

## **SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018**

We are all aware that we are in a time of change, not just locally but nationally, globally and I have continued to report, over the past year, the changes that are taking place within the county council services.

Local authorities, across the country, continue to face significant challenges to meet front line service requirements. Suffolk is no exception. One of the most significant ways SCC has adopted, to gain savings, is to work in partnership with other authorities and organisations. Having sufficient resources to deliver frontline services in a climate where there is less money, remains a challenge, thus change is inevitable.

Savings from 'blue light' ie police and ambulance services, through collaboration, is working most effectively.

Making the best use of property by sharing buildings with public sector partners.

Use of digital technology.

Efficiencies within Trading Standards and Health and Safety are being pursued.

Drone technology is being used as part of a multi-agency Air Support Unit by Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service, Suffolk Constabulary, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Lowland Search and Rescue. Drones provide aerial surveillance options to support emergency services and voluntary organisations across a range of incidents.

County elections took place in May 2017 and the conservatives gained a considerable majority; 52 conservatives councillors out of a total of 75. Training of new councillors took place together with placement on committees and outside bodies.

SCC agreed to a council tax rise of 4.99% - 2.99% for County Services and 2% increase in Adult Social Care precept. Savings in the region of £23.9m have been identified. The council's transformation programmes, that will change the basis of service provision, will be key to delivering these savings. Working with partners is fundamental to the effective and efficient delivery of services. Leadership and organisation are key.

SCCs efforts, to raise standards in education, are producing results. The 'Raising the Bar' programme has led to more students achieving the expected standard in English and Maths. 87% of Suffolk schools have been judged 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, an increase of 12% from 2015. Suffolk has risen 26 places in national league tables (83<sup>rd</sup> out of 151). – We still have a way to go.

Suffolk CC Highways have been re-structured, as of September 2017, and a new Highways Senior Leadership Team have set in train the transformation programme. Staffing levels have been reduced and new ways of working introduced. The good news is that government has given a funding boost to Suffolk Highways of £2.5m for pot hole repairs. This comes as a welcome relief in the wake of the recent bad

weather and Highways are bringing in additional gangs to tackle, first the major roads and then the minor.

The consultation into home to school transport has ended and analysis is taking place. £21ml is spent per year on school transport and during the past two years SCC has managed to save £2.6ml from its school and post 16 travel. However, despite this, the budget is overspent by £3ml. 3 options were consulted upon. A report will be coming to Cabinet in June.

The recent meeting of the Police & Crime Panel, which I chair, had considerable publicity. The main issue was the visibility of the police. It is acknowledged that the public would like to see more police, especially in rural areas, but the days of 'bobbies on the beat' are no longer possible due to limited finance and an increase in 'hidden crime' such as cybercrime and domestic violence.. The Panel recommended that there is greater effort to communicate more widely through social media and other channels.

After many years of objection to 2,000 houses at Adastral Park SCDC gave the go ahead at a meeting where I was permitted 1min 30secs to 'sum up' my final view! I was totally disgusted with SCDC's lack of consideration for the views of myself and the people I represent.

Finally, SCC has engaged Republica, an analytical firm that will look at the best way for Suffolk to deliver public services; either through a unitary authority( eg Buckinghamshire) or a 2 tier unitary (Dorset).

**PATRICIA O'BRIEN**