

Date: 4/5/22

Email: simon.harley@suffolk.gov.uk

COVID-19

Latest SCC information is available here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Latest Government advice is available here: www.gov.uk/coronavirushave

1) No Government Funding for Bus Back Better

The Department for Transport have confirmed Suffolk County Council will not receive any funding for their Bus Back Better strategy. The strategy was aimed to improve and expand bus services in Suffolk, connecting rural areas to local and important towns, as well as reduce carbon emissions in line with the goal to become net zero by 2050.

Central government confirmed that any bids that failed did not show enough ambition. We as a group have criticised the Conservatives at Suffolk County Council since the strategy was announced for playing it safe. Suffolk has paid the price for this.

We will continue to hold the Conservatives to account on their policies, and push for a bus service that helps local, rural communities stay connected with Suffolk.

2) Cabinet Meeting 26th April

The Cabinet met to discuss Suffolk County Council's Post-16 Travel Policy for 2022-23. The policy outlines all the support offered to those who struggle to afford the travel sending their child to education, training, or an apprenticeship. The Cabinet voted to freeze the increase in costs to parents/guardians, meaning the price remains at £930 per year for a Mainstream Seat, and £750 for a Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Seat.

Our Group welcomed the cap on travel costs, but asked the Council to lobby government to provide adequate funding for post-16 travel - especially when it was this government's decision to raise the mandatory age of education from 16 to 18.

The Cabinet discussed the positive report Suffolk County Council received from Ofsted's inspection into Care Leaver services. The report showed that Care Leavers were prioritised by the Council and successfully helped them transition to independence. The report highlighted emotional well-being as a point for improvement. Our Group will ensure the Council are held to account over their future action plan.

The Cabinet also discussed the 'Ipswich Garden Suburb' development. This is an Ipswich Borough Council project to develop more than 1,000 houses in North Ipswich, including a new primary and secondary school. As a consultee, Suffolk County Council voted to not endorse the plans. The project did not prioritise cycling/walking, did not mitigate sufficiently its effect on biodiversity, and failed to submit sufficient drainage that wouldn't increase flood risk or pollution.

3) County Deal – Key Communications

Back in February, Suffolk was announced as one of nine county areas to be invited to negotiate a County Deal – a deal that would see Suffolk have more control over decisions in transport, education, skills, housing, and planning. The Conservatives announced Suffolk would be pursuing a deal without the recommendation of a Mayor. Our Group agrees with this position.

The Council has confirmed that discussions with ministers are expected soon, and they will be responding with their expectations of what Suffolk would achieve in terms of the government's Levelling-up strategy.

The Conservatives have confirmed they will work with all partners, including our Group, and so we will ensure that we help secure the best possible County Deal for Suffolk residents.

4) Roadworks on A12 and diversions on A137- (I have had a lot of emails about this so am repeating from last month)

I attended a presentation by National Highways (who are responsible for the major routes).

They are planning roadworks to replace barriers and resurface A12 between Colchester and Dedham and one of the diversions planned is the A137 from Colchester to Wherstead which will have a major impact on my Division. They assure me these will be night-time roadworks only and will avoid weekends and bank holidays.

Southbound roadworks are planned 4-8 April; 8-15 July; 21 July to 25 Aug

Northbound roadworks are planned 11-14 April; 26 June to 8 July; 15-21 July; 25 Aug – 2 September

Both north and southbound: 19/4/22-26/4/22

I have emphasised the existing problems of congestion on A137 and unsuitability as a route for heavy traffic and also conveyed the complaints I have had about the recent very poor signage about roadworks at Junction 56 of A14 (Wherstead) and they have promised to improve communications and signage. They also promise that the diversions will not take place at the same time as the junction slipway closures at J56 of A14 as that will clearly lead to even more problems for drivers.

Please let me know if there are any more concerns about these works, or you can contact National Highways Customer Contact Centre:

National Highways Contact Details:

Email: info@nationalhighways.co.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 5000

Website: <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-work/east/>

Follow us on:

Twitter - [Suffolk Green, Lib Dem & Independent Group \(@SuffolkGLI\) / Twitter](#)

Instagram (New!) - https://www.instagram.com/suffolkgli_group/

Website - [Suffolk Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group – The GLI Group at Suffolk County Council \(suffolkgli.wordpress.com\)](#)

Simon Harley

Suffolk County Councillor for Peninsula Division