**TRIMLEY ST MARTIN SCHOOL**

I have been working with my colleague Councillor Patti Mulcahy ( who represents Kirton ) to address the issue of anti social parking at the school. The flashing yellow lights approaching the school in both directions ( which should operate during school start and finish times ) were not working. I liaised with Highways and these have now been repaired. Unfortunately, the school does not qualify for a school crossing patrol. We are still exploring what further measures can be taken to improve the situation.

**SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACEMENTS**

The secondary school placements for September 2025 have been announced. In Suffolk there were 7831 applications. 91.9 % have been given their first choice school and 97.5 % have received one of their three choices.

**COUNTY HIGHWAYS**

The maintenance, repair and upgrade work for Suffolk’s road network is now under new contracts – with MILESTONE for roads and J McCANN for streetlights. In 2024 the following work has been done – 22,264 potholes repaired, 3818 pavement repairs, 120,100 gullies cleansed, 3260 emergency road repairs. Planned work in 2024 involved 430 road schemes, 25 new footways, 55 sign and road marking schemes, and 110 Councillor Local Highways Budget schemes. In January 2025 there were 805 streetlight repairs and overgrowing vegetation on streetlight clearing projects.

There is general agreement that these new contracts are operating well and the service has improved.

**DEVOLUTION AND UNITARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

This Government initiative will see a Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk elected in May 2026, with powers and a budget for strategic transport and oversight of blue light services.

Additionally, County, District and Borough Councils will be abolished and replaced with Unitary Local Government. The services provided by District/Borough and County will be brought together. The County Council submitted an interim plan to meet the deadline of 21 March, and a finalised business case must be submitted by 26 September. The purpose of these documents is to indicate to the Minister who will make decisions our preferred model for unitary government of Suffolk.

I understand that the District and Borough Councils are making submissions, but Suffolk County Council is proposing one unitary Council, rather than two or three. I fully support this. Unitary will involve bringing together the services currently provided by 4 District and one Borough Council. It would be contradictory and illogical at the same time to fragment the services already run on a cross Suffolk basis i.e. by the County Council. Our Cabinet Members and Officers believe these vital services, most notably Adult and Child Care, would be damaged by being split up.

Furthermore, the financial information indicates that one unitary is the only model which will generate any administrative savings, and therefore justify undertaking the reorganisation. Suffolk County Council have commissioned an independent evaluation, and the results are compelling. The following are the figures for the models under consideration – one, two or three unitary Councils :

ONE  Set up cost £19m, annual saving £26m, cumulative saving after 5 years £104m.

TWO  Set up £26m, breakup costs over 5 years £92m, annual saving £9m, cumulative saving after 5 years £12m.

THREE  Set up cost £32m, breakup costs over 5 years £155m, annual cost £3m (extra not saving ), cumulative cost over 5 years £52m (extra not saving).

These figures demonstrate clearly that the one unitary model is the only one which will save money. The other options will involve greater cost in splitting up services currently run under one Council. A single Council will provide clarity and accountability for the public, but also a saving of £104 million over 5 years. This is money that can be diverted into services rather than wasted on administration.

COUNCILLOR STUART BIRD B.A.(HONS)

COUNTY COUNCILLOR FOR FELIXSTOWE NORTH AND TRIMLEY DIVISION

TOWN COUNCILLOR FOR FELIXSTOWE PORT WARD