

# Reports from County and District Councillors

## County Councillor's report for 2015/16

### Introduction

Many of you will be aware that because of personal issues and major health problems Peter Bellfield has been unable to attend and carry out his duties this year. I am sure he would want me to begin by expressing his apologies for his absence.

I have endeavoured to provide support to you as one of the parishes that I have been covering on his behalf in addition to my own County Council Division of Kesgrave and Rushmere St Andrew. During the year I was very pleased to be able to help various people and organisations with financial assistance. I have been pleased to provide the following grants from the Locality Budget for the Carlford Division

Westerfield Parish Council	Speedwatch Camera	£1,014.00
Playford Parish Council	Speedwatch Camera	£700.00
Swilland & Winesham Parish Council	Improvements to Winesham Play Area	£3,000.00

### Council Tax

Suffolk County Council's share of council tax is to be frozen for a sixth year in a row. This means that Suffolk residents will not pay any more than they did in 2010/11.

The council has made savings in excess of £170 million since the Government's deficit reduction programme began in 2011/2012 and faces the need to make further savings of over £80 million during the next two years. The budget passed for 2016/17 saw a 0% increase in base Council Tax. The Administration decided to implement the 2% National Adult Social Care Levy to support the implementation of the National Living Wage.

### Children's Services rated 'Good' by Ofsted

Suffolk County Council's Children's Services has been rated Good by Ofsted following the publication of its inspection report on 15 February 2016. The report praises the work of the council in protecting and looking after children and young people, with some areas of outstanding practice highlighted in the report. The inspection was carried out between 23 November and 17 December 2015.

Suffolk now sits in the top 22% of local authorities in the country. 78 councils have been inspected so far under Ofsted's new framework.

### Education attainment in Suffolk

There has been a 4% rise in the number of students getting five or more A\*- C grades, including English and Maths. It means that 56% of Suffolk's year 11s got the expected level of attainment. The validated figure for 2014 was 52%. Suffolk's results have increased by 2.6% from last year's provisional results and see Suffolk rise 17 places in the overall league table, going from 124<sup>th</sup> to 107<sup>th</sup>

77% of 11-year-olds achieved level 4 or higher in their SAT tests in the three subjects in 2015 – up from 73% in 2014.

This is the third consecutive year the gap between Suffolk and the national figure has closed. Suffolk was 7% points behind the national average in 2012 - the results show Suffolk as the most

improved local authority in the entire Eastern region, with a higher percentage rise than the other 10 local authorities in the area.

### **Third crossing at Lake Lothing in Lowestoft and the Wet Dock crossing in Ipswich**

As part of the Chancellor's budget announcements, Suffolk featured strongly with the green light being given for both Lowestoft's third crossing over Lake Lothing and the new Wet Dock crossing in Ipswich.

With this pledge of £70 million the County Council finally has the funding firmly in place to press ahead with the detailed planning required in order to bring about a third crossing over Lake Lothing. This is a massive piece of work and is estimated to cost in the region of £80-100 million, but in addition to the £70 million pledged by central Government, SCC will work to source the remaining money from local funding sources.

In addition to the third crossing in Lowestoft, the go-ahead has also been given for a new wet dock crossing in Ipswich, which will span the waterfront area of the town to connect communities with a new road infrastructure that will also serve a business and innovation centre based on an island in the dock.

### **Broadband rollout on target**

Work on the Broadband rollout continues and the first phase of rollout will be shared onto a map on the SCC website, and the second phase will be added within the next couple of months. To date, 35 cabinets have been enabled and reached over 3,000 premises under the Superfast Extension Programme, towards a target of over 1,000 cabinets, and over 50,000 premises by the end of 2019.

For more information and updates please visit [www.betterbroadbandsuffolk.com](http://www.betterbroadbandsuffolk.com)

Please feel free to telephone me on 07714 598155 or e-mail on [robert.whiting@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:robert.whiting@suffolk.gov.uk) for any assistance you may require with the County Council.

## **District Councillor's report for 2015/16**

### **Introduction**

I was delighted to be elected in May 2015 to the newly created Fynn Valley seat, having been a District Councillor for Rushmere St Andrew since May 1999. Many of you will be familiar with how I rejoice in the fact that this is such a lovely Ward taking in Playford, Westerfield, Tuddenham St Martin, Swilland, Witnesham and the village part of Rushmere St Andrew.

In unexpectedly having to cover the County Council responsibilities for these parishes, I have out of necessity spread myself more thinly than I would have liked with regard to District Council matters. However, during the year I was very pleased to be able to help various people and organisations with financial assistance. I have been pleased to provide the following grants from the Locality Budget for the Fynn Valley Ward.

Westerfield Village Hall Trust	Replacement of side cheeks to Dormer windows at the hall	£1500.00
Tuddenham St Martin Village Hall Committee	Replacement noticeboard and improved signage for the village hall	£1200.00
Witnesham Village Hall	Replacement of the electric heating system at the hall	£1000.00
Playford Parish Council	Installation of a remotely controllable system for the heating	£1000.00
Swilland and Witnesham grouped Parish Council	Replacement ropes, scramble net and climbing panel	£800.00

## **Council Tax**

The SCDC Council Tax bill has been increased by 1.99%. This increase will be less the £3 (or about 25p a month) for a Band D property.

## **East Suffolk**

Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Cabinets have agreed that officers should develop a business case to explore the benefits of Suffolk Coastal and Waveney formally merging. However, before any merger takes place it would have to be agreed by both Full Councils, as well as there being public consultation and the Boundary Commission being involved. This would not be implemented before the 2019 elections.

## **East Suffolk House**

The work to build Suffolk Coastal's new headquarters, opposite Melton Railway Station, is progressing well, with the intention of moving into it during the autumn. The move will reduce running costs, saving £8million of tax payers' money over 20 years.

## **Brown bins**

Brown bins will continue to be collected for free in Suffolk Coastal. In 2013/14 Suffolk Coastal were in the top 10% of local authorities in the country (coming 19<sup>th</sup> out of 352 authorities) with a recycling rate of 57.44%.

## **Felixstowe**

The Seafront Gardens were officially completed in December last year. Work to Martello Tower P has also been finished at Martello Park. Work to create an outdoor events area at the boating lake has now started and is due to be completed during the summer.

## **New website**

The website is currently being updated. The [www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk) website will incorporate both Suffolk Coastal and Waveney websites onto one platform and aims to be clearer and more accessible through smartphone devices and tablets.

## **Part Night Street and Footway Lighting**

Work to install an 'intelligent lighting system' to all Suffolk Coastal street and footpath lights has now been completed. This will enable part night lighting (switching off the majority of lighting between midnight and 5.30 am), in line with Suffolk County Council and other District and Boroughs in the county.

Further detailed information will be available ahead of implementation during the summer months, as well as a press release and information on the website.

Please feel free to telephone me on 07714 598155 or e-mail at [robert.whiting@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk](mailto:robert.whiting@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk) for any assistance you may require with the District Council.