

Nedging PC 6.9.21 Report from County Councillor Robert Lindsay

Road closures

You asked me about the road closure of the Ipswich Road and lack of warning about it. SCC Highways assure me that Vodafone were fined for not putting up the signs early enough (it was supposed to be two weeks in advance they did it three days before). At full council earlier in September one of my group colleagues asked about “sloppy signage” with 20% of closures where the signage had not been up to standard. Cabinet member Paul West accepted that it was the sloppy behaviour of the utility companies (rather than Highways Network Assurance) and said he was making efforts to improve this behaviour. Though he gave no details about how. He said that last year there 65,000 applications for closure – over 200 a day – and that because of the volume highways can only do a “sample” of them to check that signage was being done correctly.

Suffolk Climate Emergency Action Plan

The council agreed a little noticed plan to achieve zero carbon for Suffolk (not just the councils but the whole of Suffolk), in June.

It sets out broad goals for change in behaviours and technology to achieve zero carbon by 2030 by means of measures of: ‘transitioning to a fully decarbonised heat supply for homes; improving energy efficiency; behavioural change to use less energy; low carbon travel; reducing car use; more efficient freight transport; reductions in commercial and industrial carbon use; improvements in renewable energy production and a flexible grid’ among others.

Cycling and walking motion

The Conservative administration said in its election literature this spring that it had identified £20m of cycle path upgrades. In line with this I, with the backing of my political group, proposed a motion at the September Council Meeting that the Council set specific benchmarks and targets each year to spend the £20m up to 2030 in order to double cycling and walking by then. Unfortunately the administration voted this motion down and admitted that what they meant was that they had identified cycle routes for prioritising and calculated the cost as £20m but there was no commitment to spend any of it over any timescale.

Devolution for Suffolk without need for unitaries?

In the past the Government have insisted that they want unitary authorities with a mayor, before they will hand over extra powers to local government. However, a ‘levelling up’ white paper is to be produced by Government and Robert Jenrick MP (Sec of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government) changes the strident tone. He has said that it is now not necessary to be a formal unitary authority to receive devolved powers but any authority will have to have a governance mechanism in place that shows district councils and the county council working together. Suffolk county council and the districts have together expressed an interest in talking further with Jenrick on this. There is already a Suffolk leaders group in place which includes the CCGs and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Suffolk Biodiversity policy development panel

I am on this panel and have attended the first 3 of 8 meetings at which some basic terms of reference were agreed - including reversing biodiversity losses by 2030. I will try to ensure that goals and a strict timeframe are set so that progress can be checked.

At the second meeting, we also discussed a different regime for verge management as well as reducing the use of glyphosate.