

County Councillors Report to Lavenham Parish Council. Thursday 3rd March 2017

Moratorium ahead of County Council elections

This will start on 23rd March. Little sense from Cabinet Members, and no money for community purposes, will be forthcoming from the County Council after that date until sometime in mid May.

Budget 2017/18

The SCC component of the Council tax bill will rise by 3%, which represents the Government levy specifically to pay for Social Care. This is lower than the 5% increase being imposed by the majority of councils in England.

Annual Public Health Report.

Suffolk's Director of Public Health released his annual report on 26 January 2017 setting an ambition to improve mental health services in Suffolk over the next 10 years.

An estimated 1 in 100 people are affected by severe mental ill health in Suffolk.

The report, lists seven recommendations to promote good mental health and reduce demand in Suffolk over the next five to 10 years:

The report is divided into sections that correspond with different stages in people's lives, from pre-birth children to older people's mental health. It recognises that good mental health is a fundamental human right for everyone and that good mental health is essential for good physical health, and vice versa.

School Funding

At first sight Suffolk appeared to be one of the winners under new arrangements for school funding recently announced by the Government. Suffolk schools will receive 2% more than before. However this still means that the County's schools will receive considerably less than schools in other parts of the country, and in real terms (taking inflation into account) there will actually be little change from the previous unacceptable situation. The Cabinet Member for Education Gordon Jones has written to complain about the settlement to the Secretary of State, as have head teachers in the County.

Joint local area Send inspection in Suffolk

In December Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission conducted a joint inspection of Suffolk to judge the effectiveness of measures to deal with disabled and special educational needs children

Unfortunately the report was not good, although it did recognise that action was already being taken by the organisations concerned, including the County Council, to remedy

serious shortcomings in the system. Since the publication of the report there has been little additional information forthcoming and realistically there is unlikely to be ahead of May's election.

I do know that as part of the Raising the Bar initiative our SEN activities in schools have been recognised as improving in recent months , but clearly this is from a very low base, and we are being held back by the tight financial situation that makes bringing necessary new resources to the area difficult.

Lavenham

I understand that a meeting is being held with John Simpson from SCC to continue discussions about various traffic issues outstanding in Lavenham. I hope that some clarity will be forthcoming about the timing of the experimental weight limit in Water Street.

I have tried to assist in sorting out various matters in connection with planning issues concerning the Development at Harwood Place which were being held up by the County Council. I understand that these are close to being resolved.

Jenny Antill
March 2017