

March 2015 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

SCC freezes council tax for fifth year in a row

SCC's share of council tax is to be frozen for a fifth year in a row. The council has successfully delivered savings in excess of £130m over the last four years. However, with the government's deficit reduction programme set to continue until at least 2018/19, there is a forecast of a further £120m budget shortfall that will need to be addressed over the next three years. The Council tax freeze was agreed as part of the budget proposals for 2015/16, which include savings of £38.2million, to be made across services delivered by the council during the financial year 2015/16. The bulk of these savings (£24.6m) will be delivered through wide-ranging transformation programmes which will result in the council becoming a leaner and more focused organisation. Over the last five years, there has been a reduction of around 47% in workforce numbers across council services.

Public meeting on Lowestoft third crossing sees debate of options

A public meeting was held recently in Lowestoft to learn about an independent report regarding the potential crossing options for Lake Lothing. SCC leader Mark Bee was on hand alongside Peter Aldous MP, and Graham Newman, SCC's cabinet member for roads and transport and all spoke on aspects of the independent report, produced by international engineering experts WSP. All three agreed that a third crossing is needed to re-invigorate the economy in Lowestoft and on the basis of the independent report, the easterly crossing option should be pursued and taken forward as the preferred option. As Mark Bee said after the event: "There is a need for us to follow the best course of action that gives us the best chance of making this project a reality. A number of businesses and people who understand the dynamics of environmental protection and business generation in Lowestoft, including ABP, believe an easterly option would be the best option for the long term sustainability of the town." For more information visit the Suffolk County Council website.

Young people in Suffolk running the risk of potential cyber attack

Young people who share highly personal and/or explicit content with each other across mobile devices are vulnerable to harmful on-line content and aggression. This is one of the significant findings taken from the annual Suffolk Cyber Survey 2014. 2,988 children and young people aged from 10 years old and upwards took part in the survey conducted by e-Safer Suffolk to monitor trends in their online activity. The survey discovered, among other things: around 83% of Suffolk's young people own a smartphone; 74% of children and young people are accessing the internet at home and 71% of parents do not limit the time that their children are on the internet; 31% of young people are spending more than 5 hours a day on-line; cyber-bullying rates have risen to 23%, in line with national trends. The report is published on the e-Safer Suffolk website at: www.esafersuffolk.org

Applications invited for the Leading Lives Benefit Fund

Applications are currently being encouraged for the Leading Lives Community Benefit Fund for 2015. Leading Lives is a Suffolk-based social enterprise and provides support for a wide range of people. This year, they are awarding grants of between £1,000 and £5,000 to Suffolk-based charities and community groups who support people with learning disabilities, older people with dementia, people with autism, young people in transition and family carers. This year's fund has been doubled in value to £30,000 to enable larger grants to be awarded and more projects to be supported. The fund will support projects that allow vulnerable people to live more independently, to gain new skills, to stay safe and to participate in the life of their communities. Criteria for funding and an application can be found on our website www.leadinglives.org.uk .

Suffolk autism service up for national award

SCC's County Inclusive Resource is one of three schemes shortlisted as a finalist in the Award for Inspirational Education Provision – Other Education Provider category in the National Autistic Society's (NAS) Autism Professionals Awards 2015. The annual ceremony recognises and rewards services and professionals, that lead the way in innovative autism practice and make a real difference to the lives of people with the condition in the UK. The role of the County Inclusive Resource is to support children with autism attending mainstream schools in Suffolk, ensuring they are taught in an inclusive environment which helps them to reach their full potential. They work directly with pupils, modelling effective strategies and producing innovative, individualised resources. They also offer an extensive range of training for school staff and provide advice and guidance on supporting individual students. To find out more information about the Awards please visit www.autismprofessionalsawards.org.uk.

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