

Parish Report - November 2019

Councillor

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Due to the general election all public meetings have been postponed.

Cabinet reshuffle at Suffolk County Council

On 15 October, there was a major reshuffle of the Suffolk County Council Cabinet. The key changes are:

- Cllr Gordon Jones is the new Cabinet Member for Finance
- Cllr Mary Evans remains as deputy leader and is the new Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills
- Cllr Andrew Reid is the new Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Rural Affairs
- Responsibility for the council's policy on Sizewell C moves to Cllr Richard Rout (Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection)
- Responsibility for the council's property portfolio and assets moves to Cllr Nick Gowrley (Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Housing and Enterprise)

35% cut to Health Visitors

Earlier this year, there were reports that Suffolk County Council planned to cut 25% of Health Visitors. We have now learned that the council has in fact reduced Health Visitors by 35%, without informing either the public or councillors. The staffing cuts were made as part of an internal restructure of the 0-19 Healthy Child Service in order to save £1m.

In England, it is mandatory for families to receive five visits to check on the health of children/parents during pregnancy early childhood, and the guidance states that these checks should be undertaken by health visitors. However, as a result of these staffing reductions, in Suffolk only three of these visits will be undertaken by specially trained health visitors, with staff nurses expected to take on the other two checks.

My group proposed a motion at Council on the 17 October, asking the administration to reconsider these cuts, which unfortunately was voted down.

Boundary review – extension of consultation

The Boundary Commission has extended the deadline for their consultation on new division boundaries for Suffolk County Council until 17th January 2020.

<https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/node/18495>

Review of school transport policy confirmed

A motion on this which I amended would have agreed to remove the problem of split villages and siblings going to different schools was voted down.

Cllr Mary Evans, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, has apologised to families affected by the new school transport policy and has confirmed that there will be a review of the policy. However, it is likely that this review will only focus on the implementation of the new policy, rather than the inherent problems with the policy itself. This will be run by Mark Hardingham; head of the fire service; whilst I have great respect for Mark, I believe it should be someone totally independent of the council.

Since the introduction of the new policy, there has been a large increase in the number of transport appeals: 141 appeals were submitted from 1 July – 18 October, compared to an average of just 21 for the same time period in previous years. Furthermore, over 70% of these appeals have been decided in favour of parents who had initially been refused transport by the council.

NEW RECYLING CENTRE IN BURY ST EDMUNDS

The "depot" at Rougham Hill will close end of October and be replaced by a new one on Fornham road. All containers will be on ground level and later this year there will be a charity RE-USE SHOP where materials etc can be taken for re-use.

MEETING WITH JO CHURCHILL; I am pleased I was able to be there. There appeared to be some acceptance of the issues and has been a response form Kismel. At a cabinet meeting last month where the adult safeguarding report was presented, I asked that there be clarification of just what the responsibility of the CQC in these circumstances. Which I have sent to the clerk.