

June 2018 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Councillor Matthew Hicks takes the helm at Suffolk County Council

On 24 May, Councillor Mathew Hicks was elected as the new leader of Suffolk County Council. Councillor Hicks has promised a new era of working in partnership and listening. In a speech following his election, he pledged to work with district and borough councils, other public sector partners, businesses and residents to find the best ways of delivering services to the people that need them most. He also confirmed Suffolk County Council's focus on major infrastructure including the Ipswich Northern Relief Road, A12 four village bypass (SEGWAY), Sudbury Relief Road, Beccles Relief Road, A1307, the A140 and A47 schemes and of course the Lowestoft Third Crossing and the Upper Orwell Crossings. Councillor Hicks stressed the need for a co-ordinated and strategic approach to bring these into the 30 plus year vision so there is clarity on how major infrastructure projects can be delivered when funding is so tight. One of his first duties was to appoint the Cabinet who, with him, will be responsible for almost £500 million of public services each year along with 6 deputy cabinet members to support the delivery of the council's 2017-2021 priorities.

Council to deliver 51 new affordable homes for low income families in rural community

On 22 May, it was announced that Suffolk County Council is looking to develop a 4.5 acre site which is owned as part of its County Farms estate in Cockfield village near Lavenham. The plan is for 51 affordable homes to be built to offer local people on low incomes the opportunity to get on the housing ladder. This follows a decision on 21 March at Babergh District Council Development Control Committee which approved a planning application for such a development. To do this the county council is planning to work closely with design and property partners to achieve a good financial return and delivery of homes for a range of people, with a particular focus on local needs. The development is expected to take around two years to complete. By taking the lead on this project, the council can ensure the development delivers the proposed benefits for the local community in a timely fashion including provision for community space, powers to adapt local speed limits as required and improvements to local footpaths. The council will now progress plans for this project, working closely with industry partners and will continue to engage collaboratively with the local parish council.

More children get the free school meals they are entitled to

On 16 May, it was reported that four Suffolk councils have worked together to try to ensure more children get the free school meals they are entitled to. Changes to the benefit system in the wake of the introduction of Universal Credit mean that some families are missing out. The free school meals team at Suffolk County Council is urging parents and carers to apply for the meals – which could save a family more than £400 a year. In addition, each application could bring what is called Pupil Premium Funding to the respective school. The school can decide how to spend this windfall – as much as £1,300 a year over six years for each extra child applying - and could use it to pay for more books, cut the price of school trips and uniforms or bring in more teaching aids. The County Council has worked with Babergh and Mid Suffolk district councils and Ipswich Borough Council to identify the scale of the shortfall and to urge people to apply for what they are entitled to. Find out more at www.suffolk.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals

Suffolk residents urged to sign up as Dementia Friends

OneLife Suffolk is asking local people to consider how they can support people with dementia by becoming a Dementia Friend. OneLife Suffolk is the free healthy lifestyle service commissioned by Suffolk County Council. Dementia Friends is an Alzheimer's Society Initiative which aims to give people a better understanding of what it means to live with dementia, through a short online training course. There are an estimated 850,000 people currently living with dementia in the UK, which costs the NHS around £26 billion each year. The training offers advice and guidance about how simple lifestyle changes can reduce the risks of dementia, as well as inviting people to consider how they can support and improve the lives of those living with dementia. OneLife Suffolk are working with GP practices, pharmacies and other local organisations across the county to spread the word and encourage people to sign up. The Dementia Friend training takes no more than 20 minutes to complete. For more information and to sign up as a Dementia Friend, visit <http://onelifesuffolk.co.uk/dementia2018/>

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