

County Councillor's Report for Lavenham Parish Council meeting - Thursday 6 July 2017

Since I last saw you at your annual meeting I have been appointed to the audit committee and the pension committee on Suffolk County Council.

Risky Pension?

The pension committee is preparing to put the bulk of its £2.6bn in assets into a "pooled pot" with other local authorities across the East and South East as demanded by central Government. This will reduce, but not remove, the ability of Suffolk County Council to invest sums in the local economy, which is something I am keen to see it do. Though it is early days I would also like to see the pension fund examine whether it is wise to remain so heavily invested in fossil fuel companies since I agree with the Governor of the Bank England Mark Carney who has warned that government legislation to cut CO2 emissions could pose a substantial risk to the value of oil and gas assets.

£400k on care beds for the dead

I have attended my first audit committee which heard that the council has inadvertently paid £400,000 to private care homes for beds for people who have died. This seems to have been a mixture of some care homes not telling the county when their patient dies while in other cases they told the county but no one in the county told the people making the payments Fortunately this was spotted by the head of internal audit and we are told better internal reporting measures introduced. The last time they checked the overpayments had reduced to just £40k. The county has recovered all the money it is owed. The county's own care homes were all outsourced about four years ago to Care UK. I suspect that when this contract happened, county staff were not geared up to control payments.

More say for backbenchers

Latest plans are for there to be four cabinet committees on the county council each with 12 members, to include two from our group and two from Labour, 8 Conservatives.

Water Street Weight Restriction Trial

I met the engineer on this project Graham Taylor and invited along key members of the parish council last month so that he could talk and walk us through proposed signage, bollards etc. We agreed a start date of early August. This week he assured me it was still on track for that date. I hope he has now sent you the plans so that you can inform residents. We shall see how it turns out but from the plans I think it will provide a big improvement for Lavenham residents and visitors. Signage off Water Street and on the way to Lavenham to warn lorries is going to be important so do let me know where you think they might be appropriate so that I can press the case.

Pollution and traffic survey?

It would be nice to get some concrete data before and during the trial. I have asked if it is feasible for highways to do a traffic survey before and during the trial. I mentioned pollution tubes at our last meeting. Pollution monitors put up for 2 weeks before installation and for two weeks during the trial might also give some interesting results. However we are running out of time to do this, since they take a couple of weeks to order.

Robert Lindsay
County Councillor Cosford
July 2017