

February 2014 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Interested in adopting a child?

SCC is urging people interested in adopting to come forward, with 30 children in Suffolk currently looking for a permanent adoptive family. This push is aimed at addressing the desperate need for more people to come forward and provide 'forever families'. The council is especially on the look-out for families for sibling groups, older children and children with disabilities. Applications are welcomed from all sections of the community, to offer a child, or sibling group, a loving and supportive family for life. Anyone interested in finding out more about adoption can call Suffolk Adoption Agency on 01473 265595, or visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/care-and-support/fostering-and-adoption/adoption Providing a secure and loving home for young people who don't have one, is one of the most important roles we can play. Anyone able to adopt, is giving a young person a far better chance of a happy and fulfilling life that would otherwise be the case, and SCC urges anyone interested to come forward.

Cabinet approves proposed budget savings and council tax freeze for 2014/15

The cabinet gave its approval to the budget proposals for the new financial year, at its meeting in January. The savings proposals are the first part of a four-year plan designed to fill an estimated budget gap of £156 million, equivalent to 30% of the council's current annual budget (excluding schools). This on top of more than £90 million saved since April 2011. The proposals include savings of: £8.2 million in landfill taxes next year thanks to the new Energy from Waste site, which is scheduled to open next year; £9 million from administrative costs following the end of the Customer Services Direct contract; £10million from the Adult and Community Services budget – including a greater focus on early prevention and closer working with the NHS; £6.7 million from the children and young people's budget – including a review of children's centre services, to ensure they can best meet the needs of young families, and £4 million from the capital budget. All four years, between now and 2017 will also see a complete freeze in SCC's portion of council tax. Final approval of the budget is in the hands of the full council, who will debate it at their next meeting on 13th February 2014. We are determined to meet the budget challenge head-on: managing the county's money extremely carefully; seeking new and better ways of providing the services people need, while helping with residents' cost of living by keeping council tax down.

Adult work clubs set to open in the spring.

Clubs aimed at supporting unemployed residents back into work are being set up in the east of Suffolk. SCC has been working with the East Suffolk Partnership (ESP), to develop a Work Club programme for unemployed adults in the Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Council areas. The ESP has made £65,000 available to SCC to contract a provider to deliver the clubs in Lowestoft, Beccles, Leiston-Saxmundham, Woodbridge and Felixstowe. After this initial funding, the aim will be for the clubs to be self-sustaining. The focus will be on the 25-plus age group but all those who are unemployed will be welcome. The core service will be initial job-search and application support, making use of links with the National Careers Service, training providers, the Voluntary and Community Sector, Job Centre Plus and other agencies for more in-depth assistance. The clubs will also feature strong links to local business so that employers are engaged in supporting the project as well. It is hoped that the clubs will be up and running in April 2014.

Funding scheme for local businesses to aid greener Suffolk

SCC has unveiled a new scheme to encourage local businesses to invest in sustainable travel projects. The county council is offering grants of up to £1,000 to cover up to half the cost of setting up individual initiatives which support healthier and greener travel in the workplace. Businesses can apply for a grant now, with approvals being made on a monthly basis. Applications should be made before the end of June this year. It has been suggested that a change of as little as 1% to sustainable transport would have a long-term positive effect on traffic congestion. The scheme has operated previously, but only applied to small and medium businesses. The new grant scheme includes all businesses across Suffolk, as a result of funding from the government's Local Transport Plan budget. No initiative or idea is too small – previous grants have included the installation of showers, the provision of bike storage or remote working equipment. To apply for a grant visit www.greensuffolk.org

And finally:

Chimney fires on the increase

SCC's Fire and Rescue Service is warning people across Suffolk to check their chimney flue, to ensure it's clear, before lighting a fire. The warning comes as figures show a 42% increase in chimney fires in Suffolk compared with the same period last year. In December 2013 alone, there were 37 reported chimney fires, compared with 26 in December 2012. It is recommended that all chimneys and flues are cleaned at least once a year, or quarterly for wood fires, and checked to make sure that they are free from debris. Anyone trying to find a suitable chimney sweep can visit www.checkatrade.com, which is the on-line directory of local tradesmen and women who have been checked by SCC Trading Standards.

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