

Report for Lavenham PC 6/2/19

Budget cuts approved by cabinet

Council Tax is due to rise by a total of 3.99% - 2.99% increase in general council tax and 1% for the Social Care Precept;

- The budget includes a savings requirement of £10.1m, divided across all departments.

Citizens Advice cuts

In November the County Council announced their intention to cut all funding for Suffolk's Citizens Advice Bureaus as part of their budget savings proposals. This was later amended to a phased cut over 2 years. The funding will be reduced by half (£184,000) in 2019/20, before being removed entirely in 2020/21. An equalities consultation found that 90% believed this would adversely impact the elderly and disabled. However the cabinet nodded through this cut before the results of this survey were available to them. I shall raise my concerns at full council on Feb 14.

New highways boss

After a long search, a new 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.

Special Educational Needs Children – potential £45m investment

Cabinet has approved a recommendation from a cross-party Policy Development Panel to invest £45m in building three new special needs schools and 36 specialist units within mainstream schools which together will create 828 new SEN places. We badly need to invest in provision of these places inside the country rather than paying to send children far distances.

Orwell bridge plan dropped

The county has finally dropped long running plans to build a big bridge over the Orwell in central Ipswich, although £8.3 million has already been spent on it. The bulk of this went to consultants WSP. The plan for two smaller bridges to connect Wet Dock Island by the Waterfront will go ahead at a further cost of £10m.

School admissions consultation

A consultation on whether the admissions priorities should be changed to nearest school rather than catchment school came back with 73% agreeing that admissions should continue to use catchment. The recommendation to cabinet is therefore that catchments for admissions purposes will remain for 2019/20 and 2020/21. However given that the county is in the process of changing free transport policy to nearest school rather than catchment, this will be kept under review.

Weight restriction - signage

You have told me of one or two complaints about the intrusiveness of the “7.2 tonne” sign on the High Street and I have asked highways if it can be moved further towards the back of the pavement. I await a formal reply from the project manager. However, the problem with making a sign less “intrusive” is that it is then, by definition, less visible to lorry drivers, which defeats the whole point. I’d be interested to hear if there are locations outside the village where there are not weight restriction signs where the parish council feels there should be. reviewing signage at the end of the 18 month trial rather than at the beginning.