

Thorndon Parish Council 2.1.2014

County Councillor Report

Public Transport Panel

I am delighted to have a place on a panel looking into public transport in Suffolk, we are particularly looking at how we target a diminishing budget to help areas of need to gain sustainable bus services. The first meeting looked at how accessible our timetables are, and areas in which we could improve, as well as using data from passengers not able to access demand responsive services.

Stoke Ash Primary School

Stoke Ash Primary School has had its closure orders published, The official position is that the Head teacher has resigned and will be leaving shortly, following the recent Ofsted inspection at the School, numbers of pupils has plummeted.

The County Council had tried to find an academy partner to secure the future; this has not been forthcoming, as no other schools wished to partner with Stoke Ash it is now highly likely it will close. This brings into sharp focus the finding of our recent RSA report into education in Suffolk that suggested that schools with less than 100 pupils need to federate with a partner or partners, in order to secure their future.

Budget Setting

Suffolk County Council has a statutory responsibility to set a balanced budget. The funding for the budget comes from a number of sources including council tax, government grants as well as specific grants, fees and charges

Over the past few years central governments focus on reducing the national deficit has meant a reduction in funding for local government. This means that savings have had to be found from across all areas of the County Council. Budget setting is conducted through a process of consultation and open meetings. Every year, in the autumn the cabinet Members, consider budgets for their particular area of responsibility and recommends appropriate capital and revenue budgets to Full Council. The Full Council then meets to approve the budget in February.

In the last four years we have made a lot of savings. However we are now facing an even bigger budget gap. We have to save another £156 million in the next four years and, while we have made every effort to get more from every pound we spend, we will be faced with making increasingly tough decisions

Suffolk County Council is committed to giving everyone the chance to have their say on our budget proposals, The Council has commissioned Ipsos Mori to undertake a residents survey on our behalf. This will give residents the chance to tell us about the services they feel are a priority and where they feel we should be looking at making savings. The Council has used the feedback received to date to develop its initial budget proposals.

Over the next 2 months we will be using the opportunity of meetings and events which are being held across the county to share our budget proposals and seek feedback from local people and organisations. These online feedback forms are on the County Council website, or attend the nearest SALC area meeting.

Kier Contract to be Scrutinised

The recent move to outsource all highways operations to Kier is going to be scrutinised by a panel of councillors to make sure the level of service has not been affected by this move. If you have any experience of any change in the level of service please let me know.

I hope you all have a very Happy New Year

.Andrew Stringer andrew.stringer@suffolk.gov.uk 01449 780339 07774 199061