

Report to Brettenham Parish Council. Thursday 14th July 2016

There is not a great deal of news from the County Council due to preoccupation about the EU referendum, a by election in Suffolk Coastal, and, more importantly, the Devolution debate that took place on Thursday 30th June.

Devolution

The council was asked to endorse the agreement that had been reached with government to take forward a deal with Norfolk, and also to agree to move on to a public consultation.

The money attached to the deal is trivial in the overall scheme of things, almost certainly would need to be spent in the area in any event, and was little more than a small bribe.

The deal envisages the creation of a fourth tier of local government, a combined authority, comprising the leaders of both county councils and all district councils, plus a representative from the LEP. It would be presided over by an elected Mayor. During the debate I made the point that decision making is no nearer our parish councils than it was before.

When I spoke in the debate I said that I did not really wish to endorse anything until the public had been consulted. I also expressed the view that the arrangements as presented were neither democratic, nor did they amount to anything like devolution to my mind.

I did not vote for the motion for the reasons stated above.

Provided Government does not put a stop to the process, which is possible since 4 Norfolk councils voted not to proceed, and the implications of the Brexit vote could well alter matter, a public consultation on the deal will now go ahead.

The Labour Group moved an amendment to ensure that the public was asked a question in the consultation about their appetite for an elected mayor. We agreed to this.

The consultation exercise theoretically commenced on 4th July. It will run until 19th August, and takes the form of an on line consultation which is open to all residents, plus targeted back up calls to ensure that the responders are not entirely self-selecting.

All the papers are on the SCC website.

Consultation on the Ipswich Wet Dock Crossing.

In the last Budget statement funding of £77.5 million was allocated by the Department of Transport to support the delivery of a major crossing scheme across the River Orwell in Ipswich.

An assessment has identified three new crossings over the River Orwell in order to relieve traffic congestion in the town, and also to stimulate regeneration in the area. Two bridges, and a pedestrian and cycle route are envisaged.

On Friday 1st July a six week consultation on the plans commenced and anyone who visits Ipswich, works there, or has a view is being asked to give their views.

Suffolk County Council website

Following the launch of the new website, it has been awarded four stars by the Better Connected report, an annual survey of local authority websites, run by IT professionals. This is an improvement on the one star that the old site achieved.

Children's services continue to attract praise.

The latest Ofsted Annual social care report (published today) has praised Suffolk County Council's children's services.

The report, which is Ofsted's third dedicated annual report on the state of children's social care in England examines the standard of social care given to some of the most vulnerable children in our society.

The report concluded that Suffolk County Council had ensured that services for children had a high profile within the council.

A case study from Suffolk was included in the report. We were one of only three local authorities in the country to be singled out in this way.

Brettenham

All has been quiet from Brettenham recently.

Jenny Antill
July 2016