

Scrutiny Committee, 30 September 2016

Information Bulletin

The Information Bulletin is a document that is made available to the public with the published agenda papers. It can include update information requested by the Committee as well as information that a service considers should be made known to the Committee.

This Information Bulletin covers the following items:

1. [Suffolk Libraries](#)
2. [Site selection for new primary schools](#)
3. [Update on 'Suffolk Speaks'](#)

1. Suffolk Libraries

1.1 At the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 29 June 2016, the Committee agreed to request an Information Bulletin item providing:

- i) a summary of the activities which contributed to the success of those libraries in the county which have a high footfall;
- ii) details about how Suffolk Libraries is working to develop its marketing expertise.

1.2 This bulletin provides follow-up information relating to these questions:

1.3 The activities that have contributed to the success of those libraries with high footfall last year are, broadly, those that are widespread and successful in all Suffolk libraries:

- Lively regular activities for children and for older adults.
- Use of the building outside library hours for significant community-led activity, for example adult learning classes in Aldeburgh library.
- Excellent one-off activities, musical performances, author visits and talks for both adults and children, activities that encourage communities to enjoy creation, performance or recital together.
- Participation in wider artistic, literary or community celebratory programmes, usually with the library hosting one or more events.
- Broadening the range of services and opportunities to help people get online and interact with others. All libraries offer access to the Minecraft game.
- Building and maintaining relationships with other services in shared premises, so that people visit for more than one reason.

- Taking opportunities to co-locate with other services or to host them, as with the Post Office in Stradbroke Library and district council public-facing services in Beccles, Woodbridge and Felixstowe.
- 1.4 Prior to the 29 June Scrutiny Committee meeting Suffolk Libraries Board had resolved to commission an external expert with specialist knowledge of fundraising and marketing, to be supported by an internal project group of staff. This person has now been recruited. The primary themes of their work are to:
- Identify and exploit new market opportunities
 - Raise the status and visibility of Suffolk Libraries brand
 - Develop mutually advantageous relationships with potential commercial partners
 - Identify and exploit funding opportunities locally, countywide, and nationally
- 1.5 A process was put in place to select Suffolk Libraries staff for the project group. The group has met together, and different work tasks were assigned, on which smaller task teams are now working. The whole group will meet again in October to review progress.

For further information please contact: Stephen Taylor, Development Manager; Libraries, Information and Culture; Email: Stephen.taylor@suffolk.gov.uk, Telephone: 01473 265309.

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2. Site selection for new primary schools

- 2.1 At its meeting on 28 July 2016, the Scrutiny Committee agreed, at the request of its Chairman, to ask for an information bulletin report on the County Council's general principles and processes for the site selection process for new schools.
- 2.2 When a new school is required to support a major housing development the developer will often offer a school site free of charge as part of their planning obligations. In these circumstances selecting a school site is relatively straight forward as the site will be within the new community with access and services provided as part of the planning application.
- 2.3 When the need for a new school has been established, senior colleagues in the Schools Infrastructure Team analyse population and forecast data to determine the appropriate location for the proposed school. At this early stage of the process the key consideration will be the distribution of current and future school age children and the availability of school places in that area.
- 2.4 Concertus will be commissioned to search for suitable sites. This search will investigate potential sites which have an area of approximately five acres, are broadly rectangular, flat and have sufficient scope for further expansion in the future. Our contractor, Concertus, will then assess sites in the locality, taking account of a number of factors which could have a significant influence on the cost or delivery of the new school. The sites identified will then be presented in an options document where the pros and cons associated with each are considered carefully.
- 2.5 The main factors we consider are listed below:

- Location in relation to other schools.
 - Accessibility of the site – in consultation with Suffolk Highways colleagues.
 - Environmental issues – in consultation with local planning and ecology officers.
 - Cost of acquiring the site - is it affordable? Particularly if it has residential planning consent.
 - Availability of the site to deliver a new building within our timescales.
- 2.6 Using the information and reports provided, a senior officer in the Schools Infrastructure Team will create an options document which will be shared with colleagues and stakeholders, including the Cabinet Member for Education and Children’s Services and local county council members. Once we have received and considered feedback from stakeholders a preferred site will be identified.
- 2.7 Whilst this process will identify a specific site, it is very unlikely that it will be the perfect location that will address every aspect of our criteria.

For further information, please contact Frank Stockley, Senior Infrastructure Officer; Email: frank.stockley@suffolk.gov.uk, Telephone: 01473 264644.

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3. Update on ‘Suffolk Speaks’

- 3.1 On 7 June 2016, the Committee considered a report providing members with an opportunity to consider the County Council’s approach to consultation and to identify good practice which would help to inform future consultation exercises. The Committee agreed to “request an information bulletin on the current status and membership of the Suffolk 1000, an overview of what the forum had been or would be involved in and details of how vulnerable and hard to reach groups were represented on this forum”. The following item provides a response to this recommendation.
- 3.2 The Suffolk Speaks Panel was created in 2011 by the County Council and the District and Borough authorities within the county as an online group to engage in public consultation activities. Over time, membership has reached a figure of 594. However, the majority of members signed up in 2011 and 2012. By 2014 the membership was considered in need of ‘refreshing’, as is industry recommended, to weed out defunct email addresses and individuals who no longer wish to participate. Some cleansing work of this nature was undertaken at this time however a lack of resource across the county partners and prioritisation of other work has meant that the membership details are now unusable as they are to a great extent out of date. The last usage of the group was for a ‘Local Authority Priorities’ event at Endeavour House in early 2015.
- 3.3 There is now very little dedicated resource across the district and borough councils, which previously were equal partners with the County Council, and currently no full-time resource within Suffolk County Council. The available resources are focused on specific consultations with additional resource being brought in when required.

3.4 At this stage, no action is being taken on the Suffolk Speaks Panel and the future of the Panel will be considered with the other recommendations from the Scrutiny consideration of Consultation and will be addressed in the options available for the future.

3.5 The following is a list of consultations that Suffolk Speaks members were invited to take part in during the active life of the panel:

Consultation	Local Authority	Dates live	
Mobile libraries Consultation	Suffolk County Council	07/09/2011	07/10/2011
The budget challenge	Suffolk County Council	12/09/2011	23/10/2011
Draft Strategic Plan Consultation	Forest Heath District Council	20/10/2011	09/12/2011
Ipswich – Transport Fit for the 21st Century	Suffolk County Council	31/10/2011	25/11/2011
Babergh's Core Strategy	Babergh District Council	04/11/2011	02/12/2011
New heritage organisation for Suffolk consultation	Suffolk County Council	21/11/2011	31/12/2011
Waveney Budget Consultation	Waveney District Council	29/11/2011	23/12/2011
Suffolk Coastal 2012/13 budget consultation	Suffolk Coastal District Council	29/11/2011	23/12/2011
Street Trading Conditions - Review	Forest Heath District Council	14/12/2011	22/01/2012
Equality Scheme: A Fairer Ipswich 2012-2015	Ipswich Borough Council	07/02/2012	29/02/2012
New Website Consultation	Suffolk County Council	29/02/2012	29/03/2012
Draft Air Quality Action Plan for the Ferry Lane, Felixstowe AQMA	Suffolk Coastal District Council	06/03/2012	06/06/2012
Libraries Mystery Shopping Consultations	Suffolk County Council	03/02/2014	03/03/2014
Council Spending Priorities 2015/16	Suffolk County Council	18/11/2014	18/12/2014
LA Priorities Event Endeavour House	Suffolk County Council	10/01/2015	10/02/2015

3.6 Whenever a major consultation is undertaken by Suffolk County Council, its accessibility to all groups is a major consideration with a variety of tools used to address access issues to vulnerable and hard to reach groups. The Suffolk Speaks panel was used as one such tool. Originally the group was set up to enable anyone wishing to join to do so and it had been the intention, as membership grew, to make efforts to improve representation by actively seeking to attract underrepresented groups. Whilst the group had not reached a point where it reached all vulnerable and underrepresented groups, other channels were used during consultation activity to achieve this.

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