

**Thorndon Parish Council 4.9.2014**  
County Councillor Report

**Consultation Regarding Gypsy Transit Sites Postponed**

The county Council has stalled a consultation to bring about a number of “transit” sites to Suffolk, due to insufficient local information. Many of the proposed sites are deemed not safe and many sites that could have proved better have been overlooked, so the County Council has paused the timetable to take on board this local information. It is noticeable that the County Council used to have “locality meetings” to keep District and County Councils better informed of actions and issues such as Gypsy and Traveller provision, the County Council share funding for our team with Norfolk, but the needs surveys and subsequent planning permissions etc is dealt with by the District Council.

Our locality meetings used to help join all this up, it is important to deliver these sites as the situation at the moment leaves Suffolk with few options if any unauthorised encampments spring up.

**White lines around the Green in Haughley**

I saw some highways Contractors looking lost in Haughley village at 7.30pm on a Thursday night in late July; I stopped and helped them locate some worn out white lines. After locating the works I asked the contractors why they were so late in the day, they informed me that they had driven from Milton Keynes just to do this small amount of whitelining. I am staggered that this outsourced contract can afford to send 3 men in a lorry hundreds of miles just to carry out 30 yards/ metres of painting.

**Updates from Bournemouth Local Government Association conference  
8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> July 2014 – (based on sessions I attended)**

**Summary**

Agenda for conference: <http://sites.idea.gov.uk/annual-conference-2014/agenda/>

**Tuesday:**

- Group meetings
- AGM + New chairman Cllr David Sparks OBE – has some way to go to follow Sir Merrick Cockell
- Ben Page from Ipsos MORI was brilliant, full of interesting facts and stats about political leadership – just hoping we can get hold of his presentation.
- Key topics at conference:
  - failure to build enough homes – affordable, rent, buy – something like 1.7m on housing waiting lists – only built 110,000 last year
  - lack of skills in strategic job/sector areas – but also many people underemployed as well as unemployed
  - need for councils and other partners to work collaboratively, shared services; need to join up with health providers
  - centralised country, urban-focused – devolution wanted from centre to Combined Authorities, localities then to neighbourhoods

## Wednesday:

- Session on devolution in context of Scottish referendum – what are the implications for England? Graham Allen (good chap) heads up a committee on constitutional reform; due to publish a written constitution – a new magna carta, 800 years after the first one!
  - Speaker from Visit England talked about Destination Management Organisation and how tourism can be a significant part of the economy – wants to develop a narrative for governing England and develop the distinctiveness of locations using destination partners
  - City-region identity of Wirral/Liverpool – began talking about “combined authorities” – referred to frequently during conference – because issues cut across administrative boundaries; these currently exist in Liverpool, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Sheffield and the North East. Basics at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combined\\_authority](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combined_authority)
  - Cllr Pollard from Cornwall Council – very clear about identity and distinctiveness of Cornwall, decried UK as a centralised country; people there pleased to be recognised by EU as a protected minority
- The LEPs – meant to co-ordinate efforts of local authorities, balance the factors of production, vacuum at local level because of centralisation! LEPs about the future not today, growing the size of the cake; concerns about the democratic deficit. 100 years ago UK most wealthy country in the world, now operating at capacity in fuel, air, rail and roads, blighted youth unemployed, over-supply of HE graduates, £3T debt still rising – pushing the hardest tasks onto the next generation
  - Buckinghamshire refused a LEP so did their own thing – set up Buck’s Business first; give up a bit of sovereignty to pool resources and benefits; message – essential to keep back-benchers informed
  - Scathing reference to Pickles over his “promise” to Kent/Medway – ended up with huge LEP; need principles of subsidiarity and a federated structure
  - Every council has a geography, an economy, a history, a sense of place
  - Do the public care about who makes the decisions? As long as they are the right decisions??
  - LEPs now have power over emerging local plans (!?) - claim that we have to put aside traditional local rivalries
- Session on using workforce to transform the council – key is cultural change – rewarding staff for conspicuous effort and achievement; ask them what they like/not – what they want to keep/not; culture is not one big thing – it’s about every individual; what we do when no-one’s looking; tap into emotional connections; empowerment comes through listening to people; what creates trust? “trust arrives on foot and leaves on horseback”
- Session on NHS England – Better Care Fund: <http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/bcf-itf-sup-pck.pdf> - described as nobody’s first choice but a pragmatic way forward. NHS has to change because of money, the people being served, and the technology in use. 2/3 of patients now over 60, with on average of two or more long term conditions – costs more. People need more support – can’t just discharge them; (expensive) new drugs for a raft of illnesses and conditions + day-case surgery, a lot of these patients are also at the interface with social care. NHS blind spots include place-based

budgets. National also needs to be neighbourhood-based; 1.4m unpaid carers, invisible, taken for granted. Need to step up partnerships. Prevention and health improvement – exercise, obesity, alcohol; need to make to case for taking accident victims to specialist trauma units not the nearest hospital – 600 more people a year alive because of this; pool budgets for high need individuals

- Eric Pickles – was apparently given a rough time at a district councils' network session at lunchtime, and when he later spoke at a conference plenary he appeared to have had a few stiffeners and was absolutely appalling, both in what he said and how he said it.

### **Thursday:**

Bit of a let-down as cabinet members were all recalled to emergency meeting on security matters, so Lord Freud stood on for Iain Duncan Smith and spoke about welfare reform – he said some 40,000 “troubled families” were making progress and that welfare reform was transformative; he also mentioned “social impact bonds” US idea - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_impact\\_bond](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_impact_bond) as a potential funding source (isn't this just another form of borrowing?); Hilary Benn MP basically gave us a (very positive and optimistic) run-down of what sounded like Labour's forthcoming election pledges, which we shall no doubt see in more fulsome form in due course, but again the message of English devolution was very strong.

At Conference in general, there was obvious fury in local government about the way central government and the MPs treat and regard us. Local authorities are being treated as second class citizens yet we are the ones who actually do stuff - Parliament doesn't - everything gets delivered lower down the food chain.

The key document launched during the week was: "Investing in our Nations' Future - the first 100 days". Compulsory reading and thankfully not too long. Free download from: [http://www.local.gov.uk/publications/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/6342257/PUBLICATION](http://www.local.gov.uk/publications/-/journal_content/56/10180/6342257/PUBLICATION)

Really big and important issues including: skills (lack of/not the right ones; numbers of hairdressers being trained but lack of jobs for them, etc; poor careers advice and lack of guidance - how this is organised needs examining; big gap in engineering skills; unemployment and underemployment – both too few hours and low level work, e.g. for graduates; benefits of growth not being felt everywhere; huge need to up-skill young people and those already in work - lot of vacancies for nurses, programmers, software people - surprise - immigrants are being recruited to fill the gaps!! Which leads us to the next problem ... There's going to be a drive to get every young person up to A-level equivalent - which leads to the next surprise – i.e. that we don't have enough YPs with this level of skills. Employers, including SMEs have to be leaned on to provide and support training. The Suffolk Growth Hub and Greater Ipswich City Deal (GICD) have some schemes to help drive this. Mid Suffolk is part of the (second phase.)

Building more homes - for rent/purchase and "affordables" - big agenda. Lot of applications already approved but developers are not building - got to get them moving. Got to unclog the planning system.

Issues which will matter locally include renewables. Also need to get into wind turbines debate and factors of appropriate location.

Money has just been awarded this week to the New Anglia Growth Deal

"Feelings" picked up at LGA conference in general were: resentment, cynicism, anxiety, anger, lack of trust - and now and then a glimmer of hope.

DCLG in the form of Brandon Lewis are prepared to listen to local authority bids for money for transformation provided they can make a business case for clearly identified projects. Suffolk - MSDC seem to be viewed quite favourably because of what we have already achieved. There is a clear trend here, were Local authorities have in the main delivered on the governments cost cutting agenda, this is fuelling the feeling that Local councils could make more timely and less costly decisions than Westminster.

The upcoming Parliamentary bill calling for English devolution can be linked to using

[http://www.grahamallenmp.co.uk/news/2014/07/09/Local\\_Government\\_Independence\\_Bill](http://www.grahamallenmp.co.uk/news/2014/07/09/Local_Government_Independence_Bill)

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