

Parish Report August 2014

Councillor

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Consultation on the future of Children's centres in Suffolk begins

A public consultation looking at the future of Children's Centres in Suffolk has begun.

The cost of running or maintaining some of the buildings is disproportionately high when compared to the number of people using it. The county council is determined to find more effective value for money, wherever possible. The consultation is set to run for a twelve-week period and members of the public are being urged to engage with the consultation and provide their views on potential changes.

Councillor Gordon Jones, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for children's services, said:

"Like many people up and down the county, we strongly value the good work carried out by our children's centres and the services they provide. However, we believe that more can be done to ensure that these services are as effective as they can be and reaching all those who would benefit. Supporting parents and their children in early years is of profound importance to us and goes above and beyond the normal run of party politics. That's why we have sought the knowledge and support of the Right Honourable Frank Field MP in this consultation – someone who has, over many years, taken a deep interest in this issue and is a much respected expert in the field of early years, and breaking the cycle of poverty and deprivation. We want the precious resources we direct towards early years care to be focused as much as possible on the services that will make a difference, and not on buildings. Our aim through this consultation is to hear the views of people across Suffolk about the children's centre services and how they feel the services should be shaped. I urge all those using these services to share their views and engage fully with us."

Centre services will continue, however they may be delivered from nearby children's centres, other local community facilities or via home visits direct to the families that need support. This approach will help those that, for transport reasons, struggle to get to children's centres.

The changes will help towards making savings of £2.9 million from children's centres over a four year period leading up to 2017 - a savings level agreed by councillors in February 2014. This is 1.9 per cent of the county council's £156 million savings requirement over the same period. £1.25 million has already been saved from recurring underspends in the service and cutting waste.

All responses to the consultation must be received by the end of Thursday 16 October 2014.

Any final decisions will be made by county council's cabinet in December 2014, following analysis of the consultation responses. Any changes will be implemented from April 2015.

Call for action to prevent housing crisis

Housing experts & health professionals pledge to improve standard of homes with the long-term aim to increase quality of life for people in Suffolk.

The discussion document – 'A Housing and Health Charter for Suffolk', sets a challenge for housing, health and care professionals to work together to integrate health and housing disciplines. Taking a concerted effort in the short term, the aim is to prevent ill health in the years to come, focusing on every aspect of the housing mix, from new build homes to existing stock. The Charter makes links between the quality of housing and people's health, citing the 77 per cent of people aged 65 or above who own their own homes, which are often not equipped to meet their future needs.

Between 2012 and 2032 those aged 65 years and over in Suffolk are projected to increase from just over a fifth of the population to over 29 per cent – a rise of 85,000 people.

By thinking ahead, and building homes that are age friendly and fit for purpose, older people could delay the need for more intensive care and support at home, and costly housing adaptations, for an additional year. Councillor Joanna Spicer, Suffolk's Health and Wellbeing Board chair, said

“Like the majority of the UK, we're caught in a difficult situation where lack of new housing, coupled with a current stock which is often unfit for purpose, creates a problem for the future. This affects young families who need starter homes to suit their needs, to the most vulnerable in our communities who need greater support as they grow older. There is no easy solution, and no one organisation can solve the problem, which is why we have created this new Charter, pledging our joint support to tackle the issue head on.”

The Charter anticipates that this new approach to integrate housing, health and social care services will deliver the following benefits:

- Reducing hospital admissions
- Speeding up and improving hospital discharge arrangements
- Supporting care at home and in the community and;
- Decreasing health inequalities.

Stephen Javes, Chief Executive of Orwell Housing Association, has been closely involved with the development of the Charter from the beginning. He said:

“Our ambition is to develop true partnership working between housing, health and care professionals working in the private, public and voluntary sectors and in doing so cut out red tape and align policies so that people in Suffolk live healthier and better lives. If we can get this right, we will safeguard people's health by providing better quality housing, and cut costs associated with more intensive interventions, and hospital admissions in the long term.”

Life expectancy in Suffolk is almost six years lower for men and over four years lower for women in the most deprived areas compared with the least deprived. The varying quality of housing is one factor that affects health in communities. The Charter has been developed largely in response to an event hosted by the Health and Wellbeing Board in February 2014, where partners from the public, private, health and housing sectors heard from Dr Dan Poulter MP and others on the pressing issue of the county's future housing needs.

Leaders continue to focus on future economic growth for Suffolk

Suffolk Leaders came together to focus on transforming the economy of the county in partnership with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. Leaders from across Suffolk came together to work collaboratively and focus on transforming the economy of the county in partnership with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership. Held at Adastral Park, the meeting brought together public sector leaders including members from NHS England, HMP Prison Service, Suffolk Police, University Campus Suffolk, district and borough councils and the County Council. The leaders are turning their focus on preparing for the next round of Growth Deal negotiations that New Anglia will be having with government – to make sure that Suffolk (and Norfolk) do well in winning vital funds for jobs and business growth and infrastructure. All Local Enterprise Partnerships were asked to produce Strategic Economic Plans (SEPs) for their area on the basis of which the Government has agreed Growth Deals with them and allocated monies from the new Local Growth Fund.

Earlier this month, the Government announced the Growth Deal for New Anglia. The Deal will see a total of over £300m investment in the area to 2021. This is made up of £60m of new Government funding and over £20m provisional allocation for future projects, as well as confirmation of a previous award of £91.49m for transport schemes. Additional investment from the private and public sector and a further £20 million low-cost borrowing facility.

The New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Deal aims to make Suffolk and Norfolk a centre for global business excellence through focused investment in the area's infrastructure and ensuring businesses have the supply of skilled workers and support to grow.

Councillor Mark Bee, Leader of Suffolk County Council said:

“The leaders across New Anglia continue to demonstrate strong partnership arrangements with a view to deliver collective decisions. We have articulated a clear vision for growth in the area with our partners and through the Growth Deal have the resources to start delivering on the ground”
“But we are not resting on our laurels. Today is important as we need to start considering the next round of schemes that will form the core of our ask in future negotiations. Our collaborative approach ensured a good outcome from the first Growth Deal and we will use this model to agree future priorities.”

Suffolk and New Anglia wide schemes agreed as part of the Growth Deal include:

Investment and Growth:

- **Bury St. Edmunds Eastern Relief Road** - Construction of a relief road to enable housing and employment land in Bury St. Edmunds.
- **Beccles Southern Relief Road** - Construction of a new relief road to provide faster access to Beccles Business Park and the Enterprise Zone at Ellough Airfield.
- **Growing Places Fund** - Extension of the existing fund to kick-start investment in homes and business infrastructure.
- **Growing Business Fund** - Extension of the existing scheme to help SMEs grow and create new employment by providing grants towards the cost of investment.
- **Suffolk Better Broadband Programmes** - Programme to support the extension of broadband coverage, with the aim of reaching 95% by 2017.
- **Haverhill Innovation Centre** - Creation of an innovation centre focussing on local strengths in life sciences and advanced manufacturing. This is a joint project with the Greater Cambridge, Greater Peterborough LEP.

Transport:

- **Lowestoft River Crossing Options** – Assessment of the options for a third river crossing in Lowestoft.
- **Ipswich Radial Corridor** – Package of sustainable transport measures to improve traffic flows into Ipswich.
- **Bury St. Edmunds Sustainable Transport** – Package of sustainable transport measures to make walking, cycling and travelling by public transport easier for short journeys.

Another Suffolk business fined over £15,000 for selling alcohol to children

An ongoing campaign between Suffolk Trading Standards and Suffolk Police leads to another successful prosecution.

An ongoing campaign between Suffolk Trading Standards and Suffolk Police has led to the successful prosecution of Metro Express (Haverhill) Ltd for persistently selling alcohol to under 18's. This comes as two other businesses were fined nearly £25,000 for the same offence earlier this month. Yesterday, Ipswich Magistrates found Metro Express (Haverhill) Ltd guilty of persistently selling alcohol from 'Your Store', Apple Acre Road in Haverhill, in spite of them entering a not guilty plea. Following the trial the company was fined £9000 plus £120 victim charges and costs were awarded for £7721.18. They are to pay a total of £16,841.18.

Previously cautioned and spot fined in 2013, another incident took place at the premises in May this year, where company director, Mr Jeyaruba, sold four cans of lager to a 16 year old without asking to see any proof of age. Mr Jeyaruban was also found guilty of selling alcohol to someone under the age of 18. He was fined £2000, ordered to pay costs of £1000 and a victim surcharge of £120.

Councillor Colin Spence, cabinet member for public protection said:

“This case demonstrates that through on the spot fines, license reviews and prosecution any premises which continues to sell alcohol to under 18's will face appropriate and robust action.

“There are simple steps a business can follow to prevent prosecution such as ensuring all staff are trained in the sale of age restricted products. It is also important to keep a written record of the training you have provided, ensuring the records are signed and dated. Perhaps also consider implementing a challenge 21 or 25 policy to make it easier for staff to identify underage purchases.”

As the school holidays approach Trading Standards & Suffolk Police are urging licensees to be particularly vigilant of any underage person attempting to buy alcohol.