



By County Councillor Jessica Fleming, Hartismere Division, Suffolk

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Over the past year Suffolk County Council has responded to reduced central government funding by continuing to trim its budget, make changes to local services and engage with the devolution project. Almost all services have seen reduced budgets and in most cases this has resulted in better organisation and delivery. The County's share of council taxes remained stable (with the exception of a 2% government recommended increase for health & social care integration).

Community Transport – Successful new primary community transport providers are shown below. The existing system included at least 19 separate providers operating in different areas, the new system starts on 13th June and promises to be simpler to use and more consistent. The Rickinghall & Botesdale Good Neighbour Scheme is expected to continue more or less as before.

Area	Contract holder	Also sub-contracting to
Babergh	HCTG (Haleigh Community Transport)	GoStart (Sudbury)
Forest Heath	TVN (The Voluntary Network)	
Ipswich	Aspire Together	RVS (Royal Voluntary Service)
Mid Suffolk	Aspire Together	
St. Edmundsbury	TVN (The Voluntary Network)	

The Environment and Sizewell C: As member responsible for 'Creating the Greenest County' I have been promoting environmental awareness within County Council procurement, policy making and strategic planning. I sit on the Joint Local Authority Group (JLAG) responsible for preparing for Sizewell C construction for which the Phase 2 public consultation is expected to take place later this year along with details of the proposals.

Schools: The need for investment in schools is very evident and necessary to support economic growth. Lobbying by councillors and MPs is starting to be noticed and the per-pupil funding for Suffolk schools has started to increase as a result. However there is much work to be done to secure the space and conditions for local schools to thrive, and to manage the acadmisation programme.

Railways: Plans to improve speed and frequency on the Norwich to London line are progressing, but a bit more slowly than anticipated. Network Rail has prepared a Level Crossing Reduction Strategy for East Anglia which is likely to recommend closing or modifying some highway, rights-of-way and agricultural crossings. I will keep affected parishes informed of the content when available. I

attended the Anglia Rail Conference just before Christmas about the new franchise to replace Abellio's contract later this year, the tender includes a requirement for some trains to make the journey from Norwich to London (and the reverse) in 90 minutes as well as additional freight capacity and better east – west linkages.

Roads and Infrastructure – The Council has been working with Kier May Gurney to improve the way the highways contract works and progress integration with SCC staff. Following great efforts on behalf of Suffolk MPs the government has promised funds to start work on the Lowestoft 3rd Crossing and the Wet Dock Crossing in Ipswich. Work is ongoing to obtain support for improvements to the A12, known as the Suffolk Energy Gateway.

Devolution: Devolution proposals have been under discussion since July 2015 and important decisions may be made about the future of local government in East Anglia; a combined authority (the 'Eastern Powerhouse') is envisioned which may include Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire (although the latter has most recently opted out of the deal) and an elected mayor. The project is at early stages and would need ratification by all participating local authorities to go ahead.

Please get in touch with me about any issues that are of concern or about which you would like to know more.