

Report to Lavenham PC (for meeting on Nov 3)

Water Street weight restriction

Despite frequent requests to every tier of officer involved in this I have had no response other than apologies. I will continue pressing.

Cutting of free school buses and post 16 travel subsidy

The officers concerned with this proposal have arranged two “workshops” with randomly selected parents, teachers, governors etc to discuss what to do after our group sent the original proposal back to cabinet for a rethink. I have been invited to attend one of them this Wednesday. As yet we do not have a date for the new plan to be presented to cabinet.

Cabinet committees

I attended my first Care, Health and Wellbeing cabinet committee last month. I asked for a plan to commit funds to cycling and walking routes in the county to be put on the agenda and it was so this too will be discussed at our next meeting this Wednesday.

Suffolk County Council’s response to Babergh and Mid Suffolk local plan

I have just received this and have only had time to glance through it. It does make mention of the fact that many primary schools, such as Lavenham, have no room for expansion. So that building new houses will add to the pressure. It suggests that new developments are of at least 800 homes to enable the council to finance the build of new primary schools on new sites. It also calls for a proportion of new homes to be built to standards that cater for elderly people who wish to downsize.

Outsourcing/insourcing – health visitors and school nursing

The cabinet tomorrow will be asked to approve a county-wide tender for a new contractor to provide its Healthy Child Programme (basically health visitors and school nurses). This is currently provided directly by the county everywhere apart from Waveney where ECCH provide it. Their contract expires at the end of December and SCC were going to take the contract in house. However, ECCH have made a “right to challenge” which under localism legislation, forces the council to put the whole thing up to tender as a “market testing exercise”. The council will itself bid for this contract and does not have to go for the lowest bidder but can set the terms of the tender to include things such as quality of staff. The total contract size will drop from £10 to £9million so it is likely that health visitor numbers will be cut.

Latest budget predictions

Still on course for an “overspend” of £10.2m in the current financial year largely in the costs of SEN transport and provision of adult social care, despite the social care precept and a one-off three year grant from Govt. The steady cuts in the Revenue Support Grant from Government barely offset the social care precept. Officers have made it clear for some time that a rise in council tax will be needed but that even this will not offset the overspend.