

Report for Lavenham PC, 7.11.19

Robert Lindsay, Suffolk County Councillor

### **Cabinet reshuffle**

The cabinet member for finance Richard Smith has quit his post after what was reportedly a row over raising the council tax (he wanted a freeze). This triggered a reshuffle. Gordon Jones has moved over to take Cllr Smith's role at finance. That in turn meant Mary Evans has been moved to take Gordon Jones' role in charge of education. In turn Andrew Reid has been appointed cabinet member for Highways and transport in place of Mary Evans. Cllr Reid was chair of the pension committee.

### **School bus travel to be reviewed**

Mary Evans in her new role in charge of children and young people, issued an apology over the way the change to the school travel policy had been handled and said it would be reviewed by the head of the county's fire service Nick Hardingham. It is not clear however, whether this is a review of the whole policy or just of the way it was implemented. You will recall there were hundreds of appeals – there is still a huge backlog - and many children left not knowing whether they had a bus to their school at the start of term last month. Our group joined Labour to support a motion which asked for the policy to be modified to ensure an end to “split villages” and to ensure siblings still got free bus to their siblings school. This was voted down by the administration.

### **Public buses**

My one allowed question at full council was to the new cabinet member of highways Andrew Reid to ask if he could meet passenger groups for the three bus routes (the 112, 461/462 and 120) in my division under threat from subsidy withdrawal. He said he would consider it.

### **Health visitors**

Our political group has been approached by very concerned Suffolk health visitors who revealed that their numbers have been cut by 41 from 117 in the wake of a new in-house contract in the county which is £1m cheaper than the previous contract. Another of the change is that 3 of the 5 mandatory visits to parents of children are no longer done by a qualified health visitor. We proposed a motion asking them to change this policy and ensure all visits were done by the same health visitor. This was also rejected.

### **Copunty councillor numbers to be cut from 75 to 70 in Boundary Commission shake up**

The Local Government Boundary Commission has said it is minded to cut the number of county councillors from 75 to 70. It is now moving to determining new

boundaries, known as divisions. The review is expected to be completed by July 2020.