

SCC

Hoxne and Eye Division
January 2022 briefing

Council prepares budgets for its finances and the environment

Column by Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment

For the first time in its history, Suffolk County Council will be presented with TWO budgets at its Full Council meeting in February.

One of these budgets is the Financial Budget, which has been a regular feature of Full Council meetings ahead of the new financial year. This is where I present how we propose to generate and spend money to provide the best possible services for everyone in Suffolk.

But this year, for the first time, a detailed Carbon Budget will also be presented. This is an important step, as it will allow the Council to monitor its progress against our ambitious target of being a Net Zero organisation by 2030.

I'll explain more about the Carbon Budget shortly, but first I want to address our Financial Budget – what the last year has been like, what pressures the council is under, and how you will play a key role to enable the council to provide and invest in the services that many residents need to access.

It has been a very difficult budget to consider, especially with Covid continuing to make life challenging on every level, both professionally and personally. This is true of the council's finances too - we also continue to face rising costs. In addition, the demands on our services have hugely increased, particularly for our adult care and children's services.

The pandemic continues to have a big impact on our aim to help everyone stay active, healthy and lead independent lives – as well as supporting those with more complex needs, by providing social care, through our amazing team of care workers.

Covid has brought challenges to the services we provide to children and families, from childcare to supporting young children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). I'd like to thank our teams that have worked tirelessly to ensure children and families have been supported during this time.


I'm pleased to say that I've worked with my colleagues to propose a budget which will not see any reductions in our services, and invests further where it is most needed.

For example, we propose to increase our family services budget by £1.1m from next year, to specifically address the recommendations made by the recent independent SEND review – this is in addition to our previous commitment of £45m to develop SEND provision.

In the public consultation we ran at the end of 2021, you told us that highways and the environment were your top priorities, after children's services and adult care.

We plan to invest in these areas, for example an additional £1m over the next four years, to be spent on things like road signs and responsible verge cutting. Over the next 3 years, we have also committed to £10m to specifically deliver an increasing number of drainage schemes, and £10m to improve footpath quality and access. There will also be a £12.8m investment to decarbonise the buildings that we own.

To maintain the services we provide, and to invest further, we will be asking you for an extra 1.99% in Council Tax and an additional 1% in Adult Social Care Precept. We did have the



option of asking for another 1% on top of these increases, but decided against this as we believe that the lower amount will be sufficient to provide a balanced budget, with no need to reduce any of our services.


If you live in a Band B property – the most common type of property in Suffolk – this works out an additional £0.62 per week, compared to your bill last year.

In our public consultation, there were more people who agreed that council tax would need to go up, compared to those that didn't. This was especially true for funding adult care. By paying this extra each week, we are all helping the council to provide its key services, and supporting those who need it most.

As I mentioned, in February we will also be presenting Suffolk County Council's first ever Carbon Budget. We want to be a Net Zero organisation by 2030 -his means reducing our impact on climate change where we can. We do this by reducing our carbon emissions as much as possible, for example making our buildings more efficient, procuring goods and services from suppliers who have a similar Net Zero ambition, moving our vehicles over to electric, and investing in our environment.

A Net Zero Carbon Budget for the council enables us to evaluate the impact of decisions we take. It provides a baseline for measurement every year, against which we can track our progress.

These are two budgets which I'm extremely proud to be involved with. I think both will have a positive impact on Suffolk – both in terms of looking after our residents, but also protecting the environment and county in which we are privileged to live.





Lovell Partnerships selected as joint venture preferred bidder by Suffolk County Council

It was announced on January 14th that Suffolk County Council has agreed to join forces with Lovell Partnerships to form a property development alliance to build nearly 3,000 much-needed homes.

Suffolk County Council appoints Lovell Partnerships as preferred bidder for the joint venture alliance that will build nearly 3,000 homes.

The joint venture will deliver new housing-led developments to be built on council land.

Lovell Partnerships were identified as the preferred bidder following a nine-month procurement process.

Contracts are expected to be concluded in spring 2022, with the joint venture established in the summer.

Five initial locations have already been identified in Lowestoft, Mildenhall, Bramford, West Row and Newmarket, with capacity for a total of around 2,800 homes plus new schools, employment land and open spaces.

The proposals include an option for further sites to be delivered by the joint venture in future should additional suitable council-owned land become surplus to requirements.

Homes will be developed to be low carbon in line with the emerging Future Homes Standard.

Lovell Partnerships, part of the Morgan Sindall Group, is participating in a number of joint ventures with councils across the UK to support similar housing delivery aspirations.

The 50:50 partnership is intended to deliver around £700m of gross development value over the course of the proposed 15-year agreement, with the option to extend to a further five.

The partnership will benefit from working with other companies within the Morgan Sindall Group, as well as local suppliers, to enable it to deliver the works at pace.


Suffolk County Council has been advised throughout the procurement process by Concertus Design and Property Consultants, Avison Young property consultants, and legal advisors Pinsent Masons.

Councillor Richard Smith, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said:

“The council is very pleased to be working in partnership with Lovell to deliver high quality and sustainable homes.

“This will help meet the needs of the people of Suffolk, provide much needed social housing and new community facilities and provide value for tax-payers.

“The partnership will also generate significant funds for the council over the long-term for strategic expenditure and investment.”



Suffolk proudly supports Register my Appliance Week

Residents are urged in January to make their homes safer by registering their appliances

We all rely hugely on our fridges, washing machines and microwaves for keeping our busy lives on track, but would your appliance manufacturer know which machines you have and where to find you if a fault came to light with your model?

The answer is 'no' for some 100 million appliances, according to recent research. But this could all be remedied by people taking a few minutes to register their much-loved items.

To mark Register My Appliance Week – taking place from 17 to 21 January – Suffolk County Council is urging the public to register their many treasured appliances that, unlike our cars, are still off the radar if a free safety repair is ever needed.

This is more important than ever, as it's estimated that we are now running over 212 million essential appliances to cook, wash clothes and dishes, clean floors and store our food.

While the recent increase in online purchasing (reportedly soaring as high as 70%) and the advent of smart appliances will all help to improve traceability, research found that 49% of us have never registered a product, leaving millions of large and mid-sized older machines totally untraceable.

As part of the Fire Kills Campaign, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, along with Suffolk Trading Standards, is encouraging people to make their homes safer by registering machines at registermyappliance.org.uk.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection and Communities, commented:

"We all aim to keep our appliances running efficiently for many years, benefitting both our wallets and the environment. This places an important emphasis on the maintenance and registration of machines – helping them to last longer, whilst also ensuring the safety of users.

"Registering an appliance can be easily done regardless of whether this was already in situ at a property when you moved in, bought second-hand, or installed many years ago, as you don't need to have a receipt or know exactly when the item was first purchased.


"This campaign has prompted me to register my own appliances, and I would urge all Suffolk residents to do the same to help minimise the risk of fire posed by dangerous or faulty products which have been recalled."

Register My Appliance is a web portal developed by the Association of Manufacturers of Domestic Appliances (AMDEA) to improve ownership data by making it quicker and easier for householders to register old and new appliances.

Offering access to over 60 of the nation's leading brands, the vast majority of manufacturers on the site welcome registration of products up to 12 years old or even older.

Handy tips guide the user through how to find the important model details, meaning all the user needs to supply is their name and address. This data then goes directly to the manufacturer for use exclusively in case of a recall.

To increase safety and the life of appliances the Register My Appliance portal also offers:

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- A listing of appliance safety repairs and recalls
 - Hints and tips on household safety
 - Recommendations for appliance care



Keeping Suffolk safe from scams

By Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection and Communities.

As we find ourselves midway through January, many of us will be having varying degrees of success with sticking to our New Year's resolutions, be these moving more, learning a new language or giving healthy eating a go.

Of course, one of the most important resolutions that we should all hold is to stay savvy about scams throughout 2022 and beyond.

These are, unfortunately, on the rise. Action Fraud received 413,553 reports of fraud in the UK between April 2020 and March 2021; an increase of 33% from the previous year. More than £2.3 billion was lost by victims as a result, although this is likely to just be the tip of the iceberg, as many will have felt too scared or ashamed to report and others will be completely unaware that they have been duped.

Some of the rise in cases of fraud can be directly attributed to scammers capitalising on Covid, with new cons cropping up even now, almost two years into the pandemic.

Scams include texts, emails, or phone calls supposedly from the NHS or your GP, requesting payment for the Covid-19 vaccination or the Covid-19 Pass. Although these can often appear genuine, the NHS will never ask you to pay for the vaccine or Pass, or to provide your bank account or card details.


Our Trading Standards team have also received reports of fraudsters selling face coverings or hand sanitiser online which either never arrives or, worse still, doesn't comply with safety standards. Whilst internet shopping has been a lifeline for many during the pandemic, care should be taken when making any purchases online.


Beat the cyber crooks by only shopping at reputable retailers and doing your research first; try to make sure that they're legitimate if you haven't purchased anything online from them previously. This can be done by using independent review websites such as Trust Pilot: uk.trustpilot.com to search for customer feedback on a retailer before buying anything from them.

Paying for items using a credit card is another great way to help you shop safely, as any individual item costing over £100 and up to £30,000 will be covered by section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act. This means that the credit card company has equal responsibility (or 'liability') with the seller if there's a problem with your purchase or the company you've bought it from fails.

It's also worth remembering that if a deal looks too good to be true, it probably is. Whilst I appreciate that everyone loves a bargain, no discount is ever worth the dangerous consequences of items which haven't been adequately tested.

We are not immune to this in Suffolk. Since April last year, our Imports Surveillance team, working at the port of Felixstowe, have discovered over 15,000 unsafe and non-compliant e-scooters trying to make their way into the country.





Many of these were refused entry into the UK or destroyed at the border, to ensure the safety of consumers, after a high quantity had no labelling or technical documentation to show they complied with the relevant UK safety standards.

With dodgy electrical items like these, it's not just money that you risk losing, but your life as they can, in severe cases, cause fire or serious injury.

Only buying genuine products from trusted retailers, rather than third-party selling sites, will really help to protect you and your family. I'd also urge you to reduce the risk of fires in the home further by registering your electrical appliances to enable the manufacturer to contact you in the event of a product safety recall.


Our council is proud to support Register My Appliance Week, which began yesterday, with more information on this available at www.suffolk.gov.uk/news.

You can also keep up to date on all dangerous product recalls, including those for food and toys, by visiting www.suffolk.gov.uk/jointhefight and signing up to receive a free weekly email alert on this and scams, as a Trading Standards Consumer Champion.

Further advice on scams currently being seen in Suffolk is available on Trading Standards' Facebook page (www.facebook.com/SuffolkTradingStandards) and Twitter account (twitter.com/SuffolkTS) so if you're not already doing so, give them a follow, as this could prevent you from falling victim to fraudsters.

If you want to stop others from being scammed, sign up to become a Friend Against Scams at: www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/. This will empower you to spot the signs of scams and take a stand against these. It doesn't require much of your time and will help to protect not just you and your loved ones, but also the wider community – making it the perfect way to give something back this year.

Although scams may be on the rise, if we all work together, we can stop fraudsters in their tracks and ensure that Suffolk continues to be a safe place that everyone is proud to call home.



Suffolk County Council waives fees for Platinum Jubilee events

It was announced on January 18th that to mark the celebration of Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Suffolk County Council will be waiving street party road closure fees.

On Sunday 6 February 2022, Her Majesty the Queen will celebrate her Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years of service. To celebrate this milestone, events will be taking place across the Country, particularly over the four-day Bank Holiday weekend, between 2 and 5 June 2022. This bank holiday gives communities and people throughout the UK the opportunity to come together and celebrate with their neighbours.

For all events on Sunday 5 June 2022, which is being referred to nationally as the 'Big Jubilee Lunch', Suffolk County Council will not be charging fees normally associated with road closures.

The following website has been set up for those who are looking to organise a street party as a group of residents, or as a local authority, for an event in a large public space, such as a park:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent>.

As part of the main criteria for a road to be closed, the road must be residential with no through traffic (i.e. a cul-de-sac or traffic not able to access another road from the event road, etc.) and only resident traffic will be affected.

To be allocated traffic management to assist with an event, all applications must be received before 11pm on Sunday 27 March 2022. Traffic management will consist of 5 traffic cones, 1 road closure sign and an advance warning sign, which may be delivered to the chosen drop off point, up to Thursday 2 June 2022.

If any applications are received after 11pm on Sunday 27 March 2022, these may still be processed. However, Suffolk County Council cannot cover the costs of traffic management for the event, nor will Suffolk County Council be able to provide any form of traffic management equipment. This is due to possible supply chain constraints and other operational demands.


For full details, including street party event criteria, information on insurance and licences, please ensure you visit this link <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent>

If you have any queries, please contact Suffolk County Councils Customer Services team on 0345 606 6171 or email customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk

Find more information on how to get involved in celebrating Her Majesty's historic reign, at platinumjubilee.gov.uk.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member responsible for Operational Highways, said:

"This is a prestigious achievement for Her Majesty the Queen. To help celebrations get underway, I am glad to announce that we will be waiving fees for the events on Sunday 5 June, allowing communities to come together across Suffolk, whether it be a small gathering in a local street, or a larger event, organised by town or parish councils.



“I would like to offer my thanks to the teams involved in bringing this together, whether it be from the planning, to the delivery and collection of traffic management equipment.

“I look forward to seeing such events take place, and we welcome your photos or videos to be posted to Twitter via [@SuffolkCC](#) or [@Suff_highways](#)”

New bridge opens in Mildenhall

On January 21st, the community in Mildenhall celebrated the opening of Mallards (Old Lock) Bridge.

Funded by Suffolk County Council with contributions from Mildenhall Town Council and Barton Mills Parish Council - the new £171k bridge comprises steel truss members with timber decking and parapets, with a clear span of 18m, supported on new reinforced concrete foundations.

The existing ramped approaches have been upgraded with new timber approach ramps, to ensure it is more accessible to the community it serves.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member responsible for Operational Highways, said:

"I am delighted to see this structure open and ready for use. I know the communities missed using the route and the fact that we have been able to replace the old structure with one that is now more accessible is fantastic news.

"I thank Councillor Stanbury and the parish and town councils for working with us to get this bridge open, their financial contributions and cooperation has supported our teams to get this bridge open despite challenging conditions."

Council's Net Zero ambitions aim high with first-ever full carbon budget and biodiversity commitment

On January 24th Suffolk County Council published proposals for its first-ever full carbon budget, as it strives to be a Net Zero organisation by 2030.

- Inaugural full carbon budget to be presented alongside financial budget
- Policy to enhance biodiversity across 30% of Suffolk County Council's estate

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.

There are many activities which the council will monitor, from the energy used powering its buildings to the miles travelled by council workers, from the waste it disposes to the fuel used to run buses and gritters.

Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment at Suffolk County Council, said:

"This is an historic budget – the first full budget of its kind that the council has ever produced. Becoming a Net Zero organisation by 2030 is incredibly ambitious, but I'm committed to doing everything we can to realise that vision.

"It's incredibly challenging to have an exact figure for every last gram of CO₂ that the council emits. But our officers have worked incredibly hard to collate data so far, giving us a baseline against which we can measure our future emissions. We'll continue to improve how we gather this data so that we can see our progress to Net Zero by 2030.

"The pandemic has also changed many of our routines, not least around travel and working from home. During 2021/22 we estimate that council workers saw a reduction of about 1.5 million miles commuting in their own vehicles, and around 1,800 working weeks of driving. We will continue to learn as we look to new ways of working at the council."

Suffolk County Council recently announced a £12.8 million investment to begin decarbonising the buildings that it owns, reducing emissions and making them cheaper to run. We have a history of providing dedicated investment to improve the energy efficiency of our 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.

Growing Suffolk's Biodiversity

Proposals have also been published which would see Suffolk County Council enhance the biodiversity value of at least 30% of its land and assets by 2030.

It would also see the council working with partners, communities and landowners to help substantially reverse the decline of biodiversity across Suffolk.

The proposed policy is a result of the work undertaken by the Policy Development Panel (PDP) which was set up in July 2021.



Councillor Rout said:

“We want to grow Suffolk’s biodiversity, using our role as a significant landowner and as the highway authority to help wildlife to thrive and to support nature’s recovery. We want to extend the great work already going on through our protected landscapes and projects, such as our Roadside Nature Reserves, to increase habitats and species across the county.


“We will ensure we manage our highway verges for biodiversity wherever we can and support our county farm tenants to enhance biodiversity across our farm estate, as we have done through planting around twenty kilometres of mixed species hedgerows over the last two years. We will also deliver twice the biodiversity net gain required through our housing programme and work with our partners and local communities to enhance biodiversity on our properties.

“There is a clear link with our Net Zero ambitions for the county, with Suffolk’s nature being an integral part of the carbon cycle. I want to ensure that the council is doing everything it can to support nature in the fight to slow climate change, and to show leadership in Suffolk in the way that we look after our natural environment.”

The policy proposal includes ambitions which stretch across the whole organisation, from looking at how it manages highway trees to the impact of street lighting, from how it procures goods and services to the potential nature-based flood management solutions.

The Net Zero Carbon Budget proposal will be presented at the Cabinet meeting on 1 February 2022 and discussed at the Full Council meeting on 17 February 2022. The Biodiversity PDP proposal will be presented at the Cabinet meeting on 1 February 2022 and can be immediately implemented if agreed.





Suffolk places co-production at the heart of its strategy of support for adults with learning disabilities

On January 26th the Suffolk Learning Disability Partnership co-produced a refresh of the Suffolk Joint Learning Disability Strategy.

The Suffolk Learning Disability Partnership, an independent group of self-advocates, family carers, health and social care commissioners, police, Healthwatch Suffolk, voluntary organisations and housing providers, has co-produced a refresh of the Suffolk Joint Learning Disability Strategy. The strategy aims to ensure that people with learning disabilities live good lives as part of their community with the right support, at the right time, from the right people. The original strategy was launched in 2015 and has helped to identify and explore specific needs, and given people and their families a voice in the development and commissioning of new services.

The refresh has placed the concept of co-production at its heart. Co-production means people, carers and professionals working together as equal partners to: design, develop, commission, deliver and review services, information and advice. This strategy reinforces the belief that services designed with input from the people they seek to support, are better suited to deliver upon their needs. Beyond more opportunities for co-production in the development of new services, the strategy also acknowledges the opportunities for people with learning disabilities and autism to make use of new technologies and digital solutions to enhance accessibility to services, as well as improving and increasing information and communication and providing good advocacy and support.

Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said:

"I would like to thank all those people, carers, organisations and others who have worked together to help refresh this important strategy for Suffolk, especially given the recent challenges of the pandemic. I agree entirely with the vision, that people with learning disabilities should be able to live good lives within communities with the right support. I hope this strategy will help us continue to work together to develop services which further support this vision."



Warm Homes Suffolk Fund to heat up cold homes this winter

It was announced on January 27th that residents can cut energy costs and reduce their carbon.

Suffolk residents who are struggling to keep their homes warm, can contact a new project which offers funding and free advice at www.warmhomessuffolk.org.

Suffolk's councils have joined together to establish Warm Homes Suffolk, which launches today. The team will be on hand to offer expert advice on reducing energy bills, energy usage and identify benefits that residents may be entitled to, to help keep their homes warm.

The work of Warm Homes Suffolk will also help the county towards its target of Net Zero by 2030, as the project aims to better insulate homes and provide more efficient heating, meaning less carbon is released into the atmosphere.

A successful bid was made to the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for £2.7 million pounds of funding to run Warm Homes Suffolk - The Warm Feeling Fund. This is part of the Government's (Local Authority Delivery phase two) LAD2 Scheme, designed to improve the energy efficiency of Britain's homes.

The bid was led by Suffolk County Council, on behalf of all councils in the county.

Councillor Andy Drummond, Chair of the Suffolk Environment Cabinet Members group, said:

"With an imminent spike in energy costs for all households, Suffolk's authorities have joined together to offer valuable support and advice to residents. We want to assure people that help is out there, so that you don't have to live in a cold house, or become unwell, by worrying about your energy bills.

"If you, or anyone you know is having difficulty heating their home, or is concerned about their energy bills, please get in touch with Warm Homes Suffolk."

For eligible residents, the scheme can offer a range of home upgrades, including cavity, loft and external insulation, installation of solar photovoltaic systems and switching central heating to more efficient low carbon heat pumps.

The scheme is available to homeowners, those renting and landlords. There are some conditions to meet before being able to access funding, which is aimed at residents who are:

- earning under £30,000 per annum
- currently receiving benefits (or think you may be eligible)
- living in homes with a low energy rating

If you are a landlord with tenants and property that meet the above criteria, then you could receive a subsidy of up to two-thirds for work which improves the energy efficiency of your property, up to the value of £5,000.

More details and further information about eligibility can be found in the on the Warm Home Suffolk website www.warmhomessuffolk.org, or by calling **03456 037 686**. Lines are open Monday to Friday between 9am and 4pm.

