

Hawstead Report for September 2014

Newmarket Road Railway Bridge. SCC have now completed the survey of the bridge and identified what needs attention. The next step is to agree a timetable of repairs with Network Rail. The problem is that much will have to be done at night so as not to impinge on the timetable of trains. Repairs are likely to last until at least next spring.

Budget Consultation. SEBC's consultation period regarding next year's budget ended on 22nd of August and the response was excellent as over 1000 people replied. We have to save a further £1.5m in 2015/16 and difficult decisions will have to be made. We are keen to ensure both that the suggestions raised are considered carefully and are taken into account during the autumn budget-setting process, with the final budget being set in February 2015.

Public Sector Services The Government has given its backing to two innovative projects designed to improve public sector services across West Suffolk while saving money to the taxpayer.

A partnership of Forest Heath District Council, SEBC and Suffolk County Council has been accepted onto the Government's One Public Estate programme.

This initiative has been set up to support public service schemes that promote economic growth, reduce running costs, allow for the selling off of surplus buildings, and most importantly allow for a better integration of services that are more focused at meeting the needs of customers.

It means that projects such the second phase of the Public Service Village in Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, will benefit not only from Government funding, but also from its assistance in carrying the projects forward.

Waste and recycling. The judicial review as to the granting planning permission to build a waste transfer station on Rougham Hill has ruled that the granting of permission was lawful. This means that SCC has the right to build the station, but they are willing to work with SEBC to find alternative sites. SEBC has agreed to provide £100,000 from reserve funds (This money has to come from capital reserves and not money raised from council tax.) to secure a land option for a site to house both the HWRC and the Borough depot, currently next to

WSH. This would free up the depot land for the development of Phase 2 of the Public Service Village. (Phase one was building WSH.)

Housing. An £8m boost from the government has been awarded to the Havebury Housing Partnership which will see more than 230 new affordable homes built across SEBC by 2018.

SEBC has purchased a former HMO which will be used as flexible short-term accommodation for homeless people thus saving on expensive bed and breakfast charges. Housing is earmarked as one of our main priorities.

SEBC strives to deliver more affordable housing and to push forward the need to bring empty homes back into use, which will in itself engender a grant from central government.

The West Suffolk Housing Strategy, a joint strategy between Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council, is now in its final stages of completion. It reflects how the two councils are taking a more commercial approach to how we help meet future housing need.

It outlines plans for how the two councils will work together to deliver a mix of housing, both in terms of the size of properties, as well as the tenure whether it be affordable housing, private rented, or homes to buy on the open market.

Having the right mix will make us more attractive to businesses, will enable us to attract more highly skilled workers to the area, and an improved choice of housing, affordability and availability, will give us the competitive advantage to attract inward investment into West Suffolk.

The strategy also seeks to meet a shortfall in affordable housing by working with a range of partners to reduce the numbers on the housing register and to seek to improve the quality of the existing housing offer.

'Leg of Mutton'. You may have seen that the Leg of Mutton land between the Rougham Road in Bury and the A14 has been safeguarded as green open space by the Planning Inspector for Vision 2031. The area is to be used as amenity open space or informal recreation. The Bury Water Meadows group hope to purchase the land with plans for wildflower meadows, woodland and recreation.

Gypsies and travellers. The previous consultation regarding 7 suggested stopover sites has been cancelled as other new sites have now been put forward by landowners. More information and consultations will follow.

Bury Bus Station. Possible ways of making this a more commercial operation are being looked into. Ideas would be welcome.

Bury Market. New market licence regulations designed to ensure the continuing success of traders are nearing agreement. The revised regulations, cover everything from the disposal of litter, to health and safety and the conduct of the traders themselves.

In return, the regulations offer traders a guarantee that the council will limit the duplication of stalls selling similar items, and that SEBC will continue to develop and promote the market to attract new shoppers and traders.

Negotiations regarding non retail stalls, such as those promoting political parties, are still ongoing.

Angela Rushen September 2014