

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR RICHARD SMITH, MVO

TO ALDEBURGH TOWN COUNCIL

11 JULY, 2016

Mr Mayor, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen

Life is certainly busy! I have recently taken on extra Cabinet responsibilities for libraries, culture and heritage. These three areas are subjects which I really care about and claim to have some knowledge of, although there is a lot on which to be briefed. I am pleased that I will, in collaboration with Suffolk Libraries IPS, have some say on the future funding and shape of Suffolk's Libraries, described in one independent report as "the gold standard of library services", including the branches here and in Leiston. My responsibility for museums stretches right across Suffolk from the Long Shop museum locally to the new Home of Horseracing museum in the west and from the Lowestoft Maritime museum to Gainsborough's House museum in Sudbury.

Heritage matters include responsibility for the three County Record Offices and the very exciting project for a major new facility, shared with the new University of Suffolk (who assume independent University status on 1<sup>st</sup> August) in Ipswich, provisionally called "The Hold", but dependant for progress on a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for over £10 million.

And, on top of this, budget panning for the 2017/18 financial year have just started again, in the long run-up to the decision at the Council meeting in February, 2017.

I have always tried not to let my reports to you be dominated by wider, cross-Suffolk news, but have concentrated on matters of local concern. After a long and frustrating wait, the case for lowering the speed limit to 40mph along the B1122 between Aldringham and

Aldeburgh and the abolition of the 40mph 'buffer' as the road enters Aldeburgh will be heard by the County's Speed Panel on 18<sup>th</sup> July. I will be present to push the case for change, but I cannot guarantee the outcome as the panel consists of four County Councillors, one Conservative, who chairs it, one Labour, one UKIP and one Liberal Democrat member. Its decision is final, but if the change is approved I have allocated the necessary budget to fund the proposal through to implementation. I have not forgotten the desire, and demonstrated need, for parking restrictions in Church Farm Road and it *may* be possible to combine the legal order to include changes here. Both areas of change will need to be put to public consultation, and objections taken into account. Indeed objections will cause delay and may stretch the timetable past the County Council elections next May, but at present I am hopeful that the work to implement any approved changes can be implemented by next Spring.

It is frustrating that necessary drainage works have not yet been started on The Terrace and both your Clerk and I are chasing for progress. And have the holes in the Leiston Road at the Railway pub end been reported? I hope they have as they cannot be attended to if they have not been put onto the system. I always make it clear that I do not regard it as my responsibility to report these defects (they are now best reported on-line rather than by e-mail or telephone), but that my role comes in when they have not been attended to in reasonable time.

My offer to broker a meeting with Tim Passmore, the Police and Crime Commissioner, stands. Both you and Leiston have concerns about the future of part-funding of PCSOs, a service which both towns value highly. Further assurances are needed that the policing situation over the Carnival period will be adequate, well-planned and

resourced as it has been in recent years. The precedents are there, but assurance is still awaited.

On Devolution : Public engagement with the people of Suffolk has started and will last for a seven-week period over July and the first half of August. I could write a ten-page report on Devolution matters alone, but would rather explain more by responding to your questions at the end of this report. All Local Authorities in Suffolk have voted in favour, but four of eight in Norfolk have rejected the plans. After seeking the views of the public on the whole project, including the election of a Mayor and the creation of a new Combined Authority, there is another decision point at the end of October before the scheme can go ahead. We know that both the present Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Local Government are pushing this forward hard, but will both or one or neither be in post in two months' time? It is all something of an enigma, but the proposed changes are important and will affect all levels of local government, including (in time) Town and Parish councils. Please take the time to look at the proposals and give your views.

As the town approaches the peak holiday season, I wish it well and am available to do what I can if problems arise. Last week I attended the Local Government Association in Bournemouth. Perhaps the greatest advantage of being present is the informal networking with other Councillors and Chief Executives from all over England. My huge advantage is that almost everybody knows of or has visited Aldeburgh, and speaks highly of the town. That makes me feel very proud, and it should make you, as custodians of the town, proud too.

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