

Report for Lavenham Parish Council by Robert Lindsay, Suffolk County Councillor for 7 Sept 2023

Footpath Green Willows

I look forward to meeting your chair and others next week to discuss the potential creation of a much-needed footway connecting Green Willows with the rest of Lavenham. In advance of this I have asked the council if a footway on the verge would be supported and they have said yes, subject to a few provisos. The permission of Babergh Council is required because it will have to go over a strip of their land. NB Suffolk County Council will not provide the costs for construction or design and their contractor must be used. So if the parish can not raise the money for it, it will not proceed.

Council warns over £30 million deficit predicted for current financial year

The latest prediction, based on the first quarter of the year is for a 4% deficit on the £688m budget the council set itself in February. This is not unexpected but the council has chosen to press release this now and state that their current answer of seeking more cuts and dipping into reserves to finance shortfalls is not sustainable. All the cost pressures, inflation and interest rates were known about when the council set its budget in February and raised council tax by 4% rather than the full 5% allowed, as the Green and LibDem opposition had proposed. Our amendment was voted down by the Conservatives. The overspend comes largely in costs for children in care with complex needs and for taxi transport to special needs schools, also growing costs of elderly care.

Hadleigh High School one of four in Suffolk so far affected by concrete problem

The county council's cabinet member for education said on Friday that three Suffolk schools were affected by the aerated concrete "RAAC" issue are East Bergholt High School, Hadleigh High School and Claydon High School. Since then Farlingaye High School in Woodbridge has also identified a problem. Hadleigh High School said it would update parents today [Monday] on whether or not it would have to delay opening for the new school year. They were aiming to do a survey over the weekend. They said they had only been made aware (presumably by the Dept of Education) that they needed to close areas where RAAC is present at 3pm on Thursday 30th September.

Pylon plan not supported by SCC

Suffolk County Council is not supporting the latest proposals by the National Grid to install 114 miles of electricity pylons across the county as part of the "Norwich to Tilbury" project. A number of objections have been raised about the 33 mile stretch of the new works which would run through Suffolk, which includes installing a stretch of cabling under the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The council is pressing for an offshore solution to be fully researched and considered.