

Report for Nedging Parish Council 14/3/21 by County Councillor Robert Lindsay

Nedging Road traffic calming

Highways tell me they will not support putting dragons teeth and roundels on Nedging Road unless I pay for a speed survey to show that they are necessary. However, I understand that the parish council's own survey has already shown that vehicles do not exceed the 30mph limit so I won't be commissioning any survey.

They will, however, replace the missing 30mph signs at the entrance to the zone, because that's statutory but they are seeking a contribution of £693 for replacing six other 30 repeater signs (three pairs back to back) and two posts on Nedging Road that have disappeared over the years. They are part funding this themselves. I know it is galling that they won't pay to replace worn out repeaters. But that is the policy. I am prepared to pay half of this so that we get the benefit of a reduction in price for VAT etc if the PC provide the other half.

Coronation street parties

The county council is waiving the usual fee for road closures for villages wanting to have street parties. See the SCC website for details.

Floods and drainage backlog

There are a number of long-running flood issues in our Cosford division, including frequent flooding near the bridge between Kettlebaston and Preston St Mary which are not being prioritised by the county's drainage team. I requested details of what jobs had been done. Just 17 of the nearly 1000 flood and drain problems on Suffolk county council's list have been completed. The extra £10m that was allocated in Dec 2021 to be spent over 3.5 years is being used for "low hanging fruit" – minor civil works – that are not in this list, and that work has been speeded up. Climate scientists have been predicting an increase in rain fall for some time so it is a shame drainage repairs and maintenance appears to have been underfunded over the years.

County Council budget

For the 2023/24 budget the county council has now formally voted to increase the council tax precept by 4%, below the 5% cap they are allowed. An amendment by our political group (Green, LibDem, Independent) to raise it to just below the 5% cap to help fund social care and public transport was voted down.

As if to emphasise the need for more cash, the cabinet met February to discuss forecasts for its current year budget. The latest forecasts show that the council is having to use more reserves (£67m bringing the total reserves from £223m to £156m) than anticipated to cover additional costs in running its services. Our Group are concerned with the long-term effects of the Council's financial strategy.

Up to £1bn Highways contract awarded to Milestone Infrastructure

The county's Highways maintenance contract with Kier Group is due to expire on October 1st. Kier failed to make the three-strong shortlist for the re-tendered contract which has now been awarded to Milestone, part of venture capital-owned M Group Services. Milestone's road maintenance business was created by buying Swedish group Skanska's UK facilities management arm. It will be responsible for maintenance of roads, pavements, rights of way, drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting.

The contract is worth between £800 million and £1 billion and will last up to 20 years. The tender aimed to ensure Milestone uses local suppliers and services where possible. Milestone's parent M Group is one of the top rated business support services companies for environmental and social governance.