

Report for October 2021 to Parish Councils of Peninsula Division from Simon Harley (SCC Councillor)

Council apologises after SEND report finds big failings

The county council's leadership has apologised to families after an independent report into the county's care of special needs children (SEND) has come up with a lengthy list of serious failings. The report found that the education service had been poor at communicating with parents, was slow to respond to calls and emails, had placed some pupils in inappropriate schools, had failed to identify caseworkers for children, failed to record requests from parents, failed to routinely track the Care Plans for children and had faced high numbers of appeals when they had refused to provide assessments.

The authors – a team from Lincolnshire County Council made a series of recommendations which the council has agreed. These include hiring specialist consultants (Impower) to help review all their case work and ensure that better health and care plans for children are drawn up. Also to ensure that they share information with health service colleagues.

But opposition councillors have argued that there are issues which need discussing now.

Committee member and education spokesperson for the Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent group, Caroline Topping, said: "One of the functions of scrutiny is to look at items in a timely manner.

"I believe there is no more a timely manner than now, when a report has been put together and an action plan to address the report is now being implemented.

"Having read the review and action plan there are issues which need answering now, not in two-and-a-half months time, with more learning time lost for some young people who can't afford more lost time."

The next meeting of the committee will take place on December 9, with documents published a week beforehand.

Cycling and walking motion

The Conservative administration said in its election literature this spring that it had identified £20m of cycle path upgrades. In line with this the Green Liberal and Independent group, proposed a motion at the September Council Meeting that the Council set specific benchmarks and targets each year to spend the £20m up to 2030 in order to double cycling and walking by then.

Unfortunately, the administration voted this motion down and admitted that what they meant was that they had identified cycle routes for prioritising and calculated the cost as £20m but there was no commitment to spend any of it over any timescale.

Suffolk Biodiversity policy development panel

Our group is on this panel and Robert Lindsay has attended the first 3 of 8 meetings. He will try to ensure that goals and a strict timeframe are set so that progress can be checked. So far summary of recommendations seem a little vague.

They have discussed so far a different regime for verge management as well as moving towards a phase out of the use of glyphosate on pavements in Suffolk towns. Also working with landowners and our own county farms to "rewild" significant proportions.

Road closures and signage

At full council earlier in September one of my group colleagues asked what the council was doing about “sloppy signage” when roads are closed with a report to council showing there were 20% of closures where the signage had not been up to standard. Cabinet member Paul West stressed that it was the sloppy behaviour of the utility companies (rather than Highways Network Assurance) and said he was making efforts to improve this behaviour. Though he gave no details about how. He said that last year there 65,000 applications for closure – over 200 a day – and that because of the volume highways can only do a “sample” of them to check that signage was being done correctly.

‘Bus Back Better’

From a workshop attended by my colleague Keith Welham on 15th September -there is some progress on this Government initiative:

Timescale:

12 October – Cabinet to consider BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan)

By 31 October – BSIP submitted to Government

October 2021 to April 2022 – develop Enhanced Partnership (EP); enter into EP with bus operators. Must cover how Suffolk bus fleets will decarbonise

BSIP will need to be updated every 12 months.

EP will cover all local bus services.

BSIP will consider voluntary and community services

BSIP will set targets for reliability and passenger numbers.

In view of the favourable response to my asking Peninsula Parish Councils whether they would be interested in a similar scheme to the ‘Katch’ electric bus pilot scheme in Framlingham I wrote to Richard Smith (Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy) to ask whether we could have such a scheme for Peninsula I received the reply:

Dear Simon

I am afraid I can make no future commitments yet about bus services across Suffolk. Our share of the £3billion will not be announced by the Government until well into next year; the second of three Cabinet papers moving towards our ‘ask’ will be presented to the October Cabinet meeting.

The Katch experiment continues until the end of the year and it is too early to make any judgements.

Thank you for your interest; you will be aware that there are 74 other County Councillors all of whom want more bus services in their area (including the area I represent!)

Regards

Richard Smith

From recent SCC Press Releases:

New Suffolk Recycling Centres online booking system improvements to deliver greater customer experience

Following the use of online booking services across Suffolk’s Recycling Centres during the last 16 months of the Covid pandemic, Suffolk County Council has developed a new, more user-friendly

booking system which enables residents to book slots for recycling and disposing of household waste safely and securely.

For bookings from 27 September, people can view all available time slots in real time, to see which booking slots are free at any given moment. The system allows you to book up to seven days in advance. If circumstances change, you can easily cancel your slot up to one hour beforehand or equally, you can click to amend your booking if required.

Book at: [Welcome to the Suffolk Recycling Centres booking page - Suffolk Recycling](#)

Work begins to replace street lights in Suffolk and save energy in the County

Suffolk County Council (SCC) and Bouygues Energies & Services (Bouygues E&S) have started work replacing 43,400 street lighting lanterns in Suffolk with LED lanterns.

SCC and Bouygues E&S joined forces to create a flagship partnership with the aim of reducing energy, minimising light pollution, bringing down ongoing maintenance costs for the Authority and providing the best value to residents. SCC expects to reduce its annual electricity costs on these assets by around 76 percent, saving more than 1.7 million pounds a year.

The upgrade of the lighting system will include a further rollout of SCC's central management system which will allow lights to be switched on or off and dim individual or groups of lights. This smart technology will increase the control the Authority has over its power consumption which will further reduce costs. The system will also automatically flag any lights that are not working which reduces the need for night-time inspections.

Further details at: [LED Streetlighting upgrade project | Suffolk County Council](#)

Simon Harley
County Councillor for Peninsula Division
Green, Liberal Democrat, and Independent Group Spokesperson for Public Health & Biodiversity