

December 2015 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Consultation to shape the future of Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service

A public consultation looking at the future provision for Suffolk's Fire and Rescue Service has been launched and I would encourage everyone to feed back their views via that consultation. Views are being sought from members of the public, fire and rescue staff and all interested parties regarding proposals for changes to the service including: reducing the number of fire engines in Ipswich, Bury St. Edmunds and Lowestoft, replacing the second fire engine at Sudbury with a rapid response fire fighting vehicle and closing Wrentham Fire Station. The changes proposed by the county council meet the ongoing reductions in funding for the fire service and also reflect the significant 26% reduction in 999 call demand over the last 5 years in Suffolk. Suffolk's Fire and Rescue Service is highly skilled and dynamic and whilst these proposals are challenging, I am confident that they will ensure the county council can continue to provide an outstanding service to the residents of Suffolk. Suffolk County Council recognises the significant importance of our fire and rescue service and has done everything possible to protect it against reductions in funding. This includes investment in new fire stations, training facilities, fire engines, firefighting clothing and equipment, not to mention an innovative collaborative approach with Suffolk's blue light emergency partners and there are plans to develop this further in the future. The consultation will close on Monday 22 February 2016 and once the results have been collated, the County Council's Cabinet will fully consider the response to the proposals, before any final decisions are made. Full details of the proposals and consultation are available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/fireredesign

Proposed changes to Household Waste Recycling Centres 2016/17

In response to customer feedback, the county council is currently proposing two changes to the running of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs). These changes will improve the services offered by Suffolk's HWRCs, as well as reducing costs for the county council. The county council is proposing to change opening hours at weekends so that they are more convenient for customers, remove the limits currently set for customers on the amount of rubble and plasterboard, but introducing nominal charges for disposing of all rubble and plasterboard materials. The county council is currently working with FCC Environment, which operates all 11 of the county's HWRCs to develop a proposal offering extended weekend opening times. This will help to ease congestion on sites at peak weekend times and will also give residents greater flexibility over when to visit. Extended opening times could be achieved at no additional cost by closing on one day midweek when sites are at their quietest. At the moment, rubble and plasterboard are accepted from residents in limited quantities, currently standing at two bags per vehicle per day. These materials are legally classed as construction waste, not regular household waste, meaning that the county council is not obliged to accept them. However, in order to continue providing this service to residents, the county council is proposing to introduce a new nominal charge for all rubble and plasterboard; but removing the limit of two bags. This would effectively mean that residents could bring all of their DIY waste on a single visit. Work is not being undertaken to research and further develop the proposals, which will include considering the level of the charges, how these will be levied, impact of tonnages received, communicating the changes in sufficient time and safeguarding measures to protect against fly-tipping. These changes complement a number of planned and recent improvements to Suffolk's HWRCs including an extension to the Mildenhall Centre, improvements to the layout of the Foxhall Road centre, including plans for a reuse shop on the site.

Time to grow your future

Last week an information session for aspiring farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs took place at Otley College. Suffolk County Council, Eastern Enterprise Hub and Easton & Otley College ran the event looking to encourage new applications. The Grow Your Future programme is part of the County Farms Estate Initiative run by the county council and is aimed at encouraging rural entrepreneurs to submit agricultural or rural industry business proposals; successful applicants would then be given the opportunity to take up a tenancy of a site within the council's farm estate. The programme goes on to provide support to those individuals to set up and run their rural enterprise and sites are typically between 10 and 50 hectares in size, with suitable buildings and in some cases, accommodation. Further details of the programme along with more information can be found via www.eehub.co.uk

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