

MEMORIAL HALL EXTENSION

It was a pleasure to attend the opening event for the Memorial Hall extension on 28 March. I wish to commend and thank the Members and Clerk of Trimley St Martin Parish Council for bringing this scheme to fruition. The provision of a second usable space at the Hall gives the community a facility it can enjoy for many years to come.

PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES

On 16 April the primary school places were announced for children commencing primary school in Suffolk in September 2026. There were 6762 applications received. Of these 94.75% received their first preference of school, and 99% received one of their three preferences.

For those children not receiving the parents' preference, the names will automatically be entered on the waiting list for those schools. Parents also have the right of appeal against the decisions. If children are eligible for funded travel to school, parents will receive details of how to apply.

EV CHARGING POINTS

Suffolk County Council, in partnership with Urban Fox, will be providing 1000 EV charging points within Conservation Areas in Suffolk. These will be on street chargers, or within community facilities. This is part of a wider scheme to provide 6000 on street EV points in Suffolk, a project costing £5.3 million. In Conservation Areas planning guidance is stricter, particularly in terms of blending into a streetscape. To ensure that EV charging facilities can be provided for residents in these areas, the chargers are designed to be retractable, and therefore sit flush with the pavement when not in use. These 6000 charging points throughout Suffolk will be for long stay or overnight use, utilising overnight off peak tariffs, or cheaper residential tariffs.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The long awaited decision from the Government on unitary arrangements for Suffolk has been received. The administration of Suffolk County Council preferred a one Council model, and submitted a detailed outline of this to the Minister. Unfortunately, the Government has announced a 3 unitary Council organisation for Suffolk. The County Council believe this is an erroneous and disappointing decision, a view I endorse.

The proposal for Unitary Local Government had two primary aims. Firstly, to make local government easier to understand, removing the arbitrary division of services and functions currently run by District and County Councils. Far more importantly, there was the potential to cut out the unnecessary duplication of administrative and managerial costs in running several Councils. This would have freed up considerable funds to divert into front line services, from which residents would have benefitted. Independently produced figures showed that with one Council for Suffolk the savings

compared to current arrangements would have been £104 million in the first 5 years followed by £26 million each year thereafter. By creating 3 Councils, all the services run presently by Suffolk County Council will be split up, removing economies of scale and producing three Departments and management structures. Highways, children and adult services, libraries, waste services, trading standards will all be unnecessarily split up. The estimate is that this will cost more to run than what we currently have - £155 million more in the first 5 years, followed by an extra £3million a year.

The decision has now been made. I can assure you that as your County Councillor I will work with the Leadership and Officer Team to get the best deal and very best services for Walton and the Trimley villages. I have worked on a Budget Group for the last five years to reduce costs and divert money into front line services.

COUNCILLOR STUART BIRD B.A.(HONS)
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