

Report for Lavenham PC, 4.7.19 from Robert Lindsay, County Councillor

Suffolk County Council announces funding cuts to subsidised bus routes

Suffolk County Council has announced that 23 subsidised bus routes will no longer receive funding from the council, in a bid to save £340,000. This means that over a third of subsidised bus routes in the county will lose their funding.

The decision to cut £340,000 from the subsidised buses budget was made in February, when the Council agreed on the budget for the current financial year. I spoke against this cut at the time, as well as other cuts that will affect bus users such as the decision to no longer print bus timetables. The 112 from Bildeston to Sudbury which in May had its contract renewed, is one of the ones that is to lose its subsidy.

More details of which routes will be affected can be found at:

<http://www.suffolkonboard.com/>

The council say that they will be engaging with bus operators to determine whether the routes can continue to run without council funding. I will keep you updated if there are any further developments.

Cross-party call for independent inquiry into SEND services

On 14 June I signed a cross-party letter to the Chief Executive of Suffolk County Council, asking her to establish an independent inquiry into the provision of SEND services in Suffolk.

This follows the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission reinspection earlier this year, when Suffolk County Council's SEND services were deemed to have made insufficient improvement.

She has replied to say that this would take time away from delivering their recovery plan agreed with the Dept for Education and that the DfE would make progress reports this September and then six months later. She is also arranging for a "peer challenge" review of progress by independent experts next year.

Final Council overspend on 2018-19 budget

The final outturn figures for the 2018-19 budget have been published, showing that Suffolk County Council overspent by £4.5m (0.88% of the budget). Key areas of overspend included:

- Home to School Transport (£1.7m), due to the increasing demand for out-of-county SEND transport arrangements;
- Adult Care Purchasing Budget (£4m);
- Early Help and Specialist Services (£4.8m), due to the increasing number of children in care, especially those requiring specialist placements.

These areas of overspend were mitigated by underspends in other directorates.

Department for Transport refuses funding for four village bypass, while Ipswich Northern Bypass plan goes to consultation.

The Department for Transport has decided to not support the proposal for a £133m four village bypass in Suffolk, also known as the Suffolk Energy Gateway. The key reasons for the government's decision were:

- It is concerned about the overall value for money of the project;
- It felt the council had not provided enough money for it and neither had EDF as part of the case to build Sizewell C;
- There are concerns about the environmental impact of the road.

This decision has implications for the Ipswich Northern Bypass which SCC says will cost £500-560m.

Hole in Water Street culvert - verbal update