

Report for Lavenham PC 5/12/18

Latest £11m cuts proposed from next year's budget,

Reduce training in Trading Standards, cut the entire £378k core budget for Citizens Advice, stop printing roadside bus timetables and cut rural bus subsidy, stop roadside sign cleaning, cut winter support fleet for highways, review arrangements for grass cutting, review streetlighting. Council tax to go up by maximum allowed 4% (incl 1% for social care). Since this was announced, massive reaction from councillors and the public has led them to rein back on the CAB cuts. They will now phase them in over two years.

Period Poverty – part 2

As explained in my last report, an opposition motion calling for £15k funding for provision of sanitary products at schools was rejected by the administration at the last council meeting. But since then the Conservative administration have announced that they will be undertaking an audit of the services in Suffolk that are aimed at tackling period poverty, to identify gaps and assess how provision can be improved. A commitment of funding from Suffolk County Council will be vital to ensure we eradicate period poverty across the whole county.

Decision on Upper Orwell Crossings delayed

Work on the Upper Orwell Crossings in Ipswich has been suspended since August 2018, due to concerns that the costs of the project were no longer sustainable. In October, the administration announced that they would need an additional £43m of funding in order to continue. It was agreed by Cabinet that officers and councillors would have until December to try and find this additional funding. However, this deadline has now been pushed back to January 2019.

Significant increase in insurance pay-outs for cars damaged by potholes

Data published under Freedom of Information laws has shown that, between 1 January and 16 October this year, Suffolk Highways have already paid out £67,819 for vehicle damage (including insurance pay outs, costs and legal fees). This is more than twice the previous year, when pay-outs for the whole of 2017 totalled £26k. The number of claims has also more than doubled, from 598 in 2017 to 1,265 so far in 2018.

New highways boss – the only way is Essex

After a long search, a new highways supremo (head of Growth, Highways and Infrastructure) Mark Ash has been hired and will start in February. He is currently Director of Waste and Environment at Essex County Council, where he does flood and water management, sustainable drainage services, management and promotion of the natural environment and renewable energy.

Road closures signage and diversions

Having changed the pothole policy, new cabinet member for highways is also looking see if Highways can improve the co-ordination of road closures to stop over-runs and improve signage.

I have specifically asked that notices of closures such as the recent one in Bildeston which was ten miles from the actual roadworks in Stowmarket, mention the location of the roadworks, so that people are not diverted needlessly. I am told this has been fed back to the traffic management company which the utility uses.

Abandoned and unremoved signs

They are urging you to please report signs that are abandoned on networkassurance@suffolk.gov.uk and if at all possible with photos because utilities can be fined for these.

Green Willows

I have asked highways about the procedure for creating a new footpath. Regarding applying for CIL123 for this is under control of Babergh and you will need to talk to them.

May I wish you all the best for your Christmas fair and a pleasant and relaxing Christmas holiday.

Kind regards

Robert Lindsay

Suffolk County Councillor