

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – JANUARY 2022

Cllr Stephen Burroughes - Framlingham Division



May I wish you a very happy new year and a 'cautious' 2022.

• CHILDREN & ADULT CARE AT THE HEART OF OUR NEW BUDGET PLANS

Suffolk County Council has outlined how it plans to spend money on public services in 2022/23.

- More money to support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Extra resources for adults in need of care
- Additional funds to prevent flooding and fix footpaths

Under the proposals, the council's budget for 2022-23 would rise by 4.5% (from £598.2 to £625.4m). This additional money is generated by a 2.99% increase in Council Tax, and an increase in grants received from the Government.

The proposals will be presented at a scrutiny meeting in January, then put forward for approval by councillors in February.

The council's priorities are to:

- promote and support the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk
- strengthen the local economy
- protect and enhance the environment
- provide value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer

Some of the detail of the budget proposals, includes:

- £1.1m increase for the family services budget, specifically to address recommendations made by the recent independent SEND review
- £1m additional funding for Suffolk Highways over the next four years, for example to fund road signs and responsible verge cutting
- £10m to specifically deliver an increasing number of drainage schemes (over the next three years)
- £10m to improve footpath quality and access (over the next three years)
- £12.8m to decarbonise the buildings that we own (by 2030)
- Investments this year to set up future borrowing for bigger schemes, such as SEND and carbon reduction

Regarding Council Tax, the proposed 2.99% increase would be made up of a 1.99% increase in general Council Tax and a 1.00% increase dedicated to funding adult care.

This means costs for a household would look like:

- Band D property: £27.60 per week (80 pence per week increase from 2021-22)
- Band B property: £21.47 per week (62 pence per week increase from 2021-22) (Band B properties are the most common in Suffolk)

• ANNUAL PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT FOCUSES ON MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT OF COVID-19

On December 2nd Suffolk County Council endorsed far-reaching recommendations to improve Suffolk people's mental health and wellbeing. This includes the creation of a dedicated fund of £2.5m and the development of a cross-system group to support community wellbeing in Suffolk.

Each year, the Director of Public Health in Suffolk produces an independent report, which explores a topic or area of strategic focus that is of importance to Suffolk. This year's report titled "Better, together: Public Mental Health in Suffolk", focuses on the actions that need to be taken to support and enable good mental health and wellbeing in the community, following the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The strains of the Covid-19 pandemic have meant that the issue of mental health has been in the public consciousness like never before. The unprecedented measures required to reduce the spread of the virus, have placed extraordinary pressures, and demands on the whole population, with around 1 in 5 adults in Britain experiencing some form of depression in the first three months of 2021 – more than double the figure prior to the pandemic. Almost half of adults have reported that their emotional and mental wellbeing has been affected.

The report highlights that those impacts may be as damaging and long-lasting as the physical effects of the virus. It focuses on actions which can be taken by communities, public and private sector organisations to try and mitigate these effects and protect and promote good public mental health in Suffolk now and for the future.

The £2.5m funding, comes from the Government's Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), in recognition of the need to support Public Mental Health, which in turn both supports behaviours which continue to reduce the spread of the virus as well as supporting longer term recovery. The Health and Wellbeing Board will oversee this and will be discussing principles for how to deliver the recommendations at its next meeting in January.

- **KATCH ELECTRIC TAXI BUS SERVICE NOW RUNNING TO SNAPE MALTINGS**

From December 6th, one of Suffolk's most popular destinations is in easy to reach without needing a car following the extension to electric taxi bus service 'Katch'. The on-demand service now runs to Snape Maltings, the arts, retail, and heritage site on the banks of the River Alde, near Aldeburgh.

With its converted Victorian buildings, Snape Maltings is home to independent shops and galleries and several performance venues, including the world-famous Snape Maltings Concert Hall.

Katch is led by Suffolk County Council in partnership with [CarsSmart](#), and with support from East Suffolk Council, Framlingham Town Council, Wickham Market Parish Council, Community Rail Network, East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership and Greater Anglia.

Katch helps deliver on the commitment Suffolk councils have made to grow the region's passenger transport in a sustainable way and plays a part in cutting carbon to help reach the Government's ambition of zero emissions by 2050 and Suffolk County Council's own target of being carbon neutral by 2030.

Katch is a travel solution for residents and visitors in Wickham Market and Framlingham, as well as enabling people using the Ipswich – Lowestoft train line to book the taxi bus for a journey to Snape Maltings from Wickham Market railway station in Campsea Ashe.

It uses electric vehicles operating as shared taxi buses serving Framlingham - Wickham Market - Wickham Market Railway Station (at Campsea Ashe) - Tunstall - Snape Maltings - Snape.

It serves fixed bus stops and journeys can be booked on-demand by telephone or via the Katch app, charging fares in line with a bus service. Payment can be made by contactless card or cash.

- **APPROVAL GIVEN FOR EXTRA £20M INVESTMENT IN HIGHWAY DRAINAGE AND FOOTPATHS**

It was announced on December 7th that Cabinet members have committed an extra £20 million over the next three years into further improving Suffolk's highway drainage systems and footpaths. In recognition of the increasing maintenance demand on these areas, councillors approved the use of £10 million to specifically deliver an increasing number of drainage schemes that deal with problems that affect larger numbers of people, and a further £10 million to improve footpath quality and access.

Suffolk Highways will use the drainage investment alongside funding from the Department for Transport to increase the number of highway flooding sites which are resolved, providing a highway network that is more resilient and accessible during heavy rain and severe weather events.

The footpath investment will be focused on urban areas and busy footpaths in rural areas - providing a safer and more accessible network that supports people accessing local bus services, health care services and local shopping precincts.

- **ARCHITECTURE AND BUILDING AWARD WIN FOR THE HOLD**

On the December 8th, The Hold, the new archives and heritage centre on Ipswich Waterfront, won a prestigious national architecture and building award for the public sector. SPACES, the Society for Public Architecture, Construction, Engineering and Surveying, named The Hold as the winner in the Community Category at their online award ceremony.

The awards are dedicated to rewarding excellence, collaboration and innovation in construction projects delivered within the public sector and, because they were unable to hold the awards in 2020, included two years' worth of projects.

The Hold first opened to the public in September 2020 and was officially opened by His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester in September 2021. The £20million building is a partnership between Suffolk County Council and the University of Suffolk and is home to more than nine centuries of history safely preserved by Suffolk Archives.

- **SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT IN FIREFIGHTING EQUIPMENT SECURES SAFER FUTURE FOR SUFFOLK**

On December 10th, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service added to the lifesaving kit at its disposal – cementing the county's continued commitment to protecting its people. A significant investment from the service in new equipment has seen the introduction of digital radios, smoke hoods and smoke curtains – benefitting both residents and firefighters across Suffolk. The state-of-the-art digital handheld radios offer a clearer and greater range than previous models – vastly improving communication between firefighters when attending incidents.

These are accompanied by two pieces of new equipment designed specifically to reduce the harmful impact of smoke. All fire engines will now carry escape smoke hoods – enabling firefighters to protect people when rescuing or evacuating them from fires. Smoke curtains have also been introduced to help ensure that escape routes are kept clear of smoke, while also aiding in protecting property by reducing smoke damage.

This equipment can be used in a range of incidents, with it already proving invaluable in Lowestoft earlier today, where two occupants were rescued from a property following a kitchen fire suspected to have been caused by cooking left unattended.

- **KATCH SCOOPS HONOUR AT COMMUNITY RAIL AWARDS**

It was announced on December 15th that Katch, Suffolk's electric taxi bus service, was abuzz after winning a national award. The on-demand service won the Influencing Positive Change & Sustainability category in the Community Rail Awards.

Katch is led by Suffolk County Council in partnership with CarsSmart, and with support from East Suffolk Council, Framlingham Town Council, Wickham Market Parish Council, Community Rail Network, East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership and Greater Anglia. The award was presented at an evening held at the Guildhall in Southampton.

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Katch is available seven days a week, Monday to Friday 7.50am to 8pm, Saturday 8am to 8pm, Sundays and Bank Holidays 10am to 6pm.

Journeys can be booked up to 30 minutes in advance via the Katch App or telephone by calling 01728 554455.

The cost of a return journey is £7 and a single journey is £4 for an adult or children's fares are £3 return and £1.50 single.

For further information about Katch visit www.katchlift.com

- **OVER 10,000 NEW LED STREETLIGHTS INSTALLED ACROSS SUFFOLK**

On December 17th Suffolk's LED replacement programme reached a new milestone, with over 10,000 streetlights upgraded with new, sustainable LEDs. Bouygues Energies & Services, the contractor leading the programme has successfully installed 10,799 new lanterns and counting as part of the project to replace all 43,400 streetlights in the county. These lanterns use less energy and produce a more natural and focused light than the traditional orange glow of streetlights.

The project, which is due to complete by the end of 2022 will also allow opportunity for other streetlight owners within Suffolk such as Parish and District Councils to upgrade their streetlights as part of this process.

This upgrade supports Suffolk County Council's ambitions for becoming a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030. The benefits include; supporting a reduction in carbon emissions by saving energy and reducing light pollution, as well as providing clearer images on CCTV, traffic cameras and dashcam footage for the benefit of public safety. The teams have been working their way through the west of the county and are making progress in Stowmarket and Sudbury.

Aside from the reduction in energy usage and minimising light pollution, the project will also bring down ongoing maintenance costs for the authority. The County Council expects to reduce its annual electricity costs on the streetlights by around 76%, saving more than £1.7 million a year.

By upgrading the lighting system with smart technology, this will increase the control the County Council has over its power consumption which will further reduce costs.

Prior to commencing in towns or parishes, Suffolk Highways is contacting those councils in case they wish to upgrade their parish-council owned street-lighting at the same time. All heritage-style lanterns which have been identified will be upgraded towards the end of the programme.

For further information from my report or questions please contact me at:

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