

Report for Lavenham PC 6 December 2017 Robert Lindsay County councillor

Care, Wellbeing and Health Cabinet Committee

I have been appointed to this cabinet committee. We have met twice so far. My proposal to ask the cabinet for a commitment to funding cycle and walking networks across the county was well received and will be finalised at the next meeting in January.

Cutting of free school buses and post 16 travel subsidy

This proposal was temporarily blocked by the scrutiny committee after myself and members of my group objected. However this week (5th Dec) the cabinet again put this proposal - with a very few tweaks - to consultation. The changes would see over 3000 children lose their free school transport, most in rural areas like ours. The evidence from Essex indicates that a change in policy would NOT deliver the necessary savings. The consultation period will run from 12 December 2017 to 28 February 2018 and I will update you with details on how to participate.

Plastic bottle deposit return Scheme

I am sponsoring a motion to the next full council on December 7th asking the council to back Government plans for this and for Suffolk to be a pilot project.

Latest budget predictions and county precept rise

Current year

A month ago we had sight of the latest predictions for this year. The county council is still on course for an "overspend" of £10.2m in the current financial year largely in the costs of taxi provision for children with Special Education Needs and provision of adult social care. Neither the social care precept nor a one off 3-year social care grant are enough to offset the steady cuts in the Revenue Support Grant from Government. The option of raising council tax has been rejected by the administration for the past seven years.

Next financial year

The cabinet has now proposed they will increase council tax by 5% next year. But despite this, the Council will still be facing a forecast budget gap of £26.85m, and a cuts plan has been drawn up to provide £23.9m worth of savings. The majority of this will come from the Adult Social care budget, with a proposed £11m reduction in spending on care purchasing and a £1m saving achieved by cutting the Sheltered Housing Grant. I have a report from the finance department that shows a rise of 1% in previous years would have almost completely removed the need for these cuts now.

Water Street I am ringing the engineer in charge of the weight restriction project on a weekly basis. But he is still unable to give me a date or really an adequate explanation for delays. The engineer is aware that the culvert needs to be repaired and is trying to schedule that at the same time as the weight restriction work.