

Lavenham Parish Council report by Robert Lindsay, County Cllr 2.4.26

Government opts for three councils in Suffolk

The Government announced Wednesday 25th March that it has chosen the three unitaries option for Suffolk – advocated by the leaders of the all five district councils - rather than one single one, promoted by Suffolk Conservatives.

It means that from 2028, if the plan goes ahead, Lavenham will be in West Suffolk Council, which will stretch from just west of Hadleigh all the way to Newmarket and Brandon. There will be a lot of noise about how much money the change will cost. But both options are expensive and both predicted a four or five year timescale before those costs are clawed back in savings. The three councils option will be the smallest councils the Government would allow. Having three smaller councils I believe, gives the opportunity for an effective administration to be more responsive to people than Suffolk County Council ever was. There will be fewer Councillors than before, but not as few as the One Suffolk proposal was proposing.

The other two areas are Ipswich & Southern Suffolk (including Hadleigh and Felixstowe) and Central and Eastern Suffolk (including Stowmarket).

Five month road closure of Bildeston High Street

From mid-June, Bildeston High Street will be closed until mid-November whilst Anglian Water replace the Main there. The Main has not been upgraded since it was first put in in the 1930s to replace the village pump and as a result there have been frequent closures in recent years due to leaks. The closures were the source of frequent complaints to me from residents outside the village asking why AW hasn't replaced the Main. And as a result I wrote to them about four years ago asking them to do so. So this will be a massive inconvenience but it is a necessary evil.

Anglian Water are hosting an open day about the works at Chamberlin Hall, Bildeston on April 14th.

All businesses will be accessible on foot throughout the closure.

Car drivers will be able to access the surgery from one direction or another throughout the closure, since the closure will be in a series of phases with the stretch closed moving up the High Street from south to north. This means that diversions will vary depending on the phase. AW are setting up a dedicated website to provide all the relevant info as the work progresses. They are reaching out to businesses that may be affected. AW have put at least two businesses in Bildeston – the shop and the Crown - in touch with their loss adjusters and compensation will be looked into, if they do make losses as a result of the roadworks.

Crisis funding for heating oil

Suffolk has been allocated £1.7m by the Government in emergency funding for people unable to afford heating oil due to Trump's war on Iran. The County Council says it will administer this through its existing Local Welfare Assistance Scheme which already provides funding for residents experiencing a "financial shock or crisis" – including spiking heating oil prices.

New bus 51 Hadleigh and Stowmarket

This five day a week, six services a day route is due to start April 13th with funding from the Bus Service Improvement grants from Government two years ago.

Access over Railway Walk re allotments

I'm pleased that it appears a reasonable agreement has been reached between the County Council and the Allotments Group and the Parish Council for access for vehicles over the Railway Walk to the planned allotments.