

Parish Report January 2019

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Council pledges to lead fight against single-use plastics

On 6 December 2018, my group successfully put forward a motion calling on Suffolk County Council to do more to tackle single-use plastic waste in the county. The motion was agreed unanimously by all councillors.

The measures the council has agreed to implement include a commitment to work towards only using sustainable or re-usable plastics in all council buildings, writing to the public on how to reduce plastic waste, and creating a “plastic free Suffolk network” of councils, businesses and other organisations.

Consultation on cuts to Citizens Advice

In November, Suffolk County Council announced their intention to cut all funding for Suffolk’s Citizens Advice Bureaus as part of their budget savings proposals. This was later amended to a phased cut over 2 years. The funding will be reduced by half (£184 000) in 2019/20, before being removed entirely in 2020/21.

I am very concerned by these proposals, which will have a huge impact on our Citizen’s Advice Bureaus. The services provided by CABs represent great value for money and support many of our most vulnerable residents.

Suffolk County Council have launched a consultation on this proposed funding cut, which I would encourage you all to complete. The consultation runs until 5pm on Wednesday 23 January, and can be found at: www.suffolk.gov.uk/cabconsultation

Suffolk County Council refuses to tackle carbon emissions

At the Council meeting in December, councillors from my group proposed a motion asking Suffolk County Council to set an annual “carbon budget” and create targets for reducing carbon emissions. A carbon budget would set out how much carbon the council could emit each year, much like a financial budget sets out how much money can be spent. Unfortunately, the administration voted against the motion and refused to commit to any carbon reduction targets.

Suffolk County Council already monitors its carbon emissions, but currently this work is not in the public domain and there are no clear targets for carbon reduction. The motion asked the council to make this process open, transparent and accountable, and it’s a shame the administration didn’t want to engage with us on this issue.

Modern slavery statement unanimously agreed

A motion on modern slavery was unanimously agreed at the Council meeting in December. The motion commits Suffolk County Council to comply with the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and do all it can to eradicate modern slavery and human trafficking in Suffolk.

In addition, the council will review its procurement processes to see where they can be strengthened to fully comply with the Modern Slavery Act and bring a paper to Cabinet to decide on the production of an annual slavery and human trafficking statement. This statement will outline our actions to identify, prevent and mitigate modern slavery in our communities.

Energy from waste facility refinanced

In 2010, Suffolk County Council entered into a PFI-backed contract with Suez for the Suffolk energy from waste facility. The gate fee per tonne payments for the disposal of waste include the capital costs of the facility as well as the operating costs over the 25-year contract life. In October 2016, the council refinanced £37.8m (22.4%) of the facility's capital construction cost in order to reduce the gate fee per tonne.

At Cabinet in December it was agreed to refinance a further £10.2m (6.0%), which would further reduce the gate fee per tonne and consequently reduce the council's annual revenue costs. The net savings are projected to be a further cumulative £10.4m over the remainder of the contract.