

Thorndon Parish Council 7.4.2016 County Councillor Report

Devolution

Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk Leaders met with the Secretary of State, the Rt. Hon, Greg Clark, and Lord Heseltine on Monday, 15th February. One outcome of the meeting was that Cambridge, Norfolk, Peterborough and Suffolk should develop their collective 'big and ambitious asks' of Government for a devolution deal. Since then officers from the Districts, Boroughs, Counties and LEPs have met to develop a draft paper summarising an initial view of those combined 'big asks'. This has drawn upon the work which has already been undertaken by Cambridgeshire/Peterborough and Norfolk and Suffolk.

How this leaves the various promises of housing number deliveries and business growth options we will be told in due course.

According to the Chancellors Budget a "heads of terms" has been signed, this suggests we will have to accept an elected mayor for East Anglia for powers to be devolved from Westminster, although we have been informed "none of this is set in stone"

One very interesting outcome has been that the Councils involved in this deal were told they could keep all of the unified business rates as a result of this devolution agreement, what the Treasury did not tell the Councils was that he was about to announce business rate reductions in the Budget only 48 hours after the Devolution agreement was signed.

Broadband

A resolution has now been reached between DCMS and the EU. This will enable us to spend our full £30m of public funding, as well as the monies clawed back from the first contract a total of £33.9m.

This is subject to SCC running a one month public consultation with the market, which ends this Friday to further ascertain and demonstrate that no commercial plans exist to intervene in the additional areas we plan to target with the reinvestment. This consultation will run over Easter, and will conclude on 8th April. After April, we can complete the contracting process with BT and BDUK to embed the fully financed rollout plan into the contract, and commence community briefings in the early Summer. We recognise the frustration in communities regarding the delay and the need for information to be shared as quickly as possible.

One thing that this process does involve is the publication of a map on our website. The map will be intended for providers, however, the public may pick up on the map, hence it is important that you recognise, this is not the Map of the Projected Roll Out.!

I have secured a meeting with the project manager next week, to understand the implications and time frames, now that the mapping will no longer be affected by commercial confidentiality.

More bad news

Suffolk County Council and its Energy from Waste Partner – Suez, have been in discussion with Sterling Suffolk regarding the possible supply of heat to its proposed tomato growing greenhouse venture at Little Blakenham, it has become apparent that it is going to be difficult for the proposed glasshouses to be ready to receive heat before the government makes substantial changes to the Renewable Obligations Certificate (ROCs) subsidy programme. The deadline for new Combined Heat and Power (CHP) agreements passes on 31 March 2017 and thereafter a replacement subsidy scheme is to be launched which is unlikely to be as financially rewarding. The EFW plant would require some costly internal adaptations before it was able to provide heat as well as generate electricity. As a consequence of this, and following extensive efforts on all sides, in the interim it has been decided that alternative energy provision is required for the greenhouses. Sterling Suffolk have therefore begun to identify potential alternative sources of heat to make the green houses project a reality, in line with their desire to make the project as environmentally friendly as possible, hence options including biomass and/or internal CHP are being considered.

Fire Service Change Consultation Ends

The Suffolk County Council proposal to remove £1,340,000 from the Fire Service budget, has had a huge public response, many are concerned that the Suffolk force already one of the countries most efficient, will struggle to cover our rural county if the changes are implemented. SCC Cabinet will make the final decision later this month.

Locality Budget Offer

I have sent in the paperwork for monies to be offered to the Parish Council for the VAS signs. I have asked Thorndon to be given £2500.00 towards this project.

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