

Report for Brettenham PC 13 July 2017

Since my last report I have attended my first audit and pension committee meetings:

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. However, the proposal before next week's full council meeting is for these committees to meet in private with agenda and minutes not being published. I have yet to decide whether to vote for or against these proposals and would like to amend them to be in public.

Next week's full council

The council is agreeing a “priorities” brochure for 2017-21, which is based on the Conservative manifesto. I will be asking why there are no performance targets for cycling despite building cycle networks being in their manifesto.

Robert Lindsay County Councillor Cosford