

Report for Nedging PC 13.3.19

Budget cuts approved by cabinet

Council Tax is due to rise by a total of 3.99% - 2.99% increase in general council tax and 1% for the Social Care Precept;

- The budget includes a savings requirement of £10.1m, divided across all departments.

This financial year's forecast deficit has reduced from over £8m to £5.9m. But a lot of this is due to not replacing staff, particularly social workers, who have left, so is not sustainable. However a big part of the cost over runs is to do with sending SEN children out of county which the planned £45m investment in Special Educational Needs places in Suffolk over the next five years should tackle.

Citizens Advice reprieve

The NHS in the form of Clinical Commissioning Groups in Suffolk has come forward to match fund the county's cut grant of £184,000 for 2019/20. But the full cut is still going ahead next year and it is not clear whether the CCGs will renew their funding. I voted against the council's budget at the last full council meeting in February mainly because of this cut to CAB.

New opt in policy for school travel

For pupils eligible for free school travel from September 2019, parents must now opt in to confirm their child has a seat on the bus from March 1st to the end of May. Under the former school travel policy, the seat was reserved automatically, even if pupils did not show up.

Suffolk fails its Special Needs inspection again

Two years after failing its inspection, Suffolk County Council special needs service is still not meeting children's needs, according to Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. The inspectors said they had made progress on improving governance but not on three other areas

- Parents are having to go to multiple authorities and are waiting too long to get the new version of "Statements" - (EHCs) "Education, Health and Social Care plans" for their children, particularly for autism where there is a backlog of referrals.

- Lack of understanding among parents of support available including access to child and adolescent mental health services.
- A lack of joint working to monitor outcomes for children.