

Notable events that have taken place since the County Council Elections in June relate to the proposed Energy from Waste Plant to dispose of Suffolk's Municipal Waste by converting it into electricity and the confirmation of additional sites in Suffolk for the disposal of Waste other than that generated as Municipal Waste.

Additionally, a further set back has taken place in the proposals to change Suffolk's Council arrangements from the existing County and District/Borough combination to a Unitary structure incorporating one or more Unitary Councils.

As you will know, I have explained in the past that Suffolk County Council favours an Energy from Waste Plant (through incineration) to convert the Waste that cannot be recycled, into a useful commodity, namely electricity. I have also stated that the most probable site would be the Council's Highways Depot at Gt Blakenham.

It has now been announced that the original shortlist of four Companies to build and operate this Plant has been whittled down to two Companies. These are Sita UK Ltd and Veolia ES Aurora Ltd. Both Companies have proposed building an Energy from Waste plant (through incineration), as this is the most popular tried and tested choice of Waste Disposal technology throughout Europe. Both Companies have also opted to use the site offered by the County Council at Gt Blakenham. Both Companies will now work their proposals up to the tender stage, when the final choice will be made. Apart from the technological excellence of the successful scheme, the ability of the proposal to fit into the Suffolk landscape will also be a vital consideration.

Completely separate from this initiative, the County Council's Planning Department has been pursuing its statutory obligation to provide sufficient sites to the Waste Industry to dispose of the County's Commercial and Industrial Waste. No technology has been selected in this instance as that will be the prerogative of any commercial organisation bringing proposals forward. The County's duty is to provide sufficient sites. These have been identified at Stanton and Brome (both former airfields), Sproughton (ex-Sugarbeet Factory), the Masons site and the SCC Highways Depot (both at Gt Blakenham). A Public Consultation is being conducted in respect of these sites, prior to submission to the Government, that will be followed by an Examination in Public by a Government Planning Inspector.

The proposed Local Government Reorganisation of the structure of Local Authorities in Suffolk was due to move towards a conclusion, with a recommendation to the Secretary of State on 15<sup>th</sup> July (today as I type!). However, that has hit the buffers as the Judiciary has now found through a Mr Justice Foskett in the High Court of Justice, Queen's Bench Division, that the Boundary Committee was out of order in not considering the proposal by three District/Borough Councils (St Edmundsbury, Suffolk Coastal and Forest Heath) that a three Unitary Structure should also be considered. Therefore they are now instructed to consider, in addition to the single unitary and the two unitaries already proposed, this third option. My understanding is that the Boundary Committee are appealing against that High Court Judgement and a date will now be set to hear that appeal. If the whole process is prolonged by these manoeuvres to the point where no final decision is reached by the time of the General Election (next June at the latest) and if the Conservatives succeed in winning that election, then they have pledged to scrap the whole process. So once again, many thousands of pounds could be wasted as a result of the status quo being restored.

