

## Thorndon Parish Council 2016 Annual County Councillor Report

### **Suffolk County Council's Ofsted**

The County Council this year received its long awaited Ofsted report, looking into our own education service, the letter was dated February, but it was only released last June. Extracts from the report did make sober reading.

*"The local authority has been too slow in acting on the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. Too few pupils in Suffolk attend a good or outstanding school, particularly in Lowestoft and Ipswich which have the highest levels of deprivation in the county. Elected members and local authority senior leaders are committed to their vision of raising aspiration and improving outcomes for all children and young people. The senior leaders have rightly focused their attention on inadequate schools, but have only recently established systems for identifying other schools at risk of deteriorating. As a result, poorly performing schools that have been supported and challenged have improved while others have declined. The number of pupils achieving average levels of attainment and making at least nationally expected progress by the end of their primary and secondary school education remains below average and is especially low for disadvantaged pupils. The local authority has set suitable targets for school improvement. However, as the targets set by schools themselves are not yet linked to these, it is difficult to see how they will be met."*

*The latest ofsted into our services was a vast improvement, on many fronts our internal service is now regarded as "good". There still needs to be continued vigilance to bring this up to outstanding.*

### **Suffolk Devolution?**

Many of you may remember that last year I went to a conference in Harrogate where the subject of English devolution was discussed.

A number of councils have tried to join services together, by economies of scale as well as sharing infrastructure and expertise, government is beginning to recognise this is a way of saving money and joining together services.

Suffolk County Council has long recognised this potential, and has lost no time in lobbying the new Government to consider a proposal from Suffolk for the devolution of funding and powers from Westminster to County Hall. Suffolk does argue that we know where the funding needs to be injected to bring about sustainable growth as well as broker greater sharing of resource across services, although the early steer from the government is to favour City based Mayoral administration and a deal to enshrine was struck last month between Norfolk Suffolk Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Although this deal is just a "heads of terms" and does still include an elected mayor, this deal will now have to face the local democracy hurdle.

### **New highways reporting tool**

This year saw the introduction of a new reporting tool for highways issues such as potholes flooding and missing signs, the new system has taken a while to bed in, and for everyone to get use to it. It has meant we are now at last getting through the backlog of outstanding highways work, and are able to demonstrate where each job is in the system.

### **Bacton Middle School Site**

This year has seen a complete turnaround in the disposal of redundant School Sites, last year we gave Stoke Ash Primary School to the Girl Guides, this year we have looked at the redundant Middle School in Bacton, And the County Council has decided to "dispose" of the site through an organisation called Cornerstone, this agreement will mean that Cornerstone plan any redevelopment of the site and in return provide school places where the County Council needs them, The early plans are showing anywhere between 80 and 130 houses on the site including the

former playing fields, this has obviously a very controversial move by the county and in stark contrast to the earlier policy.

### **VAS Signage**

This year we finally got the VAS signage through the SCC hurdles, the experience of Thorndon has now changed the policy throughout Suffolk where we now have a site visit first before a headlong dash into bureaucracy.

Thank you to all Parish Councillors and members of the public for their help and guidance this year

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