

### **20mph limit**

I'm pleased to say that the statutory consultation on the village's 20mph scheme has completed and the County has approved the Road Traffic Order to implement it.

There were 13 objections but many of these objected, not to the scheme as a whole, but to the fact it didn't include all the village roads.

In my comments to the consultation I made clear that including the whole village, as I and the Parish Council wanted, would have been better.

The County's administration has set its officers rules that make area-wide 20mph limits very difficult and they weren't going to bend. But my view is getting Church Street, High Street, Lower Road, Water Street and Bears Lane covered by 20mph is better than no change. Given that those main thoroughfares are going to be 20mph, it makes no sense to keep the smaller, quieter side streets at the core of the village at 30mph.

### **County agrees motion to do more secure and spend developer money for communities**

Suffolk County Council currently holds £52 million in developer contributions – such as Section 106 money or Community Infrastructure Levy. This is money that the council makes developers provide as a condition of obtaining planning permission. The money is supposed to fund things like footways, junctions, cycle paths or extra school spaces near new housing developments.

But there are often lengthy delays before this money is spent. My Green colleague Simon Harley at the last council meeting proposed a motion that asked the council to ensure guidance for developer contributions is updated, that the work required is carried out in a timely manner and to a high standard and that legal action against developers is taken where needed.

The motion was approved.

### **Suffolk Youth Climate Conference**

On 3 July, 250 local schoolchildren pledged to write to their local Member of Parliament about climate change after an inspiring address by Chris Packham, renowned UK naturalist, at this year's Suffolk Youth Climate Conference.

The event was held at Suffolk One Sixth Form College and organised by the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership.

A range of workshops were held on topics such as electric vehicles, nature-based solutions, the global food system, coastal adaptation, plastic pollution, flood and water management, sustainable fashion and climate anxiety. Students also had the opportunity to engage with 30 charities and organisations working to improve the natural environment in Suffolk.

### **Extra Investment agreed for Special Education Needs**

The county's Cabinet decided on Tuesday 24 July to invest a further £9.1 million from reserves into Suffolk's SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) service.

The service needs extra staff and capacity mainly to speed up its production of children's Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). It is currently failing to meet its statutory duty to complete them all within 20 weeks. Investment in extra staff already made has brought the

proportion completed in time from 0% a year ago to 16% now. They have a target of getting to 100% by September 2025.

The recently completed 2023-24 year showed a near £15 million drop in the council's useable reserves – their 'savings' for a rainy day – to £180m.

Although the last Government did increase funding to councils for special needs, the council officers say it is not enough to meet growing need. The former government admitted before the election that the national SEND system is not working well for anybody.

### **Scrutinising the State of Suffolk Roads**

On Tuesday 23 July, the council's scrutiny committee met to discuss the state of the roads in the county, how much was spent annually and how works were prioritised.

Officers from Highways explained how roads are categorised from Green to Red (poor condition), that the optimal resurfacing programme would require around £50m per year in funding, whereas the current amount available for resurfacing works was more like £17m per year.

My political group are pressing for a review of the county's Highway Maintenance Operational Plan (HMOP) which sets out the parameters on what defects Highways respond to and the timeframe for response. We also believe the reporting systems for defects is not working correctly.

All of the committee agreed that better communication with residents and timely fixes for road defects would be beneficial to the public perception of Suffolk's roads – as overall the number of roads rated Red (in poor condition) has dropped since 2012, and the number of roads rated Green (in good condition) has risen.