

Once again, my apologies for not being able to join you this evening,

Below my annual report which I would be very grateful if it could be read on my behalf. As always very happy to hear from anyone re any SCC issue,

Over the last year one of our key areas of focus has been to increase our efforts to address potholes. There has been a 34% increase in the number of potholes repaired across the county. This improvement is due to increased investment in highways maintenance comma including additional £10 million specifically allocated to local road repairs in villages and residential areas.

Implementation of new repair techniques and technologies such as the dragon patcher which aims to provide a more durable and efficient repair, with a focus on proactive repairs to prevent potholes from worsening alongside responding to reported issues. Residents can continue to help us by using our reporting tool to report potholes.

Suffolk County Council has invested in a new gritting fleet to ensure roads are treated effectively during the winter months helping to commit keep our communities connected. This includes newer more efficient vehicles with improved spreading capacities, improved route planning to ensure timely coverage of priority routes including those in more rural areas and use of advanced weather forecasting to optimise gritting operations allowing for proactive response to changing conditions we've been doing a piece of work supporting sustainable travel and we secured £7.3 million in funding for electric vehicle charging infrastructure. This investment aims to support the transition to electric vehicles and improve air quality across the county.

We have also had an awareness campaign which is to encourage drivers to switch off their engines when parked. This is seeking to reduce emissions and improve local air quality the campaign involves public information materials and signage at key locations such as schools, car parks and town centres.

As always, the largest proportion of our funding- 77 pence out of every pound we spend goes on looking after people. We continue to provide support to families working to keep children safely at home this includes by delivering intensive family therapy and support services families facing complex challenges, early intervention to prevent children from entering care and making sure we provide support at the earliest opportunity. This work supporting families to overcome challenges helps improve their resilience and empowers them to thrive. We've also been prioritising the county's most vulnerable residents through adult social care, and this refers to anyone over the age 18 who needs support to live independently and fully participate in their communities and also includes provision of services for older people including residential care and community-based support.

I would like to acknowledge the many voluntary organisations across Suffolk from the large organisations people known to the smaller groups and volunteers such as parish councillors who work throughout their communities.

Our key issue and challenge continue to be funding. We have had a reduced amount of funding from central government including the loss of the rural services grant and we are working hard to mitigate the impact of these by reviewing our spending identifying efficiencies and making sure we are using resources efficiently. We continue to advocate to central government for fairer funding for Suffolk and highlight the specific needs of our communities and we continue to explore alternative sources of funding including seeking grants and partnerships. The other current issue is Local Government Reform, Westminster has proposed replacing Suffolk County district and borough councils with a single unitary authority, and we are working alongside government putting together a business case. The move aims to reduce duplication lower administration costs and ensure a more coordinated cost-effective approach to making sure residents can access vital services such as waste collection housing social care planning highways maintenance leisure school placements and street cleaning. The benefits of a single council include simpler access for residents clear accountability better use of funding an improved alignment of services we will be submitting our business case to Government later this year.

Cllr Bobby Bennett

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services

County Councillor for Clare Division