

Parish Report – October 2019

Councillor

Andrew Stringer (Upper Gipping)

'Robin'
Blacksmith Road
Cotton, Stowmarket
IP14 4QN

07545423842

andrew.stringer@suffolk.gov.uk

Review of Suffolk County Council Boundaries – public consultation

The Boundary Commission have now announced that they will be looking to reduce the number of councillors at Suffolk County Council from 75 to 70.

The next stage of the process is to determine where the division boundaries should be. There is a public consultation which will run until 2 December 2019, available here:

<https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/node/18495>

New process for requesting speed limit changes

There is now a new process in place for requesting speed limit changes. The local county councillor must act as a “filter”: all requests for changes need to come through them, and any individual or parish council who requests a change will be referred to the local councillor. The local councillor will need to persuade the officer group to support a request for a speed limit change. The group will then produce a report on the pros and cons, which the local councillor can comment on before the report goes to Cllr Mary Evans (Cabinet Member for Highways) for a final decision.

Sizewell C – response to Stage 4 Consultation

On 24 September, the Cabinet agreed a response to EDF's Stage 4 consultation for Sizewell C. The Cabinet maintains that they support the principle of nuclear technology, but do not currently have sufficient information to support the proposals for Sizewell C.

My group (made up of Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent councillors) at the county council has called on the Cabinet to reject EDF's proposals for Sizewell C. Our concerns include:

- EDF will be overcharging UK consumers for electricity from Sizewell for the next 35 years. Latest prices of offshore wind generated power, per KWhr, without any subsidy, are less than half what EDF is being guaranteed;
- Impact on the surrounding natural environment, including the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB;
- Impact on the tourism industry;
- Additional carbon emissions and congestion from a road-led strategy;
- Lack of planning for nuclear waste disposal;
- Unsympathetic design to the surrounding natural area;
- Additional pylons in an already crowded landscape;
- Not convinced by EDF's economic development argument.

Budget monitoring – quarter 1

At the end of Q1, the council is forecasting a net overspend by the end of the year of £1.2m on the Base Budget and £6.7m on the Dedicated Schools Grant Budget.

The base budget overspend is largely due to rising costs for adult care, an overspend on the Home-to-School transport budget, and an increase in the number of children in care with complex needs who require specialist placements. Most other departments at the council are forecasting to spend on budget.

The £6.7m overspend on the schools budget is largely due to an increase in children with complex Special Educational Needs, and the increased costs for support and transport to schools outside of Suffolk that go alongside this. Although the council has agreed to spend on building new special education placements within Suffolk, which ought to address some of this expenditure in the future, it is too late for this financial year.

Local Industrial Strategy for Suffolk

The New Anglia LEP, with input from local councils, are in the process of drafting a Local Industrial Strategy for Suffolk. It is expected that this Strategy will be presented to central government for approval in October.

In September, the Cabinet gave its approval for a draft version of the Strategy. However, my group were concerned that the strategy failed to acknowledge both the current climate emergency that we are facing and the potential impacts of Brexit on Suffolk. We have written to the LEP with our feedback, which will hopefully be reflected in the final Strategy.

Delay to children's centre consultation

Suffolk County Council has confirmed that there is "no firm start date" for the consultation regarding potential closures of children's centres. Originally, the Council had stated that this consultation would start in September and run for 6 weeks.

The Council is proposing to close 2 children's centres completely, convert a further 11 to SEND facilities or nurseries, reduce 9 to part-time hours and convert the remaining 16 into family hubs providing services for families with children aged 0-19.