

Report for Brettenham PC 9/11/17 Robert Lindsay County Councillor

Rethink on free school buses and post 16 travel subsidy

The officers and councillor concerned with this proposal have arranged two “workshops” with randomly selected parents, headteachers, councillors and bus companies to discuss what to do after our group sent the original proposal back to cabinet for a rethink. I attended one of them this Wednesday, I was not convinced that they are yet genuinely prepared to look at all options, but we shall see. As yet we do not have a date for the new plan to be presented to cabinet.

Care, health and Wellbeing cabinet committee

I attended my second Care, Health and Wellbeing cabinet committee this week. It was agreed that we would debate my proposal to ask the cabinet to commit to funding and a clear target for increasing the proportion of cycle and walking trips in the county over a certain time. There was near unanimous backing for this. We agreed to put the finishing touches on a request to cabinet at our next meeting in January. It will be interesting to see whether the cabinet agrees to it.

Cuts to health visitors and school nursing

The cabinet tomorrow approved a move to tender for contractors to provide its Healthy Child Programme (basically health visitors and school nurses). This is currently provided directly by the county everywhere apart from Waveney where East Coast Community Health (ECCH) provide it. ECCH's contract expires at the end of December and SCC were going to take the contract in house. However, ECCH have made a “right to challenge” which under localism legislation, forces the council to put the whole thing up to tender. The council will itself bid for this contract and does not have to go for the lowest bidder but can set the terms of the tender to include things such as quality of staff. The total contract size will drop from £10million to £9million so it is likely that health visitor numbers will be cut, whoever wins it.

Latest budget predictions

This week we had sight of the latest predictions for this year. The county council is still on course for an “overspend” of £10.2m in the current financial year largely in the costs of taxi provision for children with Special Education Needs and provision of adult social care, despite the social care precept and a one-off three-year grant from Govt. Neither of these are enough to offset the steady cuts in the Revenue Support Grant from Government. Officers have made it clear for some time that a rise in council tax (frozen for the last seven years) will be needed but that even this will not completely offset the overspend.