

Public Sector Leaders Group

They have confirmed that they will hold five public meetings a year with minutes and agendas published – there will be some private meetings in between. I am told this is purely for planning rather than decision purposes.

Water Street weight restriction

I had a call Weds afternoon from Mary Evans to apologise about the false dates, long delays and lack of communication on this project. Apparently some part of highways failed to book the road space in time, which implies serious management issues – NOT lack of money. She has asked me to write a brief report to her on this whole issue in order to ensure that the right people are reprimanded and action is taken to prevent reoccurrence. I have asked her to revert when a date is confirmed absolutely also for an answer on monitoring and signage.

Mud Lane and Lower Road

At the time of writing I am still waiting for a response to questions over traffic calming on Lower Road. I have sent another reminder on this. I am in dialogue with SCC about Mud Lane, their latest is to say that they are not owners of the ditch and therefore will be writing to the owner to ask the owner to clear it. I have told them that no one seems to own it so I await their response.

Suffolk scheduled to overspend by £8.6m this year.

Based on its spending in the first quarter of the 2018/19 financial year, the county council is forecast to overspend its £501 million budget by 1.7%. It is now attempting to reduce costs and make savings by 31 March next year. It says the overspend is mainly driven by rising demand for services and increased costs in Children and Young People's Services,

(accounting for almost £5 million of the projected overspend). This includes services for looked-after children, specialist social care for children and home-to-school transport. The council is saying nothing about raising income.

Barley Homes

The county is pulling out of its 50:50 house building joint venture with St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath District Councils having failed to build a single home in three years. The idea of this venture was to raise income for the county. A better model for SCC as a landowner would be case by case with experienced builders such as the development at Cockfield with a housing association.

Special Educational Needs crisis

A report to cabinet is projecting a rise of 18% in Sen children in the next two years, they will be short 300-400 places equivalent to three special schools. SEN kids already face either a long wait or are placed out of county, contributing to the budget overspend. Officers have consulted and are recommending cabinet provide new places via a mix of some new schools and provide specialist support centres within existing schools.

Unitaries

I have learnt that the new leader Cllr Hicks is not in favour of his predecessor Colin Noble's single unitary idea and is dropping the study that Respublica had been tasked with. However because Respublica has already been paid he is looking to task them with something else.