

# Parish Report May 2014

## Councillor

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## Suffolk Walking Festival

The Suffolk Walking Festival starts 10<sup>th</sup> May with over 79 walks within the County of Suffolk. What a great and healthy way to discover Suffolk! Listed below are some tours within or close to Melford Division. Just a Few booklet The Suffolk Walking Festival 2014 are available from libraries and Suffolk County Council.

**St Nicholas Hospice Care Bury to Clare Fundraiser:** Duration 8hrs, distance 18miles. Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2014, 9am. Start ref. Nowton Park, end ref. Clare Castle Country Park. £15

**Awesome trees:** Nowton Park Visitor Centre, Bury St Edmunds. Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2014, 2.30pm. Duration 2hrs, distance 3 miles. Adults £4, children 15 and under £2

**Celebrating 20years of the Stour Valley Path:** Long Melford to Bures. Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2014. 10am. Start Sudbury bus station. Duration 5.5hrs, distance 11.5miles. Adults £5, children 15 and under £2 (plus train fares)

**Walking with Dragons:** Stour Valley. Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2014, Duration 6hrs, distance 12.5miles. Start/end Bures community centre. Free

**Long Melford to Clare:** Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2014. Duration 4.5hrs, distance 8-9miles. Start/end Clare war memorial. Adults £5, children 15 and under £2.50 (plus bus fares)

**What did the Railways ever do for Lavenham:** Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2014. Duration 2.5hrs, distance 3.5miles. Start Cock car park Lavenham, end Tickle Pink tea rooms, Lavenham. Adults £10, children 5-14 £5 (including cream tea)

## Council launches Empowering Parents feature to encourage parents to get behind their children's education

Suffolk County Council is today launching a new initiative to encourage parents to get behind their children's education. Forming part of the Raising the Bar initiative to ensure that every child in Suffolk has access to a good education, the Empowering Parents supplement will be published in this newspaper every month for the next 11 months.

Research from the National Child Development Study has shown that parental involvement has a positive effect on children's achievement even when the influence of background factors such as social class and family size are taken into account. The same study has found that parental involvement has a bigger effect than school quality on pupils' attainment at Key Stage 2.

The features in the Empowering Parents supplement will provide parents with some of the tools they need to support their children, including advice on homework, e-safety, staying healthy and help for young people with additional needs. The first edition includes information on schemes such as BookStart packs and free school meals for early years pupils as well as advice for parents whose children are

approaching their GCSE or A Level exams. The second edition of Empowering Parents will be published on May 28.

Councillor Lisa Chambers, cabinet member for education, skills and young people, said: "Parents are central to the success of Raising the Bar but with so much going on it is sometimes difficult to keep up to date with all the information and advice that is out there. It is therefore important parents are given the information, support and help they need to do the most for their child. I know that parents all across the county will feel the same responsibility and commitment as I do, to doing all that is possible to make sure that our children can enjoy successes throughout their lives. I want to ensure Empowering Parents is as helpful as possible for parents and would encourage feedback to ensure this is the case."

### **Suffolk Families Information Service**

Family life can be hectic, so knowing where to go to find information when you need it can make life much easier. The Suffolk Families Information Service (FIS) provides advice and guidance about early learning and a range of other family services online, over the phone and face-to-face.

FIS helps parents access information about free universal services available to children up to five including BookStart Packs, Children's Centre activities and funded early learning for two, three and four year olds. They also assist parents in finding the right childcare; including guidance on out of school care, parent and toddler groups, applying for schools and accessing parenting classes.

Find out more by calling FIS on 0845 60 800 33 Monday to Friday 9am-5pm or texting your name and number to 07624 801060 and they will call you back. Alternatively you can explore the Family Service Directory by visiting [www.suffolk.gov.uk/parents](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/parents)

### **How many violent students have been excluded from County schools? Figures released days after fatal stabbing of Ann Maguire at Corpus Christi Catholic School in Leeds**

Nearly 900 pupils were excluded from schools in Suffolk over a four year period for assaulting an adult on Campus. An additional 2,922 were excluded for assaulting a fellow pupil between 2008-09 and 2011-12, according to figures released by the Department for Education. The figures come days after a teacher was stabbed to death in a Leeds school, renewing the debate about school safety.

Ann Maguire, a 61-year-old teacher of Spanish and religious education at Corpus Christi Catholic School, was repeatedly stabbed in a full classroom by a schoolboy on Monday. Altogether 863 pupils received either fixed term or permanent exclusions as a result of a physical assault on an adult in Suffolk during the time referred to by the figures.

Yesterday the secretary of Suffolk NUT, Graham White, said in his experience the number of violent incidents in schools in the county was getting "slightly worse, but not substantially worse."

In 2010, ministers handed new powers to head teachers to search pupils for weapons, drugs or stolen goods in a government drive to improve school discipline and crack down on violence. However Mr White shied away from that approach. "I think there is enough overall being done to protect teachers but clearly we need to learn from these instances," he said. "Staff need to be protected and so do pupils. "I certainly wouldn't want to go down the route of searching every pupil going into schools; I think that's a bit over the top." Mr White added that some schools felt pressured not to exclude pupils in case it affected their Ofsted rating. "Schools are certainly being pressured to retain pupils, because if you have high levels of exclusions it generally counts against you in Ofsted reports. It tends to be primary schools with pupils with particular needs which are impacting on other pupils and the authority is pressuring them to keep a pupil when the staff think it's not right for them to be there."

A spokeswoman for the Association of Teachers and Lecturers warned that some pupils saw their parents "ranting and threatening" teachers and copied them. She said: "Teachers' perception is that the behaviour of pupils is getting worse. But it reflects what is going on in society as a whole. There is a very different atmosphere. Some of that is good, children are far more engaged and confident than they used

to be. But it does mean that there are parents who go in and rant and threaten the teachers. And if children see their parents and carers do that, they can replicate it. Where that happens it is deeply, deeply worrying.”

Suffolk County Council said: “Head teachers, and their respective governing bodies, are responsible for discipline in their schools. They develop their own behaviour policies and ultimately, decide whether or not a pupil is excluded.”

### **Fears for future of Road Improvement schemes as £65,000 is spent on a single speed bump**

Almost £100,000 earmarked for traffic improvements in Sudbury has been frittered away it was claimed last night, including £65,000 on a single speed bump. A total of £460,000 has been allocated by the county council for road schemes in the town but there are fears from local people that they are not seeing any tangible results. At a recent Sudbury Steering Group meeting, county highways officers presented the results of a public consultation carried out earlier this year to ascertain how the money could best be spent. In a report to the group, it emerged that £24,000 has been set aside for feasibility studies, the consultation and related works, and £8,000 for managing the project, while £65,000 has already been paid out for traffic calming measures in King Street. The ‘raised platform’ road hump was supposed to make it safer for people to cross the road at a busy intersection on the town centre’s one-way system. But it has been widely criticised for being “confusing” to pedestrians and motorists.

Last night, the county council defended how the money is being used, while members of the steering group commended highways chiefs for consulting the town. But businessman David Holland, whose shop Curtain Craft is next to the road hump, believes the money has been “frittered” with no tangible results. He said: “From the head of highways’ report at the meeting, it seems that the much talked about £460,000 has diminished with around 20% of it having already been frittered and we have nothing to show for it except a 20 tonne heap of tarmac. I find it amazing that even with the money spent on the consultation around Sudbury, no proposal has come forward that would stand close scrutiny. Nothing of consequence has happened but an awful lot of public money has been spent.”

County and district councillor John Sayers, who also attended the meeting, said the hump was part of an earlier plan to develop a shared space in the town centre, which was later abandoned. But he added: “I haven’t met anyone yet who has said that the hump is good value for money. It is a very expensive road hump and I don’t think it serves any useful purpose whatsoever.”

Simon Barrett, vice chairman of the steering group, said he did not think the town had gained much from the traffic humps. But he defended the money spent on consulting the public. He added: “Consultation is quite important because we need to make sure that what we do is right. If you have to spend the money to get it right, then so be it. “At least the county is actually listening to us and not just saying ‘this is what you are having’. It’s a little frustrating but they are taking note.”

Graham Newman, Suffolk County Council’s cabinet member for roads and transport, said the purpose of the consultation was to identify highway issues in Sudbury. He added: “From that, we are working with the steering group so that local representatives can help to prioritise projects to be funded through the local transport plan (LTP). “The purpose of taking proposals to the steering group is to share with partners the ideas being considered and seek their input. This work is ongoing and final proposals will only be formed once public consultation has been carried out.”

The remainder of the £460,000 has to be committed to a project by the end of this financial year.

### **Sudbury Town drops 20mph zone idea**

A push to get 20mph speed limits implemented throughout Sudbury has been dropped because new criteria introduced by the county council would make it impossible for most of the town’s roads to qualify. In 2012, Suffolk’s highways boss put a freeze on implementing new speed restriction zones in the county, but the authority recently adopted a new policy on lower speed limits. This was after its roads and transport policy development panel conducted a widescale investigation of 20mph zones and drew up a list of criteria. Priority is given to roads with a history of accidents, where there are high levels of pedestrian activity, and where conservation areas needed protection. But unless there are exceptional

circumstances, 20mph zones will not be considered on A and B class roads, those with existing average speeds above 30mph and where there is no significant local support for such a scheme.

At a Sudbury highways committee meeting this week, members decided that the only place that would qualify under the new criteria was near schools, most of which already have 20mph limits in place. Committee chairman Tony Platt, who was behind the 20mph push, said: "20 zones will only be considered where two out of the three criteria have been met but not on an A or B road, which rules out most of ours. I still believe that if areas are signed as 20 it will make motorists think." But town councillor Simon Barrett is against the introduction of a "blanket" 20mph scheme across the whole town. He said: "If you introduce a blanket 20mph limit, it has no worthwhile meaning. The boy racers who ignore the 30mph signs will have even less desire to respect 20mph limits. I think the perception is that Sudbury has more of a problem with speeding than it actually has. The data shows we have actually had very few serious accidents in the town since 2005." The committee decided to put forward one area around Tudor, Clarence, York and Priory roads – where there are upper and primary schools – as a proposed trial area. Committee member Nigel Bennett said: "The main purpose of 20mph is to safeguard children so having them near schools is the obvious place. Although we already have 20 zones around schools, extending them would give people more time to slow down."

Meanwhile in Bury St Edmunds plans are forging ahead for a 20mph limit in the Southgate Street corridor. A spokesman for Suffolk County Council said informal consultation had been carried out with the local community which had gained a "very positive response," and the authority was progressing with formal consultation with statutory consultees, including the police. If this statutory consultation is successful the county council will make an order. A spokesman for Suffolk County Council, said: "The Policy Development Panel for roads and transport have the remit to look at requests and recommendations for any proposed 20mph limits. These proposals will then be publicly consulted on, the responses will be taken into account before a final decision is made as to whether to introduce a speed limit to the area in question."

#### **Lavenham: Old red phone box becomes Wi-fi hot spot**

Although it is famed for being one of England's finest medieval villages, the community of Lavenham is embracing modern technology to move the popular tourist destination firmly into the 21st Century.

The parish council has adopted one of the village's familiar red phone boxes and converted it into a WiFi hot spot to coincide with the introduction of a mobile phone app for visitors. Both innovations have been pioneered by the parish council as part of a campaign to improve the welcome that Lavenham gives to visitors. Council chairman Roy Whitworth said: "We have two of the old BT red phone boxes and although they are not well used, we wanted to keep them. Since BT introduced the scheme where local communities could adopt a phone box for £1, a few in the area have already been given novel new uses such as a book exchange in nearby Preston St Mary, so we thought ours would make an ideal WiFi hub."

Suffolk County Council provided a small grant to support the scheme. The WiFi signal can be picked up from around 20 metres either side of the phone box. Meanwhile the app, which is free to download, includes an interactive map with pictures, text and an audio guide to 16 of Lavenham's more interesting properties. It points out little known facts about the village including that Jane Taylor, the writer of children's classic 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' lived in Lavenham and that the first Governors of Connecticut and Massachusetts both lived in what was the Old Grammar School – which was later attended by the painter John Constable.

All these facts and more are explained in detail in the app, which also provides direct links to Lavenham's Tourist Information Centre and the [lovelavenham.co.uk](http://lovelavenham.co.uk) web site. The latter gives a complete up-to-date guide of village events and amenities. Mr Whitworth added: "We introduced an audio tour of the village many years ago but the number of handsets is limited and they are rather cumbersome to use. The new app enables visitors to explore at their own pace and makes the whole thing much more interesting."