

Report for Lavenham PC 7.8.25 by County Councillor Robert Lindsay

Leaflets promoting Conservatives' "One Suffolk" funded by council taxpayers

The Conservatives who control Suffolk County Council are estimated to have so far spent more than £100,000 of council tax payers' money on selling their proposal for a single Suffolk mega unitary and attacking the district councils' rival proposals for three unitaries. Half of this is estimated to have gone on a social media campaign and the other half through the costs of delivering a leaflet to every household.

Despite requests, the Council has not said how much it has spent nor how much it intends to spend but at a recent Cabinet meeting, the Conservative administration took £1.9m from reserves to put in a pot to fund preparation for unitaries and the Norfolk/Suffolk mayor. The power to decide exactly how much was spent on what was delegated to the council leader Matthew Hicks and the Chief Executive.

Of the £1.9m they estimated that £550k would be needed to cover the extra staff time needed to get their business case for one unitary for Suffolk before the minister in September. It now appears that much of this spending is on propaganda attacking the vision of their political rivals who run the five districts and borough councils in Suffolk. The Conservative's argument is purely about cost savings, while the districts' is primarily about having local government as close as possible to the people – which with clever use of local knowledge and suppliers - is likely to lead to sustainable cost savings.

Speed limits

At full council on Thursday 10 July, I seconded a motion, proposed by a LibDem colleague, to make it easier to obtain lower speed limits where the community supports one, but this was rejected by the Conservative administration on the grounds that they were already planning to do this.

They said they would produce a report for cabinet's decision "in the autumn". They are focusing on 30mph to 20mph rather than 60mph to lower limits which my group feels should be reviewed as well. I am pleased they have bowed to the growing pressure to ease criteria but I am not hugely optimistic that they will change things enough to make a difference. The administration and Highways' attitude has, up to now, been to put obstacles in the way of communities rather than remove them.

For any community wanting lower speed limits, now is the ideal time to let the administration know. One issue Lavenham PC might want raise with the cabinet member Chris Chambers is their policy on insisting on repeater signs, rather than allowing them just at entrances to a 20mph zone.

Daily Hadleigh to Stowmarket Bus bid successful

I'm pleased to say that bids from Parish Councils along the route from Hadleigh to Stowmarket for a daily bus service have been successful and have been allocated funding.

It looks as though Hadleigh Community Transport will use the funding to extend its existing service operated by two routes between the two towns.

I hope the new services will be at peak hours morning and evening so that people can get to the mainline train station in Stowmarket in time to get to London, Cambridge etc or to college.

However, getting the service underway may take some time as it appears the bus team at the county is understaffed. A shame since buses ought to be a priority in my view.

Progress on step up in recycling waste

New Government rules coming into force next year insist councils must now collect and recycle glass and food waste and more plastics from the doorstep.

District councils are responsible for collecting the rubbish and the County Council has to handle it at the depots.

At the County Cabinet meeting on Tuesday 15th July, the administration decided to invest £5.9m that they had received from Government, collected from packaging producers, into updating the recycling centre at Great Blakenham so that it can handle more recyclable waste.

This covers about half the estimated full cost of £10m to £12m that the site operator Biffa will have to invest. It means that Biffa will charge the county less for each tonne of waste they handle. The county is not investing the full amount, since it has only been given £6.9m from Government for this financial year.

Separately, the council has signed a contract to process all the county's food waste collected from the kerbside from next year at Adnams' anaerobic digestion plant near Southwold.

The waste will be used to generate biomethane as a fuel and turned into soil fertiliser.

Currently food waste that is put into the black bins is sent to the incinerator at Great Blakenham. The recycling of food waste will be a net cost to council taxpayers, so efforts by householders to reduce food waste, or home compost it, will reduce those costs.