

Cllr Matthew Hicks 2018 Annual Report for the Thredling Division

SCC Children's Services continue to improve following Ofsted pilot inspection

Suffolk County Council was a pilot 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.

Deborah Cadman leaves and Nicola Beach arrives

Suffolk County Council's Chief Executive, Deborah Cadman OBE left us last year to take up a new role as the first permanent Chief Executive of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). She joined Suffolk County Council in 2011 and since then has overseen a dramatic improvement in education attainment levels in Suffolk, improved staff morale and led the careful implementation of over £200million of savings made necessary by reductions in funding from government. In March 2018, Nicola Beach was appointed as Suffolk County Council's new Chief Executive. Nicola, who is currently Executive Director of Infrastructure and Environment at Essex County Council, will take up her new role this summer. She was appointed due to the wealth of experience she has in local government, having been Chief Executive at Braintree District Council before joining Essex County Council, and having held various other roles in authorities across the East of England.

Revised GCSE and A Level results reflect progress of Suffolk students

The Department for Education published revised GCSE and A Level results on 25 January 2018. The validated figures confirm that 3% more students in Suffolk are achieving the expected standards in English and Maths at GCSE compared with last year. 63.1% of students in the county are achieving the expected standard in English and Maths and Suffolk has closed the gap to national to less than 1%. Suffolk has also risen by 26 places in national league tables for this measure, to 83rd out of 151 authorities. The county has risen 5 places in national rankings for the percentage of students achieving the English Baccalaureate. The Revised A Level figures confirm that Suffolk pupils have once again performed well with the General Applied entry and Tech Level entries remaining above the national average figures. Since the launch of the council's Raising the Bar programme in 2012, Suffolk has risen 59 places in national rankings for GCSE attainment in English and Maths. 87% of schools in Suffolk are judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.

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.

Reminder to check white good

People in Suffolk are being urged to check their white goods and to not use them unattended in an attempt to reduce the risk of fires starting in the home. Fire services up and down the country are recommending people register their appliances in case of recalls, but to also be aware that incidents can occur when a product isn't on a recall list. Damage and severity of a fire, should one occur, is dramatically reduced if they are not left running while everyone is asleep or out of the house. People are also being urged to check their smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, and making sure they know how they will exit their home if a fire does occur. In 2015/16, more than 15,000 accidental fires in the home were caused by cookers and white goods across the UK. In 2016/17 in Suffolk, there were 29 incidents caused by white goods – to date in 2017/18, there have been 11. Suffolk Trading Standards are also informing people of the campaign, reminding them to regularly check the recalled list of domestic appliances, and to follow their weekly product recall campaign, #CheckItTuesday on Twitter. We would urge people to register their appliances at www.registermyappliance.org.uk This online safety initiative, which is supported by fire services and government represents nearly 90% of white goods brands and allows people to register appliances new and up to 12 years old so if there's a safety recall they can be contacted.

Suffolk Highways goes to war on potholes

Suffolk Highways has declared war on the potholes which are opening on the county's roads, following one of the worst winters in recent years. Since the start of 2018, Suffolk Highways has received in excess of 11,000 customer reports, which compares with approximately 6,000 reports in the same period last year. This demonstrates the impact the bad weather Suffolk has experienced since November has had on the county's road surface. Suffolk Highways has put in place the following measures with immediate effect to help cope with the demand:

- Deploying additional gangs to undertake pothole and road repairs across the county.
- Switching to a different temporary material to repair emergency potholes which, although slightly more expensive, provides a longer-lasting repair in damp conditions.
- Considering for large areas of intervention-level pothole defects whether 'making safe' (through organising traffic management and temporary road closures) is required in advance of making extensive repairs.
- Bringing in extra resource to undertake larger-scale patching works as part of a planned programme for dealing with sites on which traffic management or road closures have been arranged or areas where small-scale repairs will not sufficiently address the road deterioration.
- Moving internal resources from other teams to support the inspection of customer reports, particularly from staff with previous experience of dealing with customer reports and inspections.

This extra push to repair the high volume of potholes in the county is being assisted by the extra £21 million funding which has been borrowed to resurface a quarter of all roads managed by Suffolk Highways, by 2021.

Suffolk to use drone technology to help manage blue light service incidents

15 February 2018 marked the official launch of the use of two Small Unmanned Surveillance Aircrafts in Suffolk. The technology, commonly referred to as drones have been developed and funded by Suffolk Resilience Forum for use across the county. As part of a multi-agency Air Support Unit, the drones will be used by Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, Suffolk Constabulary, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Lowland Search and Rescue and Norfolk & Suffolk 4x4 Response. The drones will provide a range of aerial surveillance options to support emergency services and voluntary organisations across a wide range of incidents. They will also help to reduce risks to the public and emergency service workers. The drones and camera equipment cost around £42,500 and they are based at Woodbridge Fire and Police station, have 24/7 emergency response capability and can be used by 17 specially trained remote pilots. The drones will provide important visual information which will be used alongside experienced operational commanders to complete the decision-making picture and help resolve incidents as quickly and safely as possible. The drones have already been used a number of times, most recently at the fire at Saxmundham train station to not only provide pictures of fire spreading and possible collapse in areas that may not have been possible for firefighters to access or see.

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