

Thorndon Parish Council 6.9.2012
County Councillor Report

Broadband

A recent House of Lords report suggests that our country would be better off, if we bring about a universal service to all rather than rush to deliver superfast speeds to some while leaving others to languish.

Suffolk County Council has amassed £41,000,000 to deliver a state of the art fibre optic network for our county. Before this procurement can go ahead we have to ask if any of the existing private companies are about to invest in areas that we may be about to spend public money in. Therefore we have to ask BT among others what plans they have to invest in the network and we have to not intervene with our investment in these areas.

Having seen the proposed Better Broadband intervention maps and also BT's planned coverage under their exchange upgrade programme we am extremely concerned that some of the communities most in need of intervention may not benefit. Areas such as Haughley Green and parts of Old Newton and Wetheringsett are currently "not spots" but are within BT's proposed exchange upgrade area and, due to the state aid rules, are therefore outside of the Better Broadband intervention area. Due, however, to the distance from the cabinets, according to BT's own data, they are unlikely to receive coverage of any more than 2 Mgb with some areas still at less than 0.5. As they are outside the intervention area they will equally miss out on obtaining broadband at an NGA level of 24 Mgb and thus will be condemned it seems to suffer forever from a lack of effective broadband.

We have pointed this anomaly out to those in charge at County Hall, and await reassurances that this will be addressed ahead of letting any future contract.

Review of County Farms

The County Council is currently looking into the future of County Farms, currently the county council owns and rents out 12,800 acres of farmland 170 acres of ancient woodland, 85 farms with buildings and houses etc, with a total of 97 tenant farmers making use of this resource. I have been selected to be a member of this group that will the future of this facility and will look at the issues surrounding the principles of tenancies etc and even look at whether we need these assets at all. One member of the panel assembled to look into this is David Lawrence who is the principal of Otley and Easton College. I would welcome any of your views during this review.

. Joint Member Steering Group

I also have a place on the committee looking into Developing a Joint Business Case for Collaborative Working between Cambridgeshire and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Services. This is a very emotive and sensitive area, but we need to look into all areas in these days of all service areas saving money, we need to look at this as our Suffolk fire service has one the least costs per head of population, than any other in the country. The potential for savings are much harder to find.

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