



Suffolk County Council Thedwastre North

2019/20 Annual Report

In previous years I have taken a look back at items of news that have happened over the previous 12 months. I have included a selection of news items from Suffolk County Council that have featured over the last 12 months but perhaps in view of the pandemic it is equally important to know the plan for Suffolk over the next 12 months.

Schools in Suffolk see an improvement in results across a range of subjects at GCSE level

Self-reported results from Suffolk schools, released on 22 August, indicate an increase in students achieving higher grade – reported in August 2019.

Ofsted confirms that Suffolk County Council’s Children’s Services are ‘Outstanding’

On 21 May 2019, it was announced that Ofsted inspectors have awarded Children’s Services at Suffolk County Council the top grade of ‘Outstanding’ following their visit in April 2019. Only eight other Local Authorities, out of 152, have been judged to be ‘Outstanding’ overall.

Bravery, fundraising and commitment recognised at fire awards in Ipswich.

On 18 September 2019, firefighters, non-operational staff and volunteers from Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service were recognised for their bravery and commitment. Congratulations to Elmswell on-call firefighters - Steve Reid and Mark Proctor - who were presented with the Miles Hammond Trophy by the Chief Fire Officer, Mark Hardingham.

Away from that awards evening Elmswell Fire Station crew had their own get-together on 21st September 2019 to celebrate Brian Hawes and his amazing 39 years with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service. Their Facebook page is well worth looking up – and ‘following’. Congratulations Brian – a man who epitomises dedication, commitment and achievement.

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service rated “Good” in Government inspection

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has undergone its most comprehensive, independent inspection in many years and has been rated as “Good” for its effectiveness, efficiency and how well it leads and manages its staff in a report published on Tuesday 17 December 2019 by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), who inspected Suffolk’s service earlier this year.

Suffolk economic recovery and development – update for plans 2020

Going forward there is a real opportunity for Suffolk to respond to this crisis in an integrated way, i.e. ensuring our local economic recovery addresses wider issues such as stronger high streets and market towns while building strong and resilient communities; improved mental wellbeing of all Suffolk's employees leading to improved productivity while creating the right type of jobs in our key sectors.

Government grant distribution is going well: £110.82m distributed by close of 17/4/2020 across Suffolk's districts/borough (over 50% of total). As a result of the engagement through the grant distribution process, Suffolk's districts/borough are in an unprecedented position to engage with Suffolk's local business community, further understand the issues businesses are facing, and how best Suffolk LAs can provide support.

SCC focus will be not only on recovery but building long-term resilience, supporting new business opportunities, stabilising communities and supporting people.

There is likely to be a pool of newly unemployed workers that may not have immediate employment opportunities as business takes time to recover. There is a potential opportunity to encourage new starts and entrepreneurship. SCC may look to provide start-up business advice using enterprise agencies, Growth Hub etc. In addition there is an opportunity to provide seed corn funding to new businesses that meet our strategic objectives (e.g. addressing climate emergency, carbon reduction).

SCC are looking for ways to support existing local businesses to rebuild their customer base and supply chains through funding local marketing/campaigns/incentives. Also support businesses to move their trading online during the next 6 months while some social distancing measures still likely to be in place, where possible. There will also be support for businesses to diversify to secure new markets and make them more resilient. Dealing with Covid-19 has already shown many companies how they can repurpose existing equipment to meet the needs of new markets, PPE etc. SCC will look to share examples of good practice and support manufacturing advice/grants that encourage further diversification, especially if these can link to decarbonising the economy.

In addition there is a look to support the rural economy. Data will show how badly this has been hit, but rural pubs/shops fulfil an important role in community cohesion and bringing local communities together. This has been much in evidence over the pandemic crisis. Our tourist and hospitality industry have taken a big hit but SCC will do all it can to assist those businesses too. A business advice and grant programme could help secure those under threat.

SCC update on Adult Care sector

There is daily monitoring of all care facilities -but in general staff morale is high. Block contracts were offered at the start of the lockdown to ensure that almost 300 beds were secured. Even if less work is done all providers will be paid an average of the last 3 months income. In addition there have been other financial offers (grants, minimum guarantee etc) to help with cash flow crisis.

Suffolk Family Carers have been fielding calls from carers worried about Covid-19 (70% of calls) and their concerns and needs have been recorded. SFC has had a 6 month extension on their contract with SCC.

1,000 Videophones have been sent to identified vulnerable people. These are already linked to the internet so should have no set-up problems. This is to allow video calls to carers and those that they want to stay in touch with. Some assessments may also be done by video.

SCC Children and Young People update

About 240 schools are open, which is enough to satisfy the demand. There are about 1500 children attending school each day. SCC is working very closely with the whole education sector and remain very pleased with the way the whole sector has pulled together.

There are significant implications for children's and staff wellbeing and mental health, assessment for learning, curriculum planning and progression and the impact on the system of this period of closure. The school sector has been fantastic during this time and the differences between academies, free schools and maintained schools have disappeared during this period. The system is as close to working as one entity as it has ever been, the LA and schools and settings.

Home to school transport is also going well, and as at mid April 97% of applications received have been processed.

The main focus has been on schools but Looked After Children have been carefully monitored. Staff absence is lower than pre-Covid-19.

And finally - many thanks for the work of Parish Council members and the Parish Clerks

It can be a thankless task – to be a parish councillor – so I wish to record my thanks to all those people who have devoted many hours to reading through agenda's, minutes, planning documents, other letters and correspondence in order to make a difference to their communities. My thanks also to the parish clerks who have kept me informed when I have not been able to be at the meetings in person.

Jane Storey

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