report, looking into our own education service, the letter was dated February, but it was only released 2 weeks ago. Extracts from the report do make sober reading.

*"The local authority has been too slow in acting on the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. Too few pupils in Suffolk attend a good or outstanding school, particularly in Lowestoft and Ipswich which have the highest levels of deprivation in the county. Elected members and local authority senior leaders are committed to their vision of raising aspiration and improving outcomes for all children and young people. The senior leaders have rightly focused their attention on inadequate schools, but have only recently established systems for identifying other schools at risk of deteriorating. As a result, poorly performing schools that have been supported and challenged have improved while others have declined. The number of pupils achieving average levels of attainment and making at least nationally expected progress by the end of their primary and secondary school education remains below average and is especially low for disadvantaged pupils. The local authority has set suitable targets for school improvement. However, as the targets set by schools themselves are not yet linked to these, it is difficult to see how they will be met."*

The report does not contain any real surprises, but the closure of Stoke Ash primary school last year, is easily explained in the light of this current report, the challenge is to make sure no more schools suffer the same fate, while making sure ever increasing numbers of Suffolk pupils attend a good or outstanding school.

**Plan "C"**

At the last full Council meeting, Suffolk County Council elected a new leader of the ruling Conservative group. His name is Colin Noble, his election has been the culmination of an enormous amount of internal wrangling, and in my opinion, a complete distraction, from the many challenges or County faces.

**Suffolk Devolution?**

Many of you may remember that last year I went to a conference in Bournemouth where the subject of English devolution was discussed.

A number of councils have tried to join services together, by economies of scale as well as sharing infrastructure and expertise, government is beginning to recognise this is a way of saving money and joining together services.

Suffolk County Council has long recognised this potential, and has lost no time in lobbying the new Government to consider a proposal from Suffolk for the devolution of funding and powers from Westminster to County Hall. Suffolk does argue that we know where the funding needs to be injected to bring about sustainable growth as well as broker greater sharing of resource across services, although the early steer from the government is to favour City based Mayoral administrations, and seeing that Suffolk does not have a city, there may be a renewed call for the joining up with Cambridge and Norfolk into a regional structure.