**Report for Brettenham PC 14.11.19**

Robert Lindsay, Suffolk County Councillor/Babergh District Councillor

**Cabinet reshuffle**

The cabinet member for finance Richard Smith has quit his post after what was reportedly a row over raising the council tax (he wanted a freeze). This triggered a reshuffle. Gordon Jones has moved over to take Cllr Smith’s role at finance. That in turn meant Mary Evans has been moved to take Gordon Jones’ role in charge of education. In turn Andrew Reid has been appointed cabinet member for Highways and transport in place of Mary Evans. Cllr Reid was chair of the pension committee.

**School bus travel to be reviewed**

Mary Evans in her new role in charge of children and young people, issued an apology over the way the change to the school travel policy had been handled and said it would be reviewed by the head of the county’s fire service Mark Hardingham. It is not clear however, whether this is a review of the whole policy or just of the way it was implemented. You will recall there were hundreds of appeals – there is still a huge backlog - and many children left not knowing whether they had a bus to their school at the start of term last month. Our group joined Labour to support a motion which asked for the policy to be modified to ensure an end to “split villages” and to ensure siblings still got free bus to their sibling’s school. This was voted down by the administration.

**Public buses**

You are probably aware that the 377 which stopped at Brettenham between Bury and Stowmarket has topped after losing its subsidy. A shorter route has now been set up by operator Mulleys using S106 money from a development in Bury which links Bradfield St George with Bury but does not reach Brettenham.

My one allowed question at full council was to the new cabinet member of highways Andrew Reid to ask if he could meet passenger groups for the three bus routes (the 112, 461/462 and 120) in my division under threat from subsidy withdrawal. He said that his inbox was being sorted currently and replies would be forthcoming. I have since followed up with an email request suggesting dates.

**Health visitors**

Our political group has been approached by very concerned Suffolk health visitors who revealed that their numbers have been cut by 41 from 117 in the wake of a new in-house contract in the county which is £1m cheaper than the previous contract. Another of the change is that 3 of the 5 mandatory visits to parents of children are no longer done by a qualified health visitor. We proposed a motion asking them to change this policy and ensure all visits were done by the same health visitor. This was also rejected.

 **Boundary Commission to shake up county ward boundaries (divisions)**

The Local Government Boundary Commission has said it is minded to cut the number of county councillors from 75 to 70. It is now moving to determining new boundaries, known as divisions. The review is expected to be completed by July 2020.

## **Babergh Name Change to South Suffolk**

The extraordinary council meeting planned for the 22nd October was cancelled at the request of Cabinet leader John Ward. Councillor Ward, who has been the main driver behind the name change, decided to withdraw the motion for now. It was felt that it was unlikely to get the 2/3 majority that would be required.

By withdrawing the motion the idea can be kicked into the long grass and resurrected at a later date. Councillor Ward is still keen on the idea and feels that the name change would be beneficial for the district, bringing it into line with the other districts in Suffolk. Cllr Ward said: “We have received valuable feedback both for and against the proposals over recent weeks that will help in our future discussions and we are extremely grateful for the free publicity we have received in the meantime, both nationally and internationally, that has helped people understand exactly where Babergh is located, and how to pronounce it!”

##

## **Free Swimming – Hadleigh, Sudbury & Stowmarket**

Both councils extended their free swims offer during the October half term and plan to do this again during the Christmas holidays 20 December to 5 January. This follows a successful summer take up, which saw thousands of under 17s take part, equating to more than 14,000 swims across the two districts.

* Kingfisher Leisure Centre, Sudbury
* Hadleigh Pool and Leisure
* Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, Stowmarket
* Stradbroke Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre

New users in Babergh will need to sign up for an Abbeycroft Leisure Free Swimming Membership in order to claim their free swim.