

Report for Lavenham PC from Robert Lindsay County Councillor 3.10.24

Recycling and Waste Collection Changes

The County Council at its last cabinet meeting in September allocated £4.5m from reserves to update its waste depots to handle the food waste, glass and cartons that a new law says must be recycled by 2026 and plastic film by 2027. The county must also set up a new contract for anaerobic digestion of the foodwaste, which can be used to generate methane for fuel or electricity.

Financial Monitoring Report for 2024-25, so far better than last year

The council's latest financial forecast for 2024-25, and so far the year seems to be going better than last year, with a projected overspend of £1 million compared to last year when the council was forecasting an overspend for 2023-24 of £29.3 million. An overspend in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and care purchasing in adult social care services was balanced by areas that are forecast to come in under budget. Areas that are predicted to come in under budget have helped balance this out. However, the council's reserves, the 'savings' it holds for a rainy day, are taking another big hit this year and are due to reduce by £22.2 million. This is a rate of spending by the council which is unsustainable even for a few more years. Like other councils in the same position, Suffolk will be hoping for an improved funding settlement from the new government.

Funding to Improve Home Energy Efficiency

My political group were disappointed that the council is projecting to return £5 million of funding to the government which could have been used to improve the energy efficiency of homes in Suffolk. The Warm Homes Suffolk Scheme is now closed, but the council has heard that a similar scheme may be on its way and we would encourage residents who are eligible to apply. I will provide more information on future schemes when I have it.

Suffolk Devolution Deal Scrapped

The devolution deal which Suffolk Conservatives negotiated with the Conservative government has now been scrapped by the new Labour government, as has the deal for Norfolk which was along similar lines. Devolution would have provided the County with extra funding and power to make more decisions locally, for example transport and adult education in return for a directly elected leader of each authority. The mood music from the government is that they want to deal with fewer local authority leaders and that Norfolk and Suffolk should therefore agree a single, directly-elected Mayor before they will offer them devolution. I think agreement would be unlikely.

Arts and Culture Project Funding

The County has launched its new £500,000 Culture Project Fund to support local arts and museum projects across the county. This is the controversial bidding system for arts funding which replaces specific long-running grants to specific museums and theatre groups axed in the budget last February.

There are three tiers of funding:

Small grants up to £1,500

Medium grants up to £15,000

Large grants up to £50,000

Eligible applicants include arts organisations and museums, skilled freelancers, registered charities, community interest companies, non-profits, and social enterprises based in Suffolk. For more information on deadlines and award dates, or to find out how to apply, please visit:

www.suffolk.gov.uk/cultureprojectfund

or contact the Arts & Museums Team at:

cultureprojectfund@suffolk.gov.uk.

Apply for Primary and Secondary School Places

Now is the time for parents and carers of children to apply for places at primary and secondary school next year. Parents and carers should not assume that free transport will be provided to their catchment school. For the last few years, the County has stopped supplying free buses to the catchment school and they are only for the “nearest” school. The nearest and the catchment school may be two different places. There is a Nearest School Checker here:

<http://nearestschool.suffolk.gov.uk/>

Advice and guidance about the school application process is available here

www.suffolk.gov.uk/admissions