

## **March 2016 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks**

### **Suffolk County Council's Children's Services praised by Ofsted with "good" rating**

Suffolk County Council's Children's Services has been rated good by Ofsted following the publication of its inspection report on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2016. The report praises the work of the council in protecting and looking after children and young people, with some areas of outstanding practice highlighted in the report. The inspection was carried out between 23 November and 17 December 2015. 78 councils have been inspected so far under Ofsted's new framework and no authority has been judged outstanding and of the last 17 inspections across the country, just one authority had been judged good, until Suffolk's rating. This is a truly fantastic achievement and demonstrates the value that the council places on supporting the most vulnerable young people in Suffolk. Of course this achievement is testament to all the staff and local community partners who work with the county council on a daily basis. Ofsted praised SCC's social workers who act quickly to ensure children in care in Suffolk are safe. Feedback indicated that they know children well, understand their needs, visit them often and listen to what they say. Children and their families receive a timely and comprehensive early help service. There is also good support for children that need foster carers or a family through adoption. Suffolk County Council is one of only a handful of local authorities in the UK to fully adopt the International Signs of Safety methodology. Ofsted's report goes on to highlight that "Leaders have a comprehensive understanding of what needs to be achieved and have made sustained progress since the inspection of services for looked after children in 2010 and child protection in 2013, which both were judged to be adequate". It says "Suffolk County Council is led by dynamic and capable leaders and managers and is delivering a good service overall to children and their families." Ofsted also recognises that the authority underpins its services through the adoption of the Signs of Safety framework; an internationally recognised approach to organising and managing casework. Suffolk County Council is one of only a handful of local authorities to fully embed this system into its service and it is clearly bringing positive results.

### **Continuing the push with Better Broadband for Suffolk with an interim satellite broadband scheme**

A resolution has now been reached between DCMS and the EU. This will enable the county council to spend its full £30m of public funding, as well as the monies clawed back from the first contract a total of £33.9m. This is, however, subject to the county council running a one month public consultation with the market, to further ascertain and demonstrate that no commercial plans exist to intervene in the additional areas the council plans to target with the reinvestment. This consultation will run over Easter, and will conclude on 8th April. After April, the county council can complete the contracting process with BT and BDUK to embed the fully financed rollout plan into the contract, and commence community briefings in the early summer. The county council fully recognises the frustration out in communities regarding the delay, as well as the need for information to be shared as quickly and efficiently as possible. This resolution is a big step forwards, and does not involve actively conducting a full review of coverage with the market, but only consulting on the county council's plans for reinvestment. In addition to this, DCMS are launching a flyer scheme to premises which they feel could benefit from the interim satellite broadband scheme; these will be distributed during the last two weeks of March.

### **Publicly funded schools in Suffolk to benefit from £600k boost**

Publicly funded schools in Suffolk are set to benefit from a new £600,000 fund to assist in continuing to boost the attainment of pupils across the county. The fund has been created by the county council's Raising the Bar Programme in conjunction with the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). This prestigious new partnership will bring the very best in national education research into Suffolk's schools at a time when education in Suffolk has now turned a corner and there are many more children and young people in good and outstanding schools. The county council wants to build on this success and now is the right time to work with the Education Endowment Foundation to bring the best possible education expertise and knowledge into Suffolk. Schools will be able to bid for money from the fund to use for projects that have been evaluated by the EEF and have shown promise in raising educational attainment elsewhere in the country. By working together closely, the EEF and Suffolk County Council will be able to monitor how best practice can be rolled out to more schools. It is hoped that this pilot project in Suffolk could be expanded to other areas in the future. The new partnership builds on the established Raising the Bar Challenge Fund, which has seen more than 100 Suffolk schools receive a total of more than £400,000 in the last two years. Challenge Fund projects have focussed on improving literacy and numeracy in primary schools, boosting ambition and innovation in all schools, and closing the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others. Schools can find details of how to register their interest in the fund at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/eef](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/eef)

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