

## **September 2018 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks**

### **Suffolk students celebrate improved GCSE achievements**

Self-reported statistics from Suffolk schools, released on 23 August, show that more students in Suffolk have achieved expected levels of GCSE attainment in English and Maths this year. The majority of GCSEs results are now graded from 9 to 1, (previously A to G) with 9 being the highest and 1 being the lowest. The expected standard for pupils to achieve is now a grade 4 and above (previously a C grade and above), with grade 5 considered a 'strong pass'. More than 7,000 students in Suffolk were entered for GCSE results. 80% of schools in Suffolk, 67% of students achieved a grade 4 and above in English and Maths this year. The figures state 2% more students have achieved the expected standard for English and Maths, compared with last year. Some schools have made significant gains compared to last year and Debenham High School has again reported the highest number of students achieving a grade 4 and above in English and Maths at 88%. The figures also show an increase in the number of disadvantaged students achieving the threshold measure in English and Maths. Approximately 3% more students in Suffolk achieved the measure this year compared to last year.

### **Another year of outstanding results for Suffolk students**

Self-reported A-level figures, released on 16 August, show that Suffolk pupils have once again performed well with the number of A\*-E grades awarded above the national average. Almost 3,000 pupils were entered for A-levels in Suffolk. The figures show that 98.1% of A-levels taken in the county have been awarded an A\*-E grade, compared with 97.6% nationally. Suffolk maintains its position, and continues to be above the national average, while the national figure reported today shows a decrease of 0.3%. Early indications also show that Suffolk's Academic average points per entry has risen by 0.2% compared with this time last year.

### **Grit bin changes**

A new system is being introduced by Suffolk Highways for re-stocking grit bins and for approving new grit bins. A review of grit bin and grit heap provision was reported to the County Council's Scrutiny Committee on 1 May in a paper entitled 'Winter Maintenance Resilience'. Details of how the new system will operate are being sent to parish/town/borough and district councils. You should be aware that we can no longer stock grit heaps. Salt from heaps leaches into the verge and contaminates the watercourse. The leaching also reduces the effectiveness of the remaining material. Any parish/town which has a grit heap is encouraged to apply for a new grit bin in line with the guidance. The new guidance has been established to make it easier to request grit bin refills, explains the process of applying for a new grit bin and provides clarity of the grit bin process and associated responsibilities. We believe these changes will improve the service to communities.

### **Suffolk's tourist trade booming as economy hits £2bn mark**

Suffolk's tourism trade has seen its biggest boom for a decade – with the visitor economy reaching the £2 billion mark for the first time. Interim figures released on 8 August by Visit Suffolk show that tourism grew by at least five per cent in 2017, more than double the year before. Overnight visits and lengths of stay for tourists were also up by more than 4 per cent. The number of jobs in the county's tourism sector rose by 6 per cent to 42,428. This means 13.6 per cent of all employment in Suffolk is in the tourism sector. These results would not have been achieved without the continued backing for the county-wide offer from all the district authorities, Suffolk County Council, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and the Local Destination Marketing/Management Organisations (DMOs).

### **Superfast broadband coverage continues to grow**

On 24 August 2018, it was confirmed that 98% superfast broadband coverage will be achieved in 2020. Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, Jo Churchill, MP for Bury St Edmunds and Clive Selley, CEO of Openreach, were joined by representatives from West Suffolk Council, Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, Church of England, Country Land and Business Association (CLA), National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Better Broadband for Suffolk Team to confirm plans to reach 98% coverage in 2020 which highlights our commitment to connecting Suffolk. With this agreement in place, Openreach will continue to ensure that we meet our ambitious goal. In the meantime, we will continue to look for further funding opportunities to work on delivery to the final 2%. To check if a property can now access superfast broadband visit [www.betterbroadbandsuffolk.com](http://www.betterbroadbandsuffolk.com) and check the coverage for that area. The roll out is ongoing and Suffolk County Council is committed to delivering full coverage as quickly as possible. It is important to remind people that a switch to fibre broadband is not automatic. Each household or business will need to contact an internet service provider to upgrade their connection.

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