

## **Southwold & Reydon Society - Magazine Article for November 2015**

**Southwold Hospital** – A final decision on whether Southwold Hospital is to be closed permanently will be made by the Governors of the Great Yarmouth and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group (Health East) at their meeting on November 5. If they decide in favour of closure it is unlikely to happen before next April (2016) to allow time for a replacement service to be introduced which will treat people in their own home or in beds in care homes. At a meeting organised by Health East and attended by the Society last month there was support for the new system of home care but strong opposition to the closure of community hospitals like Southwold. So the final decision is far from clear cut. Jonathan Williams, CEO of East Coast Community Health, spoke to the last committee meeting of the Society and detailed the staffing difficulties which had led to the hospital being closed temporarily for three months in August. However, he said it would be possible to reopen it quite quickly and restore all the beds on a phased basis if it was decided to keep it open.

In another development Health East has given details of progress towards building a new care home on land next to the new Sole Bay Health Centre. They say they are now actively seeking to market the land to care home developers and expect prospective bids to be taken by next February. If all goes according to plan building work could start early in 2017.

The Society has been closely involved in the consultation process from the beginning. In its formal submission to Health East, the Society gave the new proposals “cautious” support on condition that a detailed “beds with care” plan was in place before Southwold Hospital was closed and that the new system – if approved - should be closely monitored and the results made public.

**St Felix** – The Society’s committee decided to oppose the application by St Felix school to build 71 houses on one of its playing fields. Whilst recognising housing needs locally, it was felt this application breached many key policies in Waveney District Council’s Local Plan designed to protect the countryside, preserve open space and maintain sports facilities. We also had concerns that the proposed traffic access would be unsafe.

Another reservation was that Waveney District Council had already begun the process of updating its Local Plan, Public consultation was scheduled to take place in early 2016 and the plan was due for finalisation in 2017. Therefore, we considered this application was premature and could pre-empt the review process.

**Dogs On Southwold Beach** - We were pleased to learn that there will be a full public consultation later this year on any proposals to change the current restrictions on dogs on the beach and that a dog-free area of beach is required to maintain our Blue Flag status.

**Southwold Town Maps** - We are planning to increase and update the ‘You Are Here’ maps that the Society has provided for many years at key locations in the town including new more weather resistant housings. We are very pleased indeed that Southwold Town Council has agreed to work with us to finalise the locations and obtain any necessary permissions and we will now seek sponsorship for producing and installing the new maps and housings. We are also very grateful to Clive Tickner for creating the artwork for the new maps.

**Awards** - Nominations remain open for our 2016 Awards for Excellence for individuals or organisations who have made a significant and sustained contribution to our community; so get on and propose anyone you think would be one of our worthy winners. Application forms are available at the Library and Barbrooks.

Tony Evans, Deputy Chairman, Southwold & Reydon Society.