

## December 2017 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

### **Suffolk County Council's Children's Services continue to improve following Ofsted pilot inspection**

Suffolk County Council was a pilot recently for the new Ofsted inspection framework. All areas are now judged to be 'Good'. This puts SCC in the top 25% of all Local Authorities. Inspectors were positive about every part of Children's Services, the quality of work with children, and the passion and commitment of everyone they met. Their report highlights that: "The local authority's commitment to children and families is clear and unambiguous... Staff know children well and are passionate about changing their lives." Key points made by Ofsted in the report recognise the work of the authority in the following areas: **Early Help:** Early help is making a positive difference to the lives of children and families Children and families benefit from a good range of early help services. **Social Care & Safeguarding:** The children and adult Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is well established. It is appropriately resourced and well managed. Thresholds are applied consistently. Information is shared appropriately. Decision-making is timely. The way in which the local authority has rolled out its preferred social work model across all children and young people's services is extremely impressive. The model is encouraging social workers and other staff to work more effectively with families. **Children in Care:** The local authority makes good use of its legal powers and acts decisively to protect children who are unable to continue to live at home safely. Social workers clearly understand the importance of achieving permanence for children in care. The emphasis is always on finding the right long-term solution for each child. **Strong Leadership:** Senior managers lead by example. They want the best for children, young people and families. They set and expect high standards of themselves and others. They understand the importance of getting the basics right but are not afraid to innovate. **Partnership working:** Partnership working, particularly with the police and with health services, is strong. This is evident in the way in which the MASH has developed. It is also apparent in the role played by health partners in early help. Working closely with other agencies, the local authority has strengthened its response to missing children and child sexual exploitation.

### **Suffolk home to school transport consultation to be reconsidered**

Proposals to consult Suffolk residents on changing the way home to school and post-16 travel is provided was reconsidered by Suffolk County Council on Tuesday 5 December. Over the last two years, SCC has managed to save £2.6 million from its school and post-16 travel service budget, making it more efficient. Despite this, the budget is still £3 million overspent. Changes to the school and post-16 travel policies now need to be considered so the service is affordable and capable of meeting growing demand in the future. SCC's current school and post-16 travel policies go above legal requirements, with around 2400 children and young people receiving free/subsidised school or post-16 travel that we are not legally required to provide, and around 2400 children receiving free travel to schools further away than legally required. On 12 September 2017, SCC's Cabinet approved a public consultation on school and post-16 travel. This was subsequently reviewed by the council's Scrutiny Committee and referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration. SCC has now carried out additional pre-consultation work with schools, parents, parish councils, bus/coach operators, councillors and young people to look at the challenges in further detail. As part of this, a range of local solutions have been developed that in addition to changing the school and post-16 travel policies, could help reduce the cost of transport and some of the impact of any policy changes. The consultation on the proposals will run until 28 February 2018. The findings will be reported back to Cabinet along with a recommendation on the future school and post-16 travel policies. Any decision to change the policies would be made so that they can be implemented from September 2019 onward. [www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/consultations-petitions-and-elections/consultations/school-and-post-16-travel-consultation/](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/consultations-petitions-and-elections/consultations/school-and-post-16-travel-consultation/)

### **Fully funded first-time central heating systems for Suffolk residents**

Suffolk's local authorities are now able to provide fully funded central heating systems subject to survey to 514 fuel poor households across Suffolk over the next three years. Around 4 million UK households are in fuel poverty, unable to affordably heat their home to the temperature needed to stay warm and healthy. As well as being on low incomes many of these households are also faced with the additional burden of relying on heating systems that are inefficient and expensive to run. The local authorities in Suffolk have a long track record of securing funding to support our most vulnerable residents. This project will enable us to make a practical, long lasting difference to improve their living conditions and make their homes more affordable to heat. Anyone who does not have a central heating system and finds it a challenge to afford their energy bills should contact Suffolk Warm Homes Healthy People on 03456 037686 quoting the Warm Homes Fund. It will fund the installation of affordable heating solutions in fuel poor households which don't use mains gas as their primary source of heat.

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