

Parish Report November 2017

Councillor

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Motion to improve early years funding rejected by Council

At the meeting of Council on Thursday 19th October, our LDGI group supported a Labour motion which called on the Council to (1) lobby central government for more funding in Suffolk and (2) pass the full amount of funding received on to providers. Unfortunately, the Conservative majority refused to back the motion.

Since September 2017, working families are entitled to 30 hours of free childcare, whilst all families are entitled to 15 hours of free childcare. Suffolk is one of only 37 local authorities which this year had a reduction in early years funding, receiving a total of £31 987 186. This equates to £4.41 per hour. However, childcare providers receive a base rate of only £3.87 per hour, and many are struggling to run their businesses on this low rate.

The motion highlighted the difficulty faced by childcare providers across the county, and questioned why the Council did not pass through a higher rate of funding to providers. Councillor Gordon Jones (Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills) stated that the Council only retains £2.1m, which is used to meet their statutory duties. He has yet to provide a full breakdown on how this money is spent.

Home to School Transport – workshops announced

In September, the LDGI Group successfully “called-in” the Cabinet’s decision to go to consultation on changes to the Home to School Transport policy. We questioned the nature of the pre-consultation period, and argued that more research needed to be done. The Scrutiny Committee agreed with us, and voted to refer the decision back to Cabinet for further consideration. It has not yet been announced when Cabinet will reconsider the proposals.

Suffolk County Council has announced that two workshops will be taking place next month, to further discuss the challenge and help develop proposals for Cabinet to consider. However, invitations will only be sent to 80 randomly selected representatives. If you have not been invited, and feel that you should be a part of these workshops, please contact schooltravel@suffolk.gov.uk.

School admissions consultation

Suffolk County Council is seeking views on its proposed admissions policy for the 2019/2020 school year. The consultation, which started on Monday 2 October, will run until Monday 13 November 2017.

There are proposals to make some minor changes to the admission arrangements and co-ordinated admissions scheme for schools in Suffolk for the 2019/2020 school year. The amendments relate to:

- The sibling criterion
- The definition of “ordinarily resident”
- The offer of a school place when preferences can't be met
- The procedure for dealing with late applications

To view the consultation documents and to have your say on the proposals, please visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations.

The governing bodies of voluntary aided, foundation, free schools and academies are responsible for admissions to their schools. If you want to view the arrangements for these schools you should contact the school directly.

Suffolk Fostering Service launches first in a series of fostering recruitment campaigns

Suffolk County Council's Fostering Service will launch a series of campaigns over the coming months to encourage more Suffolk residents to become foster carers.

820 children currently live in care in Suffolk and there is an urgent need for more people to come forward to foster. The first campaign will focus on the need to recruit more foster carers for teenagers.

Suffolk Fostering Service will also be hosting pop-up events across Suffolk. In November, the events are:

- Saturday 11th November, 9.30am - 12.30pm, Stowmarket Leisure Centre
- Saturday 11th November, 12.00pm - 6.00pm University of Suffolk, Ipswich

More information can be found at: www.fosterandadopt.suffolk.gov.uk

Town Lane

Post the public meeting on the 13th of October 2017, I have looked into the County Council elements of potential areas that could help alleviate the issues and concerns. Changing the speed limit was muted as a potential help, having gone through the data with a safety officer, the evidence needed to stack up a case is difficult to find, yes there are high numbers of heavy goods vehicles, but very few are speeding. There could be a case for a flashing warning sign at the approach to the bends, as this is where the accidents have happened, but speed was not the issue in the reports of these accidents, poor driver awareness was the cause.

The issue of closer County Council working regarding the "o" licenses, we agree should be looked at, but in this case "o" licenses are a "red Herring" as the site could operate at its present capacity if all "o" licenses were revoked.

Signage from the A140, was mentioned, the latest I have heard from X.Y.E is that new signs have arrived, but the contractor would not install them on land not in control of X.Y.E, the operator asked me if our highways department would install them instead, I reiterated that I had agreed that my officers would be instructed not to take down these unauthorised signs, it was not appropriate for me to ask the officers to break their own rules and install them.