

SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – MARCH 2022



Cllr Stephen Burroughes - Framlingham Division

• **COUNCIL FOCUSES ON CHILDREN'S SERVICES, ADULT CARE & THE ENVIRONMENT**

Suffolk County Council has approved its financial budget for 2022-23, alongside its first-ever full Net Zero carbon budget. Both items were passed at the Full Council meeting on Thursday 17 February 2022, providing a focus on children's services, adult care and the environment. The council's budget will rise by 4.5% (from £598.2m to £625.4m), with the additional money generated by a 1.99% increase in council tax, a further 1.00% from the Adult Care Precept, and an increase in grants received from the Government.

The Net Zero carbon budget will allow the council to measure its carbon emissions, and monitor and evaluate the impact of decisions it makes. This will mean it can report each year on its progress, tracking its ambitions towards Net Zero.

The overall increase of 2.99% to council tax, will see a Band D property's bill rise by 80 pence per week. The council's Cabinet had the option to increase the adult care element of council tax by a further 1%, but decided against this.

The Net Zero Carbon Budget will enable the council to more accurately measure its progress to being Net Zero by 2030, and how it can reduce its carbon emissions. Suffolk County Council has a long history of providing dedicated investment to improve the energy efficiency of its buildings and services.

This has led to reductions in carbon emissions in recent years, through projects such as replacing fossil fuel boilers with bio-mass units, installing solar panels and solar hot water systems, rainwater harvesting, updating lighting and improving insulation.

Some of the detail of the budget, 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 SCC owns (by 2030)
- Investments this year to set up future borrowing for bigger schemes, such as SEND and carbon reduction

A net increase in Government Grants of £6.0 million, or £20.7 million once the £14.7 million of one-off COVID-19 Emergency Grant received in 2021-22 is excluded. Of this £20.7 million, £11.7 million relates to additional grant funding for social care 75p of every £1 Suffolk County Council spends goes towards supporting those who need it most through Adult Care, Children's Services, and Public Health. The remaining 25p in every £1 is then used to cover the cost of other vital services, including Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, road maintenance, footpaths, waste services, libraries and addressing the challenges surrounding climate change, to name just a few.

• **COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT TO FURTHER ENHANCING SUFFOLK'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

It was announced on February 1st that Suffolk County Council will be doing even more for the county's natural environment. Suffolk County Council will be doing even more for the county's natural environment, as it confirms plans to enhance the biodiversity of at least 30% of its land and assets, by 2030. This means it will be progressing its work around managing highway trees, planting more hedgerow, nature-based flood management solutions, roadside nature reserves, and much more.

The council already planted 100,000 trees last year, and is on course to plant another 100,000 this year. It has also put in around 20 kilometres of mixed species hedgerow.

The plans will also help work towards the council's ambitions of being a Net Zero organisation by 2030, with Suffolk's nature being an integral part of the carbon cycle. The policy's ambitions stretch across the whole organisation, from looking at the impact of street lighting, to how it procures goods and services.

One example of the positive changes that the council will make, is to stop using Glyphosate in all highway maintenance operations. This will happen as soon as it is able to deploy a suitable alternative, and at the latest by 2023 for routine weed treatment programmes. The council will work with other local authorities, both locally and through the Local Government Association, in reaching this goal as soon as possible.

The proposals were agreed at Suffolk County Council's Cabinet meeting on 1 February 2022, following the work undertaken by the Policy Development Panel which was set up in July 2021.

• **'WOMEN DON'T DO SUCH THINGS!' – NEW WOMEN'S HISTORY FREE EXHIBITION OPENS**

On February 3rd, the new exhibition was announced at The Hold. Step back in time and walk in the footsteps of Suffolk women past and present who have broken down barriers in their lives throughout history.

'Women Don't Do Such Things!' is the new free exhibition at The Hold in Ipswich, telling the stories of pioneering Suffolk women. From activists to doctors, archaeologists to pilots, visitors to the exhibition will be able to experience these and many more moving and poignant stories of women who have challenged expectations and led change. The exhibition includes 'Women Like You': a photo mosaic portrait of the leader of the suffragette movement, Emmeline Pankhurst, produced by Suffolk artist Charlotte Newson. On loan from Manchester Town Hall the portrait work is made up of photos representing what women of today want in comparison to the suffragette movement over 100 years ago.

Displays exploring the Women's Land Army in Suffolk during World War Two have been compiled by local historian Nicky Reynolds, and will include original Women's Land Army uniform, documents, and photographs. A special event will also be held at The Hold to launch a new film by documentary maker Holly Brega about the Women's Land Army in Suffolk about The Land Girls and Horses of Suffolk.

The exhibition includes contemporary artworks and displays telling women's stories. A selection of works produced by members of the More than Mum group run by the Future Female Society, reflects the women in the group and their own personal journeys supported by the society.

It also showcases female leaders in Suffolk's community today. Franstine Jones was awarded a BEM in the New Year's Honours list for her work as a volunteer and trustee at the National Black Police Association and for her services to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in Suffolk.

Placards from the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 will also be on display as part of the exhibition. The placards were part of the peaceful Black Lives Matter protest in Woodbridge and were tied to the outside of the Shire Hall in the town, and have been donated to Suffolk Archives as part of their contemporary collecting.

• **PUBLIC CONSULTATION LAUNCHED IN WALKING AND CYCLING SCHEME IN SUDBURY**

Between February 3rd and February 16th, members of the public can have their say on a Suffolk County Council proposal to improve walking and cycling in Sudbury. The enhancements are being proposed for a section of Melford Road at its junction with Girling Road and Gainsborough Road.

The scheme includes:

- Widening footways to create a cycle way on both sides of Melford Road
- Moving the bus stop north of its current location on the west side of Melford Road
- Installation of tiger crossings – a separate crossing to the existing zebra crossing, which allows for cyclists to cross without needing to dismount
- 'Copenhagen'-style crossings, which will provide a separate path across the junction of York Road and Beaconsfield Road

- Widening of the triangle island to create more space for pedestrians and cyclists to cross Melford Road and to provide space for planting.

It is proposed to extend the scheme along Girling Street, which public views are also being sought on.

The scheme has been designed to improve connectivity for walking and cycling between residential areas, schools, and the town centre.

The six-week consultation runs from February 2 to March 16. Members of the public can respond online, by contacting Suffolk County Council's on 0345 603 1842 or by emailing transport.schemes@suffolk.gov.uk.

- **RESIDENTS URGED TO SUPPORT SUFFOLK SPECTACULAR**

Suffolk is set to stage a host of exciting Jubilee celebrations during 2022 – bringing the county's communities together to mark this momentous milestone. Her Majesty The Queen became the first ever British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, on Sunday 6 February, after 70 years of service. The unprecedented anniversary will be celebrated throughout the year, with a four-day UK bank holiday taking place from Thursday 2 to Sunday 5 June to enable people to commemorate the occasion.

Plans are already in place for a Festival of Suffolk – the county's biggest ever community event. This year-long spectacular will incorporate much-loved existing events, such as the Suffolk Show, alongside dedicated Jubilee celebrations, including a race day and torch relay. Details on the latest line-up can be found at: www.festivalofsuffolk.org/. A highlight of the festival is the Big Jubilee Lunch, set to take place on Sunday 5 June. The initiative encourages people to come together and celebrate, either by hosting their own street party or simply enjoying a cup of tea with a neighbour. To help facilitate this, Suffolk County Council has set up a dedicated webpage: www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent and will waive its fees for any road closures for events on this day, as well as providing free assistance with traffic management for all applications received before 11pm on Sunday 27 March.

The council is also supporting the Queen's Green Canopy in Suffolk, which aims to plant over 775,000 new trees in 2022 – one for each resident in the county.

Almost a quarter of a million trees have been planted to date, with everyone urged to visit suffolk-lieutenancy.org.uk/queens-green-canopy/ and find out how they can 'Plant a Tree for the Jubilee' either directly or via one of the many organisations taking part in the scheme.

In addition to using the Jubilee as an opportunity to create a greener county, a focus on health and wellbeing will also form an important part of the celebrations, with plans for themed parkruns across Suffolk and a County Community Games tournament currently in development.

While primary school children across the county can participate in a Time Capsule Competition – enabling them to showcase how their school, students, teachers, and community have changed over the Queen's reign.

Schools have until 11 February to express their interest in the competition: www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/education/time-capsule/ and must submit their entry by 25 March, ahead of the winner being announced on 1 April.

The winning school will get the opportunity to visit The Hold – home to 900 years' worth of Suffolk's history – which will also house their time capsule entry to preserve it for future generations to enjoy.

Businesses can also benefit from the occasion by attending the Suffolk Business Expo, scheduled for Monday 20 June to Friday 1 July. The event – organised by Suffolk County Council, the Suffolk Chamber, and other partners – aims to showcase Suffolk businesses, whilst helping them to capitalise on the expected increase in tourists to the county and bounce back from Covid-19.

- **SUFFOLK CEMENTS COMMITMENT TO KEEPING ITS COMMUNITIES SAFE**

A new strategy was announced on February 7th outlining how Suffolk will address Violence Against Women and Girls has been published today. The strategy has been prepared collaboratively by the Safer Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) – consisting of representatives from Suffolk County Council, district and borough councils, the police, Suffolk's Police & Crime Commissioner, community safety partnerships, health and probation services, the Norfolk & Suffolk Criminal Justice Board and Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership.

All board members hold a shared ambition to tackle the incredibly important issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) which includes, but is not limited to, domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and revenge porn – all of which have a devastating impact on victim-survivors, families, and communities.

Much work has been done on preventing VAWG since the launch of the county's first strategy in 2018, which led to the establishment of Suffolk's 24/7 domestic abuse helpline, additional accommodation for survivors and the creation of a Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Unit to help offenders address and alter their behaviour. However, with recent figures showing an increase in sexual offences and domestic violence nationally, the board recognises the need to continue to drive forward positive change through effective partnership working.

Suffolk's new VAWG Strategy outlines how this will be achieved in the county, with four key objectives – prevention, supporting victims, pursuing perpetrators, and strengthening the system – forming the basis for its approach.

Relevant strategies, policies, and legislation, including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the police and Government's response to VAWG, have also been reflected to enable Suffolk to complement the national effort.

In addition, the strategy will be accompanied by an action plan for 2022 – 2025 to help ensure meaningful activity. This has been informed by members of the board, local charities, and domestic abuse survivors – who praised the system for enabling them to co-create proposals and have their say.

To support the board in implementing both the strategy and action plan, Suffolk County Council has contributed £350,000 towards this.

Whilst the strategy is focused primarily on preventing VAWG, due to these crimes often disproportionately affecting this gender, work will still be undertaken to support men and boys, as well as those that are transgender, non-binary or gender non-conforming.

- **GOOD NEWS FOR SUFFOLK GOVERNMENT GIVES THE GREEN LIGHT TO NEGOTIATE A COUNTY DEAL**

Leader of Suffolk County Council, Councillor Matthew Hicks, on February 8th, explained why a new county deal is good for Suffolk, and why we don't need a new Mayor. He said: In August last year, I wrote about the efforts of Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders in working to secure from the Government a devolution deal for Suffolk. Last week, at the same time as the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper, we heard the news that Suffolk was successfully chosen as one of nine areas across the country to have been given the opportunity of negotiating a new County Deal. This is fantastic news for Suffolk, and I am delighted about it.

One of the questions I've heard a lot since the announcement is, what would a deal mean for Suffolk? To clarify we do not have a deal yet, and we have many more months of negotiations and discussions with Government ahead of us before we can look to finalise an actual deal.

Some of the areas we included in our initial discussion centred around the development and roll out of Oyster style travel cards to increase the attractiveness and effectiveness of public transport and longer term funding for major transport infrastructure upgrades, not just one-off funding.

We also discussed with Government the opportunity of keeping all the apprenticeship levy funding raised in Suffolk in Suffolk, benefiting more people here. This could create the opportunity to work with the University, colleges, business and others to explore how this money could be better used.

Negotiating the devolution of the powers necessary to develop more innovative projects to help deliver further action on Climate Change and make good on our promises around net zero by 2030 are also possible. Whilst I was delighted to read the other day that in a recent study Suffolk County Council was ranked as the third-best county council nationally for our response to the climate crisis, our ambitions in this area could be taken further still via a County Deal.

What I can promise you, however, is that during the negotiations I will be pushing the Government for the maximum amount of benefit for the people of Suffolk.

Finally, one of the areas related to this announcement which gained a lot of attention, especially from the media, was the potential for a directly elected Mayor of Suffolk, like the Metropolitan Mayors across the country in areas like the West Midlands. Let me say here and now, this is not something which Suffolk has asked for and importantly not something we need to secure a deal with Government.

Whilst of course we recognise the work of such Mayors like Andy Street and Ben Houchen, this additional level of oversight is not needed for our deal given the strong levels of co-operation and leadership already found here in Suffolk. Do not forget, this opportunity is the result of an ongoing dialogue to promote Suffolk to central Government strongly supported by our MPs and the partnership working with district and borough councils. Going forward this partnership working will continue alongside health partners, emergency services, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chamber of Commerce.

I have always been ambitious for Suffolk, and I believe the opportunities within a County Deal would help unlock more potential in Suffolk and help us level up across the county; especially as we start to slowly escape the clutches of COVID. We will negotiate hard for a deal that will give us the tools we need to build back better, build back stronger and build back greener.

- **COUNCIL WELCOMES GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO REDUCE IMPACT OF OFFSHORE WIND ON SUFFOLK**

It was announced on February 8th that the Government recognises Suffolk's communities need to see tangible and substantive benefits from the Offshore Transmission Network Review. Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council have welcomed the renewed effort, announced by the Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) on 31 January, to try to ensure that Suffolk communities benefit from coordinated connections of offshore wind before 2030. As part of a webinar on the Offshore Transmission Network Review, it was announced that BEIS officials would be initiating a program of activity working with offshore wind developers, inter-connectors, and the onshore transmission owner, facilitated by the trade body Renewable UK, to explore more ambitious regional coordination with a specific focus on East Anglia.

It was acknowledged during the webinar, that proposals currently put forward by developers identifying early opportunities for coordination, particularly in East Anglia, could go further. This work will run in parallel with the Holistic Network Design (HND), expected to be published in June 2022, which will set out the required onshore network reinforcements and how the connections of future offshore wind projects coming through the seabed leasing process will be coordinated.

• **£6.4 MILLION PROJECT TO 'RECLAIM THE RAIN' & TACKLE FLOODING**

It was announced on February 15th that Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils were successful in winning £6.4 million to implement innovative sustainable water management projects. Both councils placed a joint bid into Defra's 6-year Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme and were 1 of 25 successful projects chosen to take part. The joint project, named 'Reclaim the Rain' sets out to improve flood and drought resilience in at least six small rural communities across Norfolk and Suffolk.

Norfolk and Suffolk both face considerable surface water flood risk, while also being the driest region in the UK. The project will deliver beneficial flood water reuse by agriculture, industry, communities, and the environment combined with nature-based flood management solutions.

The project will involve both partner organisations and the community in the development of suitable flood water reuse schemes. The schemes will address the community's needs in terms of flood risk and water resource requirements, and could result in provision of:

- Habitat creation and restoration;
- Rain Gardens;
- Rainwater Capture and Reuse for community, agriculture or business use;
- Retrofitted sustainable drainage systems (SuDS);
- Smart Leaky Water Butts and more...

To find out more about Reclaim the Rain and how you can get involved, visit: www.reclaimtherain.org.

• **HALFWAY MARK REACHED AS OVER 20,000 SUFFOLK STREETLIGHTS REPLACED**

It was announced on February 16th that Suffolk County Council's programme to replace 43,400 streetlights with new energy-efficient LEDs has reached the halfway mark. Contractor, Bouygues Energies & Services begins work in Ipswich. To date, the teams have replaced 21,215 new streetlights with the new lanterns and are well on the way to successfully delivering the project on budget and to programme timescales.

These LED lanterns use less energy and produce a more natural and focused light than the traditional orange glow of streetlights. They are extremely long-lasting products and have an expected lifetime of up to 100,000 hours. This is approximately two times longer than a typical conventional street lighting lamp. As a result, Suffolk County Council is expecting to reduce its annual electricity costs on the streetlights by around 76%, saving more than £1.7 million a year. This is 16% more than what was originally anticipated.

The programme is on schedule to be completed by the end of May 2022, with all heritage-style lanterns being upgraded towards the end of the programme. 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 end of the project.

• **SUFFOLK FOSTERING AND ADOPTION SERVICE SWOOPS INTO THE BIG HOOT**

Suffolk Fostering and Adoption Service has been announced as a proud sponsor for Suffolk's biggest ever mass participation public art event – 'The Big Hoot'. The Big Hoot Ipswich 2022 is the third art trail brought to Ipswich by St Elizabeth Hospice in partnership with creative producers Wild in Art, following the success of Pigs Gone Wild 2016 and Elmer's Big Parade Suffolk 2019.

As part of the Big Hoot 2022, 50 ornately decorated owl sculptures, featuring designs celebrating all things Suffolk, will be scattered throughout Ipswich showcasing the wealth of artistic talent of the county and beyond, as part of the biggest free art event in Suffolk which attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors to the town.

Suffolk Fostering and Adoption's owl, named 'Big Hoot-Little Hoot' will represent the care that foster carers and adopters provide to children in the local community. The owl which features a baby owl nestling safely

under the wings of its parent, will be painted by artist, Sandra Reynolds and perfectly depicts the loving and nurturing nature of foster carers and adoptive parents caring for Suffolk children.

In addition to The Big Hoot, Suffolk Fostering and Adoption Service will take part in the Little Hoot. The Little Hoot is predominantly aimed at schools who design their owl and fundraise for St Elizabeth's hospice. However, as a focus on Suffolk's children in care and adopted children, Suffolk Fostering and Adoption Service has been gifted an Owl by local business Highway Assurance. Children in care will be able to take part in a drawing competition to design the owl and the winning design will be chosen by The High Sheriff of Suffolk, Edward Creasy, and Highway Assurance Managing Director, Robert Watton. The owl will then be painted by a local artist to reflect the winning design before being proudly displayed at the Suffolk show along with 59 other Little Hoots, ahead of joining the trail in Ipswich over the summer, launching on 19 June.

Suffolk's children and young people's service currently have over 850 children in care and with more children coming into care in Suffolk every year, the need for foster carers and adoptive parents to come forward has never been greater. These children need someone who can understand what they have been through, look at the world through their eyes and provide warmth, consistency and emotional support.

To find out more about fostering or adopting in Suffolk, visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/fosteringandadoption or call 01473 264800.

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

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