

Parish Report – Oct 2023

Councillor

Andrew Stringer (Upper Gipping)

Broadway House
Broad Road
Cotton, Stowmarket
IP14 4ND

07774 199061

andrew.stringer@suffolk.gov.uk

Condition of School Buildings

On 7 September councillors from our group attended Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee to question council officers from the Schools Infrastructure team about RAAC, the schools in Suffolk affected and the support they are being offered. The agenda also included the process for building new schools in the county and how the council works with the Department for Education and housing developers to make sure there are enough school places for children in the county. The meeting also looked at the school admissions and school transport processes and ways they can be made easy for parents to navigate. A local School, is now having to hire a large number of portacabins to contain the builders and over flow of pupils to deal with this issue.

Suffolk County Council Overspend

At Cabinet on 12 September our group raised concerns about the overspend predicted for the financial year 2023-24. The council is forecasting a net overspend of £22.3m, which is 3.2% of the overall budget for the year and will cut into the council's financial reserves with a reduction of £56.9m of the council's 'savings'. Finance officers at the council had suggested a high council tax rise during the budget process to try and lessen the pressures on the council caused by rising inflation, energy costs and increased demands on council services such as placements for children in care, adult care and school transport for children and young people with special educational needs. The Cabinet agreed that senior leaders at the council would look at how money could be saved in each directorate to protect council reserves and prevent cuts to services wherever possible.

New Suffolk Fire and Rescue Control Centre

Officers from Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) joined Cabinet on 12 September to explain their recommendation that the council leave the current control centre partnership with Peterborough and Cambridgeshire and open a new control centre in the county by the end of 2024. This would create significant extra cost, but it was agreed that it was necessary for the safety of Suffolk residents. A vote was held and the recommendations were approved. My group were keen to ensure that no fire stations would close and there would be no cuts to jobs or changes to work terms and conditions, but no assurances were given.

Cost of Living help and advice:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>

Benefits advice and support:

<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>