

Report for Nedging with Naughton PC from county councillor Robert Lindsay

8.9.20

Changes to Children's Centres challenged by opposition

On 25 August, the Cabinet agreed to reduce the number of Children's Centres in Suffolk from 38 to 17 full-time and 11 part-time "Family Hubs". I and my group are concerned at the loss of so many centres and the impact on families. My group worked with the Labour group to collectively challenge the Cabinet's decision. This challenge has been accepted as valid by the council's Monitoring Officer, and so the decision will be suspended until it has been looked at by the Scrutiny Committee on 11 September. The Scrutiny Committee will either confirm the Cabinet's decision or ask the Cabinet to reconsider the decision.

Update on school transport arrangements for September

Suffolk County Council has confirmed that it will initially not be offering spare seats on school transport. This is due to social distancing requirements, which have reduced the capacity on school buses. However, parents may be able to apply for a spare seat from October half term. The council has also confirmed the arrangements for masks and social distancing on school transport. The rules vary depending on the type of transport used.

<https://www.suffolkonboard.com/school-travel/bus-getting-to-school-college-or-sixth-form/coronavirus-faqs/>

Council takes giant loan for ballooning costs of Lowestoft bridge

The cabinet in late August decided to borrow the county's largest ever single sum - £65m - to finance the ballooning costs of the planned third crossing at Lake Lothing, Lowestoft. The cabinet heard that estimated costs had risen from £92 million to £145m. The interest costs alone for the loan will be £3.3m a year for the next 30 years. This is essentially a road bridge (although with a footway attached) and personally I do not see how it matches with the county's goal of reaching zero carbon by 2030.

Infrastructure Board established to oversee costs of large projects

It has emerged that Suffolk County Council established an Infrastructure Board in November 2019 to oversee large infrastructure projects and ensure they remain within budget. This is in response to a number of recent projects where costs have increased dramatically,

including the Upper Orwell Crossings which was eventually abandoned after costs increased by £43m. The board is currently only made up of officers.

Climate emergency recommendations for Suffolk wide carbon reductions published

When on July 14th, the county council Cabinet approved a plan to bring council carbon emissions to zero by 2030 it also authorised the Suffolk Climate Partnership to commission a report detailing how emissions by the wider county could be brought to zero by 2030. That initial report, by consultants Ricardo, has been published and is due to go to public consultation via series of five workshops. It is available on the county council website <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/pledge-to-climate-emergency-declaration/>

It includes proposals for eliminating one in four car journeys across Suffolk by 2030 and massive investment in electric charging points to enable the remaining three in four cars to be electric by 2030.