



# March 2019 Thedwastre North

## **County Council announces consultation on Northern Relief Road**

On 27 February, Suffolk County Council announced the timescale to progress the Ipswich Northern Route project. The next steps are to produce the Strategic Outline Business Case, which will examine and ultimately clarify the feasibility of an Ipswich northern route.

There has been much debate and many discussions about an Ipswich northern route and these have been well documented over the years. This announcement confirms the County Council's commitment to explore these formally with a public consultation which will inform the Strategic Outline Business Case to be put to government and published later in the year.

The timescale for moving the project forward is:

- The stage one study and report into possible highways options was completed in 2017
- The options assessment and development commissioned in May 2018 is currently being evaluated and prepared for shortlisting, prior to consultation.
- Public consultation on the route details, alignment options and junction options with the A14 and A12 - to begin in the Summer 2019
- Completion of the Strategic Outline Business Case to be shared with government, local MPs and the public - Autumn 2019.

The options assessment, that forms a key part of the Strategic Outline Business Case, is required to look at all other viable transport and traffic mitigation options. This will confirm whether the road alignments published in 2017 are indeed the best solution for the county. After carefully considering the assessment and developing these options further, the next stage is public consultation to begin in summer 2019.

The initial study, options assessment and the results of the public consultation inform the Strategic Outline Business Case, which will provide clarity on the feasibility of the project and will determine whether the project can proceed to the next stage. That will be shared publicly for consideration in the Autumn of 2019.

Suffolk County Council has been working with District and Borough Councils to develop the project and will continue to do so in the future. Anyone who has been held up because of problems on the Orwell Bridge will no doubt be keen to see the outcome.

## **County Council budget 2019/20 approved**

On 14 February, Suffolk County Council concluded its budget setting process for this coming financial year (2019/2020).

From 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, Suffolk County Council will spend almost £10 million a week across all its services following approval of this budget of £519.3 million.

Over the period 2011-12 to 2018-19 the Council has made over £260 million of savings in response to reductions in funding from Central Government and increasing demand for services. For 2019/20 the Council has proposed a range of savings totalling around £13 million. These savings are required to help balance the budget - something that the Council must do by law.

Recognising the unrelenting rise in demand and the complexity of support required by vulnerable children and adults in Suffolk, the Council are significantly increasing spending in these two top priority areas.

The net budget for Adult and Community Services (ACS) will rise to £243m and the net budget for Health, Wellbeing and Children's Services (HWCS) will rise to £147m. This is an increase of just over £14 million for ACS and HWCS. ACS and HWCS will account for 75% of the total spend in 2019/2020.

General council tax will rise by 2.99% this year. The Council are also applying the final 1% of the six per cent Social Care precept allowed over the years 2017/18 to 2019/20. The overall increase in council tax is one per cent less than for 2018/19.

The four-year investment in surface-dressing our roads continues into its third year and the Council will treat 1,000 miles of Suffolk's roads by the end of 2020 as promised. The Council has also maintained Suffolk Fire and Rescue's budget and protected Suffolk's Library services.

The Council is looking to maximise the financial contribution from its medium-term programmes, which focus on transforming how the Council delivers its services and works with other authorities and public sector partners.

### **Important information for School Travel users**

Suffolk County Council (SCC) is implementing changes to its School Travel Policy from September 2019. The Council has already written to all schools and Town and Parish Councils with information about the policy changes and how they may affect families in their area.

#### **Statutory School Age School Travel Policy**

Children living in Suffolk who will be starting at a new school in September 2019 will be eligible for SCC funded school travel when they are over 2 miles (under 8 years old) or 3 miles (aged 8 or over) walking distance from their nearest suitable school that would have had a place available for them. This would be whether or not an application was made for a place at that school. Full details about SCC funded school travel, including additional arrangements for low income families and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), can be found at [www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel](http://www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel)

#### **New pupils**

In the first year of change the new school travel policy will only impact on those starting or moving school with effect from September 2019.

- For those starting at secondary/upper schools, parents will be informed if their child is eligible by 30 April 2019.
- For those starting at primary/middle schools in September 2019, parents will be informed if their child is eligible for SCC funded travel by 14 May 2019.
- If parents do not hear from the Council by the date shown above and believe their child is eligible for SCC funded school travel, they should contact the Customer Service Team on 0345 606 6173 or email them at [customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk). Information about those who are eligible to SCC funded travel will be provided to the child's current and receiving school.

#### **Returning pupils**

The new policy is being phased in. This means that children who receive SCC funded school travel in the 2018/2019 school year will continue to receive this whilst they continue to attend the same school, unless they turn 8 years of age and live between 2 and 3 miles from their current school, or move house - at which time eligibility would be reassessed.

#### **To opt-in (apply) for SCC funded school travel -**

For transport in September 2019 and all future years, families whose child/ren are eligible for SCC funded school travel will need to opt-in to receive their transport. This is a change from previous years.

The opt-in process for those pupils who are eligible for SCC funded school travel for the 2019/2020 school year opens on 1 March 2019 with a **deadline of 31 May 2019**. SCC will be using various communications channels to cascade the opt-in message to parents/families.

This important change means that parents whose children are eligible will have to opt-in by 31 May each year for school travel to be provided in the following school year as this will no longer be provided automatically.

This includes:

- Those currently eligible and who have SCC funded school travel under the old policy arrangements because they will be in Year 1 to Year 6, or Year 8 to Year 11 in September 2019 (and have not moved address) or

- are eligible under the new travel policy.

Recent research has shown that some families, although eligible to SCC funded school travel, do not use their seat(s). Suffolk County Council consequently is funding seats which are unused and therefore, SCC are asking families to opt-in.

#### **Post-16 Travel Policy Statement for September 2019:**

The Post-16 Policy has not changed other than agreed increases to the cost of a seat until the charge equals the average cost. For September 2019/2020 school year the charge will be £750 per annum.

The financial contribution for students with SEND for 2019/2020 school year will be £690.

#### **Suffolk Brokerage Service:**

If any school or local community would like to access capacity building support to assist them in running travel arrangements themselves, they can contact [customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk)

For more information on how Town and Parish Councils can get involved see the Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy at [www.suffolkonboard.com/smot](http://www.suffolkonboard.com/smot)

### **The future of the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service**

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is asking the public for views on how it manages the risks it faces across the county, as well as five different areas of its work, from how it responds to automatic fire alarms, to firefighters' shift patterns.

This eight-week consultation is part of a statutory process, with information feeding into the fire service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for the next three years (2019 to 2022); essentially a plan for how it provides its services.

The fire service regularly assesses all foreseeable risks that could affect its operations. This includes considering one-off type events such as countywide flooding and terrorist attacks, in addition to the more usual responses to fires, animal rescues and road traffic collisions. A key part of this review is to invite the public to share their views through this consultation and at a number of events around the county. The particular areas which the fire service is seeking feedback on are Automatic Fire Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals, Response to Road Traffic Collisions, Shift Patterns, Specialist Rescue Capabilities and Speed of Response to Emergency Incidents – Performance Measures.

The consultation will run from Monday 11 February to Sunday 7 April 2019. The draft IRMP, supporting documents and online consultation are available online at [www.suffolk.gov.uk](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk)

Staff from the fire service will be making visits around Suffolk, so people can find out more about their work and the consultation. All visits are from 10am to midday. Upcoming dates are:

4 March: Bury St Edmunds: Sainsburys, Bedingfield Way

14 March: Haverhill: Sainsburys, Haycocks Road

21 March: Newmarket: Tesco, Fordham Road

### **Citizens Advice Bureau funding**

On 11<sup>th</sup> February it was reported that Citizens Advice in Suffolk will no longer see any difference in their funding for 2019/20. This is due to a collaboration between Suffolk County Council, NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group.

Suffolk County Council proposes to reduce the funding given to Citizens Advice by 50% (£187k), in 2019/20. Under the joint agreement now in place with the CCGs, a total of £187k will be provided by NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk and NHS West Suffolk CCGs. So, funding for Citizens Advice in 2019/20 will remain the same as the previous year (£374k).

Jane Storey

March 2019