

July 2018 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Proposed changes to the future commissioning of specialist education services for children and young people

On 27 June, a consultation was launched on proposed changes to the future commissioning of specialist education provision for children and young people. As demand for specialist education places in Suffolk continues to grow due to population growth and increasing complexity of special educational needs, Suffolk County Council must ensure there is the right provision in place to support children and young people with SEND. Currently, the county council has a lower number of specialist education places than other similar authorities. Suffolk also has a high reliance on independent special school placements, which means children and young people often have to access their education outside of Suffolk away from their families. The six-week consultation is asking for views from the public on two main issues:

The key principles that will inform Suffolk's future commissioning of specialist education provision; and Preference for one of three options, each of which sets out a different commissioning strategy for the development of Suffolk's specialist educational provision. The options are:

Option 1 – to meet all additional growth for new specialist places through the independent sector

Option 2 - to meet most of the additional growth by developing new special schools, using independent placements for a small number of children with very specialist needs

Option 3 - to meet the additional growth by a combination of new specialist support centres attached to existing main stream and specialist providers and new special schools, using independent placements for a small number of very specialist needs

The consultation closes at 5pm on 7 August. For more information call 0345 603 1842 or visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/SENDSufficiencyeducation

Major review of highways maintenance in Suffolk launched

On 22 June, a major review was launched of the way highways in Suffolk are maintained. The review will explore how Suffolk's limited highways budget can be used to best effect, when maintaining the county's roads, pavements, bridges, grass verges, and other highways assets. Areas to be reviewed include: Existing policy which determines how resources are deployed, known as the Suffolk Highway Maintenance Operational Plan (HMOP); How utility companies coordinate roadworks and are held to account for their actions; How residents, councillors and businesses are informed about road repairs and how they can access information; The approach to, and importance of, innovation within Suffolk Highways; Financial control and contract management; How the location of potholes on the road is considered alongside the width and depth, recognising the impact they can have on cyclists and motorcyclists; How town and parish councils can work closer with Suffolk Highways to make the best use of their local knowledge, skills, money and time. With immediate effect, a new Highways Improvement and Innovations Board has been established to oversee the areas that will make up the review.

Bringing affordable solar power to Suffolk

On 21 June, a call went out for homeowners, schools, small businesses and community groups to register their interest in buying high quality, low-cost solar panels. The aim is to reduce electricity bills and help Suffolk become the Greenest County. Solar Together Suffolk is a pioneering bulk-buying project, supported by Suffolk County Council and local borough and district councils. It aims to bring affordable solar power to Suffolk and boost the county's renewable energy. This comes at a time when many residents are interested in exploring solar energy but would welcome a helping hand to make an informed decision and find a trustworthy installer. Similar projects have delivered a discount of 25 – 30% to homeowners on the cost of a solar panel system. Typically, domestic users can expect their investment in solar panels to be repaid within 10 years.

How does the scheme work?

Homeowners, schools, small businesses and community groups have until 21 August to register for free and without obligation at www.solartogethersuffolk.co.uk

22 August: pre-vetted UK solar PV suppliers participate in an auction. A large bulk order means they can pass on better savings to registered users.

From 10 September: registered users will receive a personalised offer from the winning supplier.

19 October: deadline for registered users to make a decision.

After accepting the offer, a technical survey will be arranged after which an installation date will be confirmed.

Telephone and email support is available throughout the whole process and information sessions will allow registered users to make an informed decision in a safe and hassle-free environment.

Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division

Tel : 01728 628176 Mob : 07824 474741 E-mail : matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk