

## Parish Report June 2007

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### New centre for people to report racist incidents

Helping gypsies and travellers to report racist incidents is the aim of a new centre which has opened in Ipswich.

Gypsies and travellers are considered to be one of the most marginalised communities in society, and can experience widespread and overt discrimination and prejudice.

The new reporting centre at the West Meadows Gypsy and Traveller site means that people from this community can easily report racist incidents to a trained person, who can identify the right organisations to help them.

Similar reporting centres have already been set up in 14 Citizens Advice Bureaux across Suffolk, to provide more places where people can easily report racial incidents.

This is part of the Racial Harassment Initiative's work to provide support and advocacy to victims of racial harassment across the county, and to ensure that all incidents are properly and sensitively investigated.

People can also phone the Racial Harassment Initiative 24 hour helpline on 0800 138 1643, where a message can be left in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, English, Farsi, French, Kurdish, Portuguese or Turkish.

### Review of Suffolk schools to start in Lowestoft and Haverhill

Following the decision in March by Suffolk County Council's Administration to move to a stage two review of school organisation in Suffolk, the Cabinet has considered proposals for the next stage of work.

The Cabinet approved the proposals for which areas would be reviewed first. The first areas to go through the consultation and implementation process will be Lowestoft and Haverhill, beginning in the summer term of 2007. The second group will include the Beccles, Bungay, Leiston, Mildenhall and Newmarket areas, beginning in the summer term of 2008. The third group will be Bury St Edmunds, Thurston, Sudbury and Stowmarket areas, beginning in the summer term of 2009.

The choice of areas, linked to the Building Schools for the Future programme, was based on comparative attainment and social needs indicators. Also taken into account were the relative priorities in each area for a review of post-16 provision and the capacity of the authority to undertake re-organisation in the areas in each phase.

There will now be a consultation in each area which will consider all the options, but if the decision is to make changes, it will be a number of years before they take effect.

## Revised admission arrangements for Suffolk Schools

Every parent wants the best for their child and Suffolk County Council is supporting parents with its policies for school admissions. Changes designed to make sure that schools admissions policies are kept fair have been introduced by government for September 2008 school admissions.

Under the council arrangements, parents can choose three preferences in priority order. We will check at those schools to see if a place is available at each of them. We will then offer a place at the highest preference school where places are available.

From September 2008 onwards the council will not be able to guarantee a place at a school to those who live within the catchment area. Catchment guarantees would be contrary to the new school admissions code decided by national government. However, the council will continue to give priority to families who live within the catchment area of the school.

If there is demand for more places at a school than are available, then who gets a place will be decided according to our agreed oversubscription criteria. These criteria include top priority for children with a physical disability which only that school can deal with. The council will then prioritise children with brothers or sisters at a school, or who live as a family at the same address as current pupils, (and practising members of the Church of England in the case of voluntary controlled schools). If decisions still need to be made, then the council will use distance from the school as the criterion.

The council's admissions policies are published on the web, and are available in main council offices and libraries. More information is available from [www.suffolk.gov.uk/onlineadmissions](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/onlineadmissions) or by calling 0845 606 6067

## Recent Developments in Countryside Access

A few months ago all parishes were consulted on what they felt to be their priority routes. Responses to this have been used in the development of a two tier hierarchy which also takes account of other factors, for example county council promoted routes and paths which link to services. The updated hierarchy will again impact on how resources are allocated to protection and maintenance, including the mowing programme which is one of the county council's largest financial commitments on rights of way, and some parishes will see changes to the local mowing programme

Public rights of way protection, maintenance and small scale improvements have for many years been delivered from 3 areas based at Bury St Edmunds, Gt Blakenham and Saxmundham. In order to help improve the county council's ability to deliver the ROWIP at a time of financial constraint, from 4<sup>th</sup> June 2007 protection, maintenance and small scale improvements will be delivered from two areas, based at Bury St Edmunds and Saxmundham. The 6 existing Rights of Way Officers will be divided equally into the two new areas.

For more information, please contact Andrew Woodin on 01473 264753