

Cabinet Member Report to County Council

15 September 2016

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Jane Storey Cabinet Member for Broadband and Rural Issues
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1. Better Broadband for Suffolk

Over the past few months, much progress has been made with the Better Broadband Programme.

Having completed the first contract ahead of target, significantly under budget, and reaching more premises than planned, focus is being placed on repeating that feat for the second contract. Currently, we are at around 87% fibre coverage in Suffolk, and we aim to reach 90% by the end of the year.

BT are currently re-modelling the rollout plan for the second contract, which will run to 2019. This is a result of a Suffolk County Council move to introduce the “clawed back” funding into the contract, pushing coverage higher, beyond the 97% by 2019 target. We are also pleased that other improvements are being modelled into the contract, including technological advances, but also improved engineering processes used to physically roll out the network.

Much has been discussed recently about how positive this is for Suffolk, in that the overall outcome improves drastically each time the plan is remodelled. It does however pose a communications challenge, and the team remain committed to ensuring the most accurate and up to date information is available at any one time. In practice, this will mean that the next 6-12 months of rollout can be uploaded to the website on a quarterly basis, but those areas which are yet to be surveyed will need more careful messaging.

We have also made improvements with the 2Mbps infill scheme, opening it up to wireless providers as well as satellite broadband providers, in attempt to ensure that residents and businesses have the widest possible choice of tactical suppliers whilst the fibre scheme and rollout ensues.

Lastly, we are very pleased that Matthew Hancock MP has now been appointed as the Minister for Digital and Culture. Matthew is acutely aware of the need for fibre broadband, and has already been briefed to this effect locally and nationally. The team and I are working to seize the opportunity to influence national policy relating to the “final few percent” with a view to any spending announcements which may be forthcoming in the Autumn Statement.

Finally, a reminder that the team are here to help with any queries and issues, and can be contacted at broadband@suffolk.gov.uk.

For further information, please contact: Jonathan Chown; Email: jonathan.chown@suffolk.gov.uk, Telephone: 01473 265211.

2. Military Covenant

Suffolk Armed Forces and Veterans Demographic Profile

As part of Suffolk County Council's pledge to support the UK Armed Forces community, the SCC Public Health and Protection Knowledge Hub released the Suffolk Armed Forces and Veterans Demographic Profile – this coincided with this year's UK Armed Forces Week.

A summary of the key findings can be found:

<http://www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-jsna/jsna-blog/an-interesting-month/>

For further information please contact: Natacha Bines; Email: natacha.bines@suffolk.gov.uk, Telephone: 01473 260091.

3. Rural Issues

For the last few weeks I have continued to be active on rural issues particularly relating to the Rural Summit scheduled for October 2016.

There is a lot of activity in the rural sector at the moment. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee has announced that they are holding an inquiry on Rural Tourism. Rural Tourism contributes around £17bn per year to the national economy but rural communities face particular challenges and these include transport connections, broadband access and seasonal employment. EFRA have asked for submissions by 6 September 2016 and officers at Suffolk County Council are co-ordinating a response for the Suffolk LEADER groups and Norfolk County Council for the Norfolk LEADER groups to ensure that their views are communicated effectively.

Suffolk Community Foundation are launching the refreshed Hidden Needs in Suffolk report on 28 September 2016 at University of Suffolk. This report will provide useful comparative information to see how hidden areas and groups of deprivation have fared since the last report in 2011. The information in the 2011 report has been used extensively to justify investment by funders in some of the most deprived rural areas of Suffolk where deprivation is hidden due to smaller numbers or a lack of understanding of the depth of deprivation in rural areas.

A new rural strategy for Essex has been launched which aims to deliver better services to local communities in Essex. For those interested it is called 'Respecting our Past, Embracing our Future: A Strategy for Rural Essex', and it is available to download from the Essex Rural Partnership website.

If you have any questions please do contact Frances Bedding who can supply further detail on the work that she is doing on my behalf.

Fran Bedding; Email: frances.bedding@suffolk.gov.uk, Telephone: 07714 854998.

4. Voluntary and Community Sector Support

Working Together Awards

The Working Together Fund is an awards programme open to Suffolk's voluntary and community organisations. Funded by Suffolk County Council, the programme is managed by Suffolk Community Foundation with the objective of recognising outstanding service delivery or community activity as a result of increased partnership or collaborative working. The programme made awards of up to £10,000 to 12 organisations from across the county. I am currently in the process of visiting these amazing and inspiring groups and organisations to give them their cheques and certificates. Councillors should receive an invitation to join me when I visit these organisations if the visits are taking place in your division.

For further information please contact: Stephen Watt; Email: stephen.watt2@suffolk.gov.uk, Telephone: 01473 260782.

5. Celebrating Success

Institute of Internal Auditor's Awards

I would like to congratulate our Audit Services Team on winning the Institute of Internal Auditor's 'Outstanding Team (public sector)' category of the Audit & Risk Awards 2016. In considering Suffolk's nomination the Institute highlighted the following initiatives:

- Moving away from fixed annual audit plans to a more responsive planning approach that takes into account emerging and salient risks, a true risk-based approach
- The adoption of assurance mapping techniques, setting an example for others working in the local authority sector
- Doing all of this in a climate of cost-cutting in the local authority sector

Christos Constantinou, Senior Auditor, was also highly commended by the judges in the Best Newcomer category.

For further information please contact: Peter Frost; Email: peter.frost@suffolk.gov.uk, Telephone: 01473 264247.

Law Society Excellence Awards

On the back of last year's success with Tim Earl winning In-house Legal Professional of the Year in the Lawyers and Local Government Awards, I am delighted to announce that our in-house legal team has been shortlisted again

in the [Law Society Excellence Awards 2016](#). They are the only local government team to have been shortlisted in three categories, which are:

- ***Excellence In-house***

This category celebrates excellence and outstanding achievement by an in-house team. In-house teams are required to exhibit a unique blend of legal and other skills such as leadership or innovation. Suffolk Legal presented their national reputation for being top of the performance tree in many areas of public law and in particular presented their strengths in leadership, the ability to embrace change and maintaining delivery of exceptional, innovative and cost effective services.

- ***Excellence in Learning and Development***

Following changes to continuing professional development in the legal profession this category was seeking clear linkages with how learning and development enhanced the business. Suffolk's entry highlighted that the critical success factor for their national reputation are their people recognizing that an energized team is key to everything they do and how, in a climate of pay freezes, they tackled a range of risks and created opportunities for all.

- ***Solicitor of the Year - In-house***

This category celebrates excellence and outstanding achievement by an individual solicitor working in an in-house role. Tim Earl is a local government law expert, especially childcare litigation, and heads up Suffolk Legal. Balancing strategic management, complex case holding and senior external roles, Tim has developed a team with a national reputation valuing the benefits of welfare and development across the whole team.

For further information please contact: Tim Earl; Email: timothy.earl@suffolk.gov.uk, Telephone: 01473 260860.
