

Chedburgh Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held at the Erskine Centre, Chevington Road, Chedburgh on Monday 14 September 2015 at 7.30pm

Present: Councillors (Cllrs) Michael Chester, Pat Fisher, Margaret Rickard, Clare Varney and Peter Westcott (Chairman)

In attendance: Paul MacLachlan (Executive Officer), Borough Cllr Angela Rushen (part), PCSO Anthony Welford (part), PC Darren Marshall (part), Rob Beaumont (part) and 3 members of the public.

The following documents will be appended to the signed minutes:

- the Agenda;
- the following appendices:
 - A: Actions arising from prior meetings;
 - B: SALC guidance on Predetermination
 - C: Village handyman's report;
 - D: Responsible Finance Officer's report;
 - E: County Councillors report;
 - F: Borough Councillor's report.

28. Apologies

The apologies of Cllr Teresa Landymore were received and accepted.
The apologies of County Councillor Terry Clements were received.

29. Declarations of Interest

None.

30. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting dated Monday 13 July were agreed a true record and signed by the Chair.

The Chair thanked Rob Beaumont for his attendance at the meeting. The Chairman proposed, and it was agreed, that agenda item 34(ii) be taken at this point and that the public be permitted to participate in the discussion.

34(ii) Progress with development of the former fireworks factory

Rob Beaumont reported that:

- work to clear the public open space had commenced and that all tyres earmarked for removal had been extracted and were ready to be taken from the site;
- work on the public open space should be completed by the March 2016 deadline;
- 26 dwellings are due to be handed over to Havebury Housing Partnership by 1 November 2015;
- the two derelict buildings within the public open space will be taken down shortly;
- rubbish in the wooded area will be cleared prior to planting;
- abandoned manhole covers near the main road will be collected;
- arrangements for the ongoing maintenance of the public open space have not yet been made;
- the developer wishes to begin phase 2 before March 2016 and that a variation of planning permission will be sought to enable this.

Chedburgh Parish Council

Rob Beaumont responded as follows to questions from the public:

- that water will be drained from site using water retention chambers specified by Anglian Water;
- that the whole of the back area will be planted with trees and shrubs;
- that, if requested, the developer will either brick up the air raid shelter or remove it altogether;
- that the developer is retaining ownership of the public open space and, while there are no plans for future development, this could not be entirely ruled out.

Rob Beaumont left the meeting.

31. County, Borough and Community reports

- (i) County Cllr Terry Clements submitted a written report which is produced in full at appendix E.
- (ii) Borough Cllr, Angela Rushen, gave a report which is produced in full at appendix F. Cllr Rushen commented on:
 - Ministry of Justice plans to close the magistrates court in Bury St Edmunds;
 - the withdrawal of the County Council's brown bin subsidy and the likely introduction in 2016/17 of charges for those wishing to retain the service;
 - local public transport options and the current rural transport survey.
- (iii) PCSO Anthony Welford and PC Darren Marshall advised that no crimes had been reported in Chedburgh since the last meeting. PC Marshall reported on recent thefts of lead from the roofs of churches close to the parish.

The meeting was adjourned for public question time.

No items were raised.

The meeting was reconvened.

PCSO Welford, PC Marshall and Borough Councillor, Angela Rushen, left the meeting.

32. Decisions taken since the last meeting

None.

33. Clerk's report

- (i) Cllrs received and noted the Clerk's report of actions taken since the last meeting (Appendix A) and approved funding to enable the Clerk to identify ownership of Vendas Lane via the Land Registry. The Clerk also reported:
 - receipt of a letter of thanks from the community council following the recent donation;
 - that a satisfactory play area report had been received following an inspection in August and that the Borough Council's annual inspection report was due shortly;
 - on his attendance at a SALC Finance and Accounting seminar on Tuesday 22 September.
- (iii) Cllrs noted the content of SALC's guidance on Predetermination (Appendix B).

Chedburgh Parish Council

34. Planning and Environment

- (i) Report on recent applications
None.
- (ii) Report on progress with development of the former fireworks factory
Taken at an earlier point in the agenda.
- (iii) Marquis Cornwallis public house
The Chairman reported that the planned sale of the Marquis Cornwallis had fallen through and that a new buyer was being sought.
- (iv) Village flower displays
Cllr Fisher reported that she was willing to continue to arrange all village floral displays other than that under the village sign. Cllrs thanked Cllr Fisher for her work and agreed funding for the flowers and shrubs required for the autumn replanting. It was further agreed that Cllr Fisher arrange for less demanding shrubs to be planted under the village sign.
- (v) Chedburgh emergency plan
Cllrs noted that, some years ago, work had been undertaken on a Chedburgh emergency plan. Cllrs agreed that work on the project be terminated and that the emergency plan be abandoned.

35. Community

- (i) Village Handyman report
Ian Leggett's report was received, noted and necessary expenditure approved. See Appendix C for the full report.
- (ii) Vehicle Activated signage
The content of Ian Leggett's VAS report was noted.
- (iii) 30mph notices for domestic wheelie bins
This item was deferred to the next meeting.
- (iv) 2016 Summer Fete
Cllrs approved a request that the 2016 Summer fete be held at the Parish Council playing field on Saturday 25 June 2016.
- (v) Rural Transport survey
It was agreed that the Clerk highlight the survey in the parish newsletter and encourage users of local public or community transport to participate.
- (vi) Proposed closure of Bury St Edmunds magistrate court
Cllrs asked the clerk to circulate a draft letter objecting to the closure.

36. Finance

- (i) The report of the Responsible Finance Officer (Appendix D) was received and noted.
- (ii) Village Hall hire charges
The Clerk reported on correspondence relating to village hall hire charges. Cllrs noted that the hourly hire charge had increased from £5 to £6 but confirmed that the council will honour a pre-existing agreement to pay a flat fee of £20 for use of the hall for parish council meetings.

Chedburgh Parish Council

(iii) Ring-fenced funds

It was agreed that funds currently ring-fenced for the RAF Memorial (£110.00) were no longer required and that the sum of £110.00 be added to the ring-fenced funds earmarked for future play area improvements.

(iv) External auditor

The Clerk reported on an enquiry by the external auditor regarding the contractual retirement gratuity paid to the former clerk.

37. Councillors' reports and items for future agendas

(i) No further reports were made.

(ii) No meeting arrangements were advised.

(iii) No future agenda items were proposed.

(vi) Other items of information

Cllrs Chester and Fisher reported on a productive meeting with a visitor to the parish seeking further information about a relative who had served, during the war, at the local airbase.

The meeting ended at 9.25pm.

Chairman
9 November 2015

Actions arising from prior meetings

Presented to Parish Council meeting dated 14 September 2015

Cllrs – All Councillors	MC – Michael Chester	PF – Pat Fisher
MR – Margaret Rickard	CV – Clare Varney	PW – Peter Westcott
TL – Teresa Landymore	IL – Ian Leggett	Clerk – Paul MacLachlan

Actions carried forward from Parish Council meeting dated 13 July 2015

Ref	Action	Who	Done
Meeting dated 13 July 2015			
24(ii)	Forward notes of meeting to Rob Beaumont	Clerk	Yes
24(iii)	Write to Hawthorn Leisure advising that Council wishes land to remain undeveloped and to request a meeting	Clerk	Yes
24(v)	Investigate ownership of Vendas Lane	Clerk	Approve cost?
25(i)	Enquire whether volunteers are covered when using own tools and equipment such as industrial diggers	Clerk	Yes
25(ii)	Forward VAS data to PCSO Welford	Clerk	Yes
26(i)	Put ring fenced funds on next agenda	Clerk	Yes
26(ii)	Transfer funds to Uniry Trust bank account	Clerk	Yes
26(iii)	Write to Community Council and Little Teapots re grant support	Clerk	Yes
26(v)	Send employment costs paper to Cllrs	Clerk	No
Meeting date 9 March 2015			
9(i)	Purchase grit bins (not urgent)	IL	In hand
Meeting dated 12 January			
6(iii)	Repair to Chevington Road bus shelter	Clerk	Yes

Publication of delegated decisions

PREDETERMINATION

Introduction

1. Decisions made by local authorities and other public bodies which are based on bias or predetermination have always been open to legal challenge by judicial review. There is useful caselaw which gives guidance on how decision-makers such as councillors should avoid bias and predetermination (see paragraphs 11-12 below).
2. Being predetermined is different from having a disclosable interest. Issues of conduct may occur alongside those of predetermination but, equally, the two issues may occur entirely separately. For example being determined to oppose building next to your own house may be both ; being opposed to building at the other end of the village may be predetermination but may not be a disclosable interest.

Section 25 of the Localism Act 2011

3. S.25 of the Localism Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act") is intended to deal with challenges to the validity of decisions taken by parish councils (or in Wales a community council) because a member or co-opted member is alleged to have had a closed mind when voting. The full text of s.25 is in the Appendix to this LTN.
4. A 'co-opted member' of a relevant authority is defined as a person who is not a member of the authority but who (a) is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or (b) is a member of, and represents the authority on, any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the authority, and who is entitled to vote on any question which falls to be decided at any meeting of the committee or sub-committee.

5. 'Relevant authorities' includes all principal authorities in England and Wales, parish councils in England, community councils in Wales, National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority.

Purpose and objectives of section 25 of the 2011 Act

6. By introducing s.25, the Government has not attempted to change caselaw in respect of predetermination and bias but it has attempted to clarify it.
7. The explanatory notes to the 2011 Act in relation to s.25 say that it 'clarifies how the common law concept of "predetermination" applies to councillors in England and Wales'.
8. 'Predetermination occurs where someone has a closed mind, with the effect that they are unable to apply their judgment fully and properly to an issue requiring a decision. Decisions made by members and co-opted members of relevant authorities later judged to have predetermined views have been quashed. [I]f members or co-opted members have given a view on an issue, this does not show that they have closed minds on that issue. If they have campaigned on an issue or made public statements about their approach to an item of council business, they will be able to participate in discussion of that issue in the council and to vote on it if it arises in an item of council business requiring a decision.'
9. S.25 provides that a member or co-opted member is not to be taken to have had a closed mind 'just because' they 'had previously done anything that directly or indirectly indicated what view he/she took, or would or might take, in relation to a decision'.
10. It must be remembered that predetermination is different from pre-disposition. There are no restrictions on a member or co-opted member holding a provisional view on an issue (pre-disposition) but there is a problem if he/she acts with a closed mind on a subject (predetermination).

The courts

11. In a number of cases including R. (on the application of Island Farm Development Ltd) v Bridgend CBC (2006) and the Court of Appeal decision in

R. (on the application of Lewis) v Redcar and Cleveland BC (2008) the courts have already gone a long way in recognising that councillors need to be councillors and that not all that they think or say beforehand is necessarily what they do at the point of decision making - they may be swayed by argument at the meeting.

12. In National Assembly for Wales v Condon and another [2006] the court recognised that there is a two stage test for predetermination. First the behaviour complained of has to be relevant to the issue. Second the situation has to be one where a notional fair-minded and well-informed observer, looking objectively at all circumstances, would consider that there is a real risk that the decision maker has refused even to consider a relevant argument or would refuse to consider a new argument.
13. In both the courts and the 2011 Act there is a presumption against predetermination by local decision makers. This is to enable democracy to work in the way it has developed.
14. But the presumption that there is no closed mind can be rebutted. In a situation where a member said something like "over my dead body" in respect of voting a particular way on an issue, the 2011 Act does not change the legal position that if the member could be shown to have approached a decision with a closed mind, that could affect the validity of the decision. In other words it is for a complainant to prove that a closed mind existed in a particular case rather than for one to be assumed by any set of circumstances.
15. So, if a member had expressed views on a particular issue but when taking the decision they had approached this with an open mind and taken account of all the relevant information, they will not have predetermined the issue.
16. However, the more extreme the view expressed by a councilor, the more difficult in practice it will be to be able to get away from the impression that they would approach the decision with a closed mind.

Examples where there is no predetermination

- a) A councillor who stated that he was against any further development in the community. Subsequently voting against a planning application does not show predetermination.

- b) A parish councillor is also a councillor on the local planning authority. He would not have predetermined his view on a planning application to be decided by the principal authority just because the parish council had already considered and he had voted for or against that planning application. The important issue is that the councillor must be prepared to reconsider the planning application at principal authority level in the light of the material information and considerations presented there.
- c) A councillor who helped a resident to object to a new play area. She would not have predetermined the issue if she subsequently voted against a motion to have the play area just because of helping the resident.
- d) A councillor's pre-election campaign included opposing a proposed incinerator. After he was elected, he voted to end the negotiations to sell local council land for development of an incineration plant. There is no presumption that the councillor has predetermined his decision because of his election campaign statements.
- e) A councillor's political group on a community council has a planning policy which supports housing development in the area. The councillor votes to support a new affordable housing development in the area. The policy in itself is not evidence of the councillor's closed mind about the affordable housing scheme. When voting on a decision to support a particular planning application, the councillor would have to have regard to considerations which are specific to the application even though because of his political group's planning policy he might be predisposed to be in favour of it.

Summary

- 17. In all the above examples, a council's decision will be safe from a successful legal challenge if the councillors' approach is objective and fair and they consider all the relevant and material issues.
- 18. If there is evidence of predetermination by one or more councillors then the council decision could be subject to a successful Judicial Review. The decision could be quashed and the council would have to reconsider and re-make the decision without the predetermination.

19. In practice many of such challenges come from individuals or companies that have had planning applications adversely commented upon or refused.

Other relevant Legal Topic Notes (LTNs):

LTN	Title	Relevance
5	Parish, Town and Community Council Meetings	Sets out the relevant principles in respect of decision making
7	Non-Councillor Members of Committees	Sets out the relevant principles in respect of decision making.
15	Legal Proceedings	sets out judicial review proceedings

© NALC 2014

Appendix

LOCALISM ACT 2011

Section 25

(1) Subsection (2) applies if—

(a) as a result of an allegation of bias or predetermination, or otherwise, there is an issue about the validity of a decision of a relevant authority, and

(b) it is relevant to that issue whether the decision-maker, or any of the decision-makers, had or appeared to have had a closed mind (to any extent) when making the decision.

(2) A decision-maker is not to be taken to have had, or to have appeared to have had, a closed mind when making the decision just because—

(a) the decision-maker had previously done anything that directly or indirectly indicated what view the decision-maker took, or would or might take, in relation to a matter, and

(b) the matter was relevant to the decision.

(3) Subsection (2) applies in relation to a decision-maker only if that decision-maker—

(a) is a member (whether elected or not) of the relevant authority, or

(b) is a co-opted member of that authority.

(4) In this section—

“co-opted member”, in relation to a relevant authority, means a person who is not a member of the authority but who—

(a) is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or

(b) is a member of, and represents the authority on, any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the authority,

and who is entitled to vote on any question which falls to be decided at any meeting of the committee or sub-committee;

“decision”, in relation to a relevant authority, means a decision made in discharging functions of the authority, functions of the authority's executive, functions of a committee of the authority or functions of an officer of the authority (including decisions made in the discharge of any of those functions otherwise than by the person to whom the function was originally given);

“elected mayor” has the meaning given by section 9H or 39 of the Local Government Act 2000;

“member”—

(a) in relation to the Greater London Authority, means the Mayor of London or a London Assembly member, and

(b) in relation to a county council, district council, county borough council or London borough council, includes an elected mayor of the council;

“relevant authority” means—

(a) a county council,

(b) a district council,

(c) a county borough council,

(d) a London borough council,

(e) the Common Council of the City of London,

(f) the Greater London Authority,

(g) a National Park authority,

(h) the Broads Authority,

(i) the Council of the Isles of Scilly,

(j) a parish council, or

(k) a community council.

(5) This section applies only to decisions made after this section comes into force, but the reference in subsection (2)(a) to anything previously done includes things done before this section comes into force.

Handyman Report for period July to September 2015
Presented to Parish Council meeting dated 14 September 2015

The two notice boards were treated with wood stain. The one on The Green needed some repair also as nails were protruding from warped wood on the roof area.

The VAS fitting was delayed as the incorrect brackets were supplied and took a week to be replaced. The brackets arrived on July 27th and were fixed on 28th. The VAS was installed the same day in Chevington Road. The VAS system ran until August 10th. Analysis done and sent to Clerk to the PC.

Path verge along Queens Lane attended to as nettles were 6 feet high and leaning over pathway. These were cut back.

The Queens lane ditch mesh filters were cleaned out after the heavy rain. They do seem to be doing there function very well.

Two posts at entrance to Play Area painted with white paint.

After contacting West Suffolk regarding information given that the verges would not be cut back in future, and West Suffolk replying stating "no such instruction has been made", why is it that only one cut has been made to the verges in Queens Lane, Bury Road and Chevington Road and that was with a tractor. Clearly someone is telling lies!

There has been a lot of grain lying on the roadside near the grain store attracting rats.

Play area swings frames cleaned of tree stain, and bearings greased. All chains checked for wear. The playing field continues to suffer from dog mess with an average of 3 picked up every morning, some in the play area itself.

The sign at THE STREET which was damaged in February and reported to Highways was removed in May. It has not been replaced. I have contacted Highways again for a progress report.

The mesh filters in Queens Lane ditch were overwhelmed with torrential rain on August 26th but still caught the debris washed down. They were cleared and reset on August 27th.

Reported to Highways the dangerous condition of Chevington Road just past the 30mph sign. At least 6 inches deep holes with weeds growing in them over a 20 metres long area. This was reported 6 months ago and told the holes were not large enough to warrant a repair.

Reported to Highways the pathway along Chevington Road as hedges are overhanging the path and the verges need attention.

Reported to Highways that the verges along Queens Lane need cutting back.

Reported to Highways that a street light opposite Majors is not working.

Reported to Highways that white junction markings have almost disappeared at junction of Chestnut Crescent and Queens Lane.

The Dog Bin in Erskine Centre car park has corroded badly. Will arrange a repair locally so as not to incur the high cost of a replacement.

The road sign at Chestnut Crescent is in need of repair. Wooden backing plate rotted and name plate loose.

Rubbish will be collected off the A143 on September 7th.

Since the last Parish Council meeting the Playing Field has had only one cut, on August 7th. This means that only 7 cuts have been made this year. At the time of writing (Thursday Sept 3rd) the grass is more suitable to grazing sheep at 8-10 inches height.

Ian Leggett.
September 3rd 2015.

Chedburgh Parish Council

Appendix D: September 2015 RFO report (part 1) Presented to the Parish Council meeting dated 14 September 2015

Chq	Payments	Total	VAT	Net	
	Bank of Ireland charge for bank transfer	21.00	0.00	21.00	Bank transfer charge
808	CCDR Community Council	532.39	0.00	532.39	Section 137 donation
809	Chedburgh PCC	812.50	0.00	812.50	Donation passed to PCC
810	Suffolk Association of Local Councils	12.00	0.00	12.00	Councillor training
813	Ian Leggett	89.60	0.00	89.60	August/September salary
812	Paul MacLachlan	300.96	0.00	300.96	August/September salary
814	HMRC (Qtr from July to Sept)	446.40	0.00	446.40	Tax and NI for July to Sept
811	Queensbury Shelters Ltd	1,408.82	234.80	1,174.02	Repair to bus shelter
		3,623.67	234.80	3,388.87	
	Receipts				
	Estate of Isla Fraser Ashton	1,250.00	0.00	1,250.00	Donation
	Estate of Isla Fraser Ashton	812.50	0.00	812.50	Donation for Chedburgh PCC
	Community Council	532.39	0.00	532.39	Donation
	NATS	400.00	0.00	400.00	Wayleave
	Bank of Ireland	7.50	0.00	7.50	Refunded bank charges
	Bank of Ireland	1.38	0.00	1.38	Interest
	Bank of Ireland	1.36	0.00	1.36	Interest
		3,005.13	0.00	3,005.13	
	Year to date surplus reported to prior meeting	7,079.98			
	Less payments reported above	3,623.67			
	Plus receipts reported above	3,005.13			
	Current surplus	6,461.44			

Notes

- Chqs highlighted in blue are not yet issued



		2015/16 Actual	2015/16 Budget	2014/15 Actual
Income	Precept	8,706.00	8,706.00	8,420.00
	Parish Support Grant	974.00	974.00	1,200.00
	National Air Traffic Service	2,182.39	400.00	400.00
	VAT Refund	261.81	0.00	0.00
	Interest	7.60	0.00	14.95
	Total	12,131.80	10,080.00	10,034.95
Expenditure	Salary costs	1,841.28	3,712.00	4,489.85
	Chairman's Allowance	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Environment maintenance	1,523.69	2,152.00	1,224.13
	Insurance	712.50	1,179.00	1,144.20
	Publications and training	52.00	65.00	12.00
	Subscriptions	327.00	313.00	313.00
	Audit costs	100.00	250.00	100.00
	Section 137 payments	632.39	300.00	233.79
	Administrative expenses	0.00	210.00	245.14
	Cost of meetings	180.00	120.00	100.00
	Fixed assets	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Other costs	21.00	1,779.00	0.00
	VAT on payments	280.50	0.00	261.81
	Total	5,670.36	10,080.00	8,123.92
	Surplus for the year	6,461.44	0.00	1,911.03

Bank Reconciliation	Bank balance at 31 March 2015	7,972.92	
	Less outstanding cheques	0.00	7,972.92
	Surplus for 2015/16		6,461.44
			14,434.36
	Bk of Ireland balance at 28 Aug 2015	6,692.14	
	Unity Trust balance at 28 Aug 2015	10,000.00	
	Less outstanding cheques	0.00	
	Less cheques to be issued	-2,257.78	
	Plus credits in transit	0.00	
	Net available funds after payments authorised		14,434.36

Fund Allocation		Year to date	2014/15
Ring fenced funds	RAF Memorial	110.00	110.00
	Donations to local organisations	250.00	150.00
	Clerk's retirement fund	0.00	728.68
	Play area improvements	900.00	900.00
	Total	1,260.00	1,888.68
Unallocated funds		13,174.36	4,173.21
Total Funds		14,434.36	6,061.89

County Councillor's report

Presented to the Parish Council meeting dated 14 September 2015

Update – August 2015

Councils in Suffolk have announced that they will be working with the Mason Trust to inspire young people about careers in the region.

As part of this initiative, a new website and mobile phone app will be developed to provide young people with information and insight into the potential opportunities for fulfilling careers in the local area. The website and app will primarily target 13 to 24 year olds across Suffolk and will enable users to gain an understanding of what many local businesses do, what working for them would be like and what current career opportunities exist. SCC are investing in the development of the platform along with Ipswich Borough Council, Mid-Suffolk District Council and also Babergh District Council as part of a wider work-inspiration programme of activity across Suffolk. The website and app will be developed over the next few months and will be officially launched at the upcoming Suffolk Skills Show on 21 October 2015 at Trinity Park. Employers that would like to be featured on the site can contact Michael Gray at Suffolk County Council for more information: email michael.gray@suffolk.gov.uk; or phone 01473 264053.

Endeavour Card

SCC has partnered with First Buses to launch a new range of tickets in and around Ipswich, which will benefit Endeavour Card holders.

The First Endeavour Annual ticket will allow anyone between the ages of 16-19 who has a Endeavour Card to purchase an annual ticket, but pay for it in monthly instalments. This scheme has a number of benefits for Endeavour Card holders who sign up such as: spreading the cost of an annual ticket over 12 smaller payments; fixing the cost of your travel for the whole year; unlimited travel on any First services; simple to join and you can cancel at the end of any month; tickets are posted directly to your home. This scheme will allow students to not only travel on First services to and from school, but will also allow them to use public transport outside of school hours and includes unlimited travel at weekends and during school holidays. The scheme is not limited just to students: people can take advantage of all the benefits just by being a 16-19 Endeavour Card holder. Further information on the Endeavour Card scheme, including how to apply can be found here: <http://www.suffolkonboard.com/endeavour-card/16-19-card>.

Refinancing proposal for Suffolk's Energy from Waste facility will save over £24million

SCC's cabinet discussed proposals to re-finance part of the capital costs of the Energy from Waste facility at Great Blakenham, when it met in July.

The new agreement will reduce contract-fee payments to Suez Environment (formerly SITA UK), saving over £24million over the remaining lifetime of the contract. If all goes to plan, the hope would be that the refinancing will take place later this year.

All Suffolk Waste Partnership members to consider changes to garden waste collection policy

The suggested approach is to encourage more residents to manage their own waste through home composting and to adopt the policy already in use within Babergh and Mid Suffolk areas, where there is a charged service for residents who wish to take up the option of a garden waste collection. Suffolk Waste Partnership members have collectively discussed their potential options and accept that this proposal offers a potential way of reducing overall costs of waste collection

and treatment in Suffolk. Suffolk's councils currently spend £6million a year collecting and treating garden waste (which in some areas includes food waste). If Suffolk's councils collectively decide to adopt this approach, the saving will be around £2million a year. At the same time, each local council can decide to retain a universal free service to all residents should they so choose.

New academy sponsor proposed for Bury St Edmunds High School

Samuel Ward Academy Trust was recommended, after a panel assessed two potential providers; the other was The Seckford Trust. The panel was impressed with the calibre and professional expertise of both providers but the Samuel Ward Academy Trust was selected for recommendation as it was able to demonstrate particular knowledge and understanding of the local community, strong local relationships and greater experience of working collaboratively with schools and other education providers. This recommendation comes after a decision by the previous sponsor, the National Education Trust (NET), to withdraw its bid to run the school. Following the cabinet's approval, the decision is now referred to the Secretary of State for Education for final approval.

Active for Life: Launch of first Suffolk Walking Strategy

Active for Life: Suffolk Walking Strategy 2015-2020 aims to make walking the default choice for journeys of 20 minutes or less on foot and for walking to be seen as fun, beneficial, easy, inclusive, accessible, and safe. The case for walking is clear – most people could improve their health through more physical activity and most of us can walk, yet nearly half of us are inactive to the extent that it is harming our health and wellbeing. Walking is ideal for people of all ages and fitness levels who wish to become more active. It has been shown to reduce the risk of chronic illnesses, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, respiratory diseases, stroke and some cancers, all of which are key causes of premature deaths in Suffolk. Alongside the Walking Strategy, partners in Suffolk are hoping to make 2016/17 the 'Suffolk Year of Walking', building on the success of this year's 'Suffolk Year of Cycling' to develop a countywide celebration of walking and encourage new walking opportunities. As part of the Year of Walking, a partnership made up of local councils, voluntary groups and others is calling on local groups and organisations with an interest in walking to come forward with ideas to get Suffolk people involved. To find out more, contact Alexandra Blowers on 01473 260080 or via email Alexandra.blowers@suffolk.gov.uk

Cycling to school set to rise

SCC's highways team will be carrying out improvement work around eleven schools during the summer holiday. This will include improved crossing areas, footway construction, improved cycle facilities, road markings, parking restrictions, speed limit signing and bus stop facilities. The work is being carried out to provide better facilities for pupils travelling to school as passengers, on foot or by cycle, as part of the recent School Organisation Review.

The locations of the work is as follows: Guildhall Feoffment Community Primary School; Abbots Green Community Primary School; Serbert Wood Community Primary School; Westgate Community Primary School; Hardwick Primary School; Stowupland High School; All Saints CEVC Primary School; Ickworth Park Primary School; Sexton's Manor Community Primary; and Gt Welnetham CEVC Primary School

Coming to a high street near you...SCC's Leader is listening

"I want to get out there and meet our communities across the county, speaking to residents who care passionately about Suffolk. I want to hear about the things that are close to people's hearts, to find out what issues are at the top of their agenda and what they want to see happening locally. I have enjoyed discussing a range of subjects with people in Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft and Haverhill, and I look forward to meeting residents of Felixstowe this weekend." To find out more

about forthcoming We Are Listening events, visit the Council's website now at www.suffolk.gov.uk/wearelistening

Update – September 2015

Suffolk GCSE results rise

More of Suffolk's 16 year olds achieved expected levels of GCSE attainment this year, it emerged last month.

Provisional results collated in Suffolk suggest around a 4% rise in the number of students getting five or more A*-C grades, including English and Maths. It means that 56% of Suffolk's year 11s got the expected level of attainment. The validated figure for 2014 was 52%. Some schools have made significant gains on last year: The results also saw a significant improvement for disadvantaged pupils – these are children looked after and pupils eligible for free school meals. The early results reported to SCC indicate 72% of schools have seen a rise in the attainment of pupils who are disadvantaged County Upper School - Up 27% on last year to 54%.

These results are extremely encouraging. The overall rise in students meeting our expected attainment levels is testament to the hard work and commitment of heads, governors, teachers, parents and, most importantly, students.

Key Stage 2 results show significant improvements for Suffolk Schools

The percentage of pupils achieving the expected level in reading, writing and maths in primary schools in Suffolk is continuing to rise. Data released by the Department for Education show that 77% of 11-year-olds achieved level 4 or higher in their SAT tests in the three subjects in 2015 – up from 73% in 2014. The Suffolk figure of 77% closes the gap to the national average, which stands at 80%. These results mean that Suffolk has improved on its ranking against all authorities, moving up 22 places to 118th and is now 118 out of 150. This is an improvement of 22 places from last year. Another positive figure emerging for Suffolk is the progress in writing between Key Stages 1 and 2. The percentage of pupils making the expected progress went up from 89% in 2014 to 91% this year. The percentage of children making expected progress from key stage 1 to 2 in Reading and Maths also increased. Both areas seeing a one percentage point rise.

Suffolk Skills Show 2015: Are you showcasing your business?

The Suffolk Skills Show will take place at Trinity Park on 21st of October 2015 between 9am and 6pm. It will provide a great opportunity for businesses to showcase their work, the people they employ and what they are looking for in future employees. The young people attending will be looking for career inspiration. The inaugural event in 2014 attracted over 44 schools and recorded over 3,500 people through the gates. For more information, visit the Suffolk Skills Show website at: <https://www.suffolkskillsshow.com>

September Report for Chedburgh.

Anglia Revenues Partnership. ARP collects our council tax. They have now set up an enforcement agency which will ensure consistent customer service standards are maintained throughout the payment collection process. It will also ensure that enforcement fees are only incurred by debtors after all reasonable attempts have been made to engage with them to make arrangements for payment. Where debtors will not make payment and enforcement agents have to visit premises, the fees charged and recovered will be retained by the Councils, benefitting the council tax payer. It is estimated that an income from fees of £150,000 will be shared between the partners.

Apex. For the first time, income from ticket sales at The Apex has topped the £1m mark - up 42 per cent on last year.

The number of tickets sold has also leapt by 34 per cent to 63,011, of which 12,431 were new customers.

The increased income, accredited to an improved programme, marketing initiatives to reach new audiences, and excellent work from the support team, has helped bring the venue £74,732 under budget.

Parks in St Edmundsbury are amongst best in UK for cleanliness and safety. The Abbey Gardens in Bury St Edmunds, East Town Park in Haverhill, Nowton Park and West Stow Country Park, have all been awarded The Green Flag Award for 2015/16 from the national charity Keep Britain Tidy.

It is the fourth year in a row that the four parks have been awarded Green Flags.

The proposed closure of the Bury St Edmunds Magistrates' and Family Courts has been announced in a Ministry of Justice press release. SEBC will be doing all it can to prevent this happening. The travel scenarios described in the consultation document assume a starting point of Bury St Edmunds. This takes no account of difficulties faced by our rural residents in getting to Bury in the first place without a good public transport network.

If the current courts are to be closed, SEBC could offer them a new site in our next phase of the development of the Public Service Village, next to West Suffolk House. The Public Service Village is already home to adult and children's services, together with other Council services, and, in the future, we hope to share it with the Police, DWP and NHS. We shall work towards this as a viable alternative to the movement of the courts to Ipswich.

Brown Bins. The brown bin scheme has been highly successful across West Suffolk since it was introduced in the 1990s, but recycling priorities have changed and we are also facing huge financial challenges. A report goes to St Edmundsbury's Cabinet this week setting out the background to the need, either to charge for brown bins or find up to £500,000 extra a year across St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath, which could have a potential impact on the delivery of other services. The extra cost follows significant changes to the amount Suffolk County Council, which is responsible for disposing of waste, pays councils to support collecting organic material for recycling.

A likely charge for a brown bin to collect garden waste could be around £35 a year, which is the same charge the West Suffolk councils make for a single bulky waste collection of several items. Following on from the Cabinet meeting, it is likely that a recommendation to charge for emptying brown bins will come before Full Council at the meeting on 22nd September.

West Suffolk Operational Hub. Councillors are being asked to approve a second round of consultation which would give residents across West Suffolk the opportunity to give their views about proposals for a shared waste transfer station, vehicle depot and household waste recycling site. This follows concerns raised by those who live nearest to the preferred site for the facility at Hollow Road Farm, Bury St Edmunds. The second pre-application consultation stage will ask communities to put forward their views on the concept of the Operational Hub and the preferred site at Hollow Road Farm, together with thoughts about credible, alternative sites. We are still, however, at the pre-application consultation and there is not yet a planning application for a specific site.

Parking at West Suffolk House. New parking restrictions, using free ticket machines, come into force on September 1st at West Suffolk House in Bury St Edmunds in a bid to make the car park more accessible to visitors.

All car park users will have to display a free parking ticket. The ticket is linked to the vehicle registration while the machines have been calibrated so a new ticket will not be reissued for that vehicle after the 90 minutes are up.

The restrictions will apply between 8am-5pm meaning public attending most council meetings will not have to worry how long they have left on their ticket. Special provision is also being made to ensure members of the public attending development control committee meetings will also avoid having to worry about time left on their ticket.

People needing longer time will have to park in the car park in Olding Road. A fine of £70 will be imposed on those people who overstay their time.

Enforcement Action. A High Court judge has agreed with SEBC that uncontrolled use of a caravan site in Bardwell should be stopped, and imposed a 4 month prison sentence, suspended for a year, on the owner unless further undertakings are complied with. Substantial costs were awarded to SEBC.

Our new team of enforcement officers are now moving forward and making inroads into the backlog of cases they have inherited. The team leader is Andrew Smith who can be contacted on 01638 719734. He will be pleased to hear of any issues you may have, including the FW site!

Devolution. Suffolk Public Sector Leaders have all signed up in principle to expanding the devolution agenda - not just seeing local control going to the big cities and metropolitan areas but getting into the rural districts as well. Members have worked together across the county and have put forward solid proposals to the Government. Devolution is about bringing money and responsibility down from Whitehall to the local level where we can recognise opportunities and continue to deliver more for less.

Devolution would mean quicker reaction times to deal with issues as they crop up, without having to wait for different authorities to make decisions, find the money and so on. Simpler decision-making across the whole public sector will make real differences to our communities. We are the ones who are closest, and listen, to people who live and work in West Suffolk. We know the infrastructure projects that can transform the area, opening up opportunities for more jobs, and pooling the money could help those major projects become reality much more quickly.

We await further details from the government as they clarify their objectives and I will keep you informed.

USAF Mildenhall. The US Department of Defense has announced that it will withdraw from its base at Mildenhall. We are told there will be no changes in personnel numbers until 2019, and any hand-over of sites is unlikely before 2021-22.

The Ministry of Defence has announced that any decision on the future of the site would be made as part of its overall review of the Defence estate, which is due to be completed in 2016. MOD will continue to work with local councils to

ensure any decision takes into account local strategic planning issues and wider Government drivers.

Joint Venture Company, (Verse). As part of our aim to behave more commercially, and to counteract further Government reductions in funding, SEBC, FHDC (Forest Heath) and the publically owned commercial organisation Eastern Facilities Management Solutions (EFMS) are setting up a company, known as Verse, which will deliver facilities management at its buildings, such as catering, cleaning, courier services and security. This venture will allow the two councils to save over £40,000 per year, whilst improving services, sharing in profits, and offering the flexibility to add other services at later dates as demand requires.

Angela Rushen

September 2015