

Samford Division – Annual Parish Meetings

Well it's 2 years since we had an annual parish meeting, and 23rd March 2021 marked 12 months to the day that the Prime Minister called upon us all to Stay Home, Protect the NHS and Save Lives as we all entered the first COVID national lockdown.

Well what an extraordinary year it has been, we still can't meet in person where we would normally hold our meetings and have a drink and a chat afterwards, although my mileage has reduced substantially!

In the last year we have all been touched by the impact of the pandemic in some way. Many have had the virus and recovered, others have known somebody close who has caught the virus and tragically some of us have seen the loss of family and friends to this terrible pandemic.

At Suffolk County Council like many businesses and organisations we have reacted with speed and professionalism in finding ways to adapt services to continue supporting residents. Many of our employees have stepped forward to work in new multi-agency teams, helping to source and supply over 5 million items of PPE to care homes and the voluntary sector and helping set up and support the delivery of support services such as Home But Not Alone.

At this point I want to thank all the volunteers across Suffolk for the role you have all played and especially those in in all the villages in he Samford Division for the outstanding contribution you have all made. A heartfelt thanks from all of us.

Our Public Health team continue to be at the forefront of local testing and the vaccination programme with partners across local government, health and wider Public Sector, not forgetting the significant role volunteers have played in the delivery of the vaccine. The whole vaccine programme has been the outstanding success of the response to the pandemic.

When the time is right, we need to reflect on what worked well and what did not and let us be honest many things did not and we need to learn from them. The debate still continues today on whether to have vaccines passports or not and the whole testing programme going forward to name just two.

Reflecting on some of the highlights at SCC during the last year: -

March 2020. Winning £830k of funding to develop an outline business case to improve the A12 East of Ipswich, and consultations have recently been taking place on the proposals.

April A drive through COVID-19 testing facility opened at Copdock

May For those interested in local history, a new Suffolk Heritage Explorer website was launched.

June Better Broadband for Suffolk reached its 100,000th customer. This work is continuing and has recently received fresh impetus with recent announcements from central Government, as we all recognise the importance of good, fast reliable connectivity in the times of “new ways of working”.

July The successful booking system for our Household Waste recycling centres extended to people with vans and trailers and trade waste. We’ve recently announced further automation of the booking system.

Further details of policy changes to support our ambition to be a net zero authority by 2030.

August on 5th August Suffolk Highways announced they had completed its 1000th resurfaced mile of road since May 2017.

September First of Suffolk 2020 Fund bids approved; £300k to provide 100 fast charging points for Electric Vehicles in rural parts of the county.

The Hold; the new records office in Ipswich welcomes its first visitors

October Another Suffolk 2020 Fund bid approved £228k for tree planting, protecting hedgerows & verges.

November. Final approval of the Government’s part of the funding of the Gull Wing bridge in Lowestoft approved, contracts will now be signed.

Work started in March. The designs show that Lowestoft will get an iconic bridge

December New cycle parking installed in Bury St Edmunds & Haverhill financed by the Government’s emergency Active Travel Fund

January Two new Suffolk 2020 Fund projects announced. Discovering Suffolk and a Dementia therapy initiative using virtual reality experiences.

February Council’s 2021/22 Budget agreed, and I’ve already covered that many times in my monthly reports. Further 16 rapid testing centres for COVID-19 opened, bringing total to 23. Highways increase drainage budget for 2021/22

March. SCC secures £3.1m for building decarbonisation initiative. Freeport East approved as a new freeport. Further Suffolk 2020 Fund projects launched including £400k for the ANPR speed camera 2-year trial. Total funding agreed £2.8m for the 2020 Fund

Having been a Councillor for the last 8 years with 7 as a member of the Cabinet , 5½ years with responsibility for Children’s Services, Education & Skills and with the last 18 months for Finance & Resources, I have decided to “retire” and not to seek re-election in May. I just want to say what a pleasure and a privilege it has been to work with you and the Parish Councils over these last 8 years and wish you all the best for the future

Happy to answer any questions, but before I do a couple of items you may wish to take particular notice of in the coming months and years.

Pylons – National Grid, whether that be the upgrade of the Bramford to Twinstead line in the north of the division or the recently proposed ATNC line from Bramford in the south of the division through the parishes of Bentley & East Bergholt and onto Essex both need watching. Parliament needs to change the legislation to ensure that National Grid are not limited to supplying the least (financial) cost option but are made to consider the social value and environmental impact so the maximum amount of cabling is underground or underwater. Local MPs need to ensure that the legislation is enacted to enable this to happen.

The upgrade of the Copdock interchange, is due in the next phase of RIS programme from 2025. Try and make sure you are fully included in the prior consultation, and that upgrading of the junctions on the A12 between the Essex border and the Copdock interchange are finally included in the programme.

I've joined many of you to address speeding through your villages since becoming your councillor in 2013, and we finally have a 2-year trial of ANPR cameras starting shortly. For those that want to be included, do make sure your new councillor takes up the baton on your behalf. I will also write to the road safety team before I depart to ensure your involvement.

Gordon Jones

5th April 2021

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