

Bawdsey Annual Parish Meeting
11th April 2017
Suffolk County Council Annual Review 2016 – 2017

Service savings and Adult Social Care precept proposed as Suffolk County Council addresses economic challenges ahead

Budget proposals for the 2017/18 financial year were agreed by the County Council in early February. Key to the Council's budget was the freezing of Council Tax for the seventh successive year, honouring the commitment made before the last County Council election in 2013. The budget included savings of £31.3million across a number of services as the Council continues to make good progress with transformation programmes and identifies ways in which services can be managed in an efficient and effective way. The budget also included use of the national Adult Social Care precept. Last year this was agreed at a rate of 2% of total council tax in Suffolk. The Government has given all local authorities flexibility to decide how they use this precept over the next three years, with the opportunity to increase up to a total of 6%. The Council agreed an increase of 3% for the social care precept in 2017/18, 3% in 18/19 and 0% in 19/20. The precept will raise £8.5m extra funding in 2017/18 to help ease the pressure on adult social care services, helping to meet current severe cost pressures in services for vulnerable older residents. There is a budget gap of £39.8m during the next financial year, and on top of the proposed savings, the council plans to utilise around £8.5m from its total usable reserves of around £49m.

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Finance and Heritage, Cllr Richard Smith said: "After many years of very tight budget management, this year we are expecting an overspend of around £6m. This equates to just over one per cent of our overall budget and mainly is due to the increasing cost of delivering important statutory services to support the most vulnerable young people in Suffolk. We are using money from our reserves to cover this increase in costs. This situation demonstrates exactly why we have maintained our reserves at a prudent level.

"Despite ever-increasing financial pressures, we remain absolutely committed to providing services to the most vulnerable people in our communities. Using our reserves responsibly, combined with a range of savings to help us meet our budget gap, is the right thing to do.

"We have looked carefully at the areas of services where we need to make savings over the next year and I am confident that, should they be agreed, these proposals are targeted so that they will not impact the delivery of the County's services.

"Following the 2% Adult Social Care precept last year, we plan to increase this precept by 3% of total council tax in each of the next two years to help us meet the financial challenges currently facing the social care sector. This additional funding will not cover all associated expenditure but will go some way to helping us meet the cost of delivering social care services to adults in Suffolk and contribute to the increased charges from the welcome increase in the National Living Wage."

Councils and Residents Respond to Sizewell C Stage 2 Consultation

Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council made a joint response in February to EDF Energy's long awaited Stage 2 public consultation on the proposed development of Sizewell C, alongside the views of many local community groups and individuals who have taken time to offer important feedback on this subject.

The response supported the principle of a new nuclear power station and recognised the benefits for the local economy. However, it stressed there is a lot more work required on the

part of EDF Energy to provide much greater detail and demonstrate how they plan to mitigate many of the significant concerns that such a major development brings with it. Particular aspects focused on the challenges of accommodation, construction, transport, environment and effect on local communities. The report confirms that some of the proposals are sound; including the temporary extension of rail links and park and ride bus site. The positive economic outcomes are also welcomed. In regards to road improvement the councils have made it clear that the preferred option is for the 'SEGway' (the Suffolk Energy Gateway including a 4 village bypass) to be built in time for the development. This means that within EDF Energy's current stage 2 consultation, the option for a 2-village bypass for Farnham and Stratford St Andrew is the absolute bare minimum mitigation that they must fund. The authorities will strive to deliver a SEGWay by seeking government funding to add to what EDF Energy must provide for a two village by pass.

The report states that there are aspects of the proposals that require more detail from EDF Energy before the authorities can be content. There is a lack of information regarding potential alternative locations for the borrow pits, spoil heaps (up to a huge 35 metres high) and stockpiling of other materials that will occur as part of construction. There is a significant threat to the surrounding Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). There is also concern about the scale of the site footprint and its proximity and vulnerability to coastal processes. There is similar concern regarding the proposed five storey high accommodation block for construction workers in regards to its location and design. In short, there are many elements of the proposals that really need a greater level of detail to satisfy either local authority.

The third element of the report going to each Cabinet outlines a number of areas of EDF Energy's proposals that simply require much more detail before either authority is even willing to give a view on whether to support or disagree. Further information is required in regards to traffic movement and related volumes that are likely during construction in order to better understand the impact on existing road networks and what additional infrastructure may be needed to help alleviate concerns from the local community including changes to existing road junctions. Without further detail regarding how EDF Energy intend to utilise the different modes of transport available, the councils must assume a worst case scenario at this point, until EDF Energy can clearly demonstrate the benefits of their proposal and how they would deliver this. It is also unclear how social and economic benefits will be delivered to local people and surrounding communities and what part tourism and business plays at this point. there are deep concerns regarding the design of the site and power station that need addressing and also the accumulated impact of such development such as additional volumes of household waste and environmental impact.

.Suffolk County Councillor Guy McGregor, Chair of Sizewell C Joint Local Authorities Group (JLAG) and Suffolk Coastal District Councillor Geoff Holdcroft, Vice Chair of JLAG, said: -
"This massive project can be good for Suffolk, but we need much greater detail and evidence from EDF Energy before we are able to offer firm support."

Education attainment in Suffolk

Validated figures published by the Department for Education confirm that Suffolk's GCSE progress has for the first time risen above the national average. Suffolk is now ranked in the top half of all authorities for progress at GCSE level, at **55th out of 151**. This is a real improvement since 2014 when Suffolk was ranked 119th for English progress and 108th for maths. It is important to recognise that the way a school's progress is measured has changed this year nationally. Progress 8 is the Government's new way of measuring GCSE results. It measures how well pupils of all abilities have progressed by comparing them with students who achieved similar levels in Key Stage 2 across the country. More information about the new Progress 8 measure can be found on the Department for Education's website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure>.

Across Suffolk, 60.1% of students achieved the national measure of attaining a grade C or above in English and maths. This is **3% higher than last year** and marks a **6% increase since 2014**. Suffolk students have also closed the gap to the national average state funded schools from 6% in 2014 to just 3% this year. Suffolk continues to be above the national figure of 59.3% for all schools. This is a real sign that Suffolk is making good progress.

We are now into the fifth year of the Raising the Bar programme which aims to improve levels of educational attainment and ensure that every child in Suffolk is able to achieve their full potential. Since the programme began in 2012, there has been a more than 20% rise in Suffolk Schools being judged 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, so now 89% of schools are rated "Good" or Outstanding. This rate is currently improving more than twice as fast as those across the country. We will not become complacent and will continue to build on the momentum of the positive results we have seen since the programme started and will continue to ensure that every child and young person in Suffolk reaches their full potential.

Over 90% of Suffolk children get 1st choice of primary school

At a time when many areas across the UK are facing real difficulties in sourcing sufficient primary school places, it is a real achievement that here in Suffolk we are able to give the majority of parents places for their children. In the majority of cases, we are able to allocate school places at the parents preferred schools. In April 2016, almost 91% per cent of Suffolk children got their first choice of primary school and 97.5% got one of their three preferences. The percentage of children allocated their first preference has increased by 0.5% between 2015 and 2016. In total, 7920 applications for reception places were received by the county council, compared with 7928 who applied in 2015. Chances of applications being unsuccessful increase when applications are submitted after the closing date, but there are some helpful FAQs to assist parents at: www.suffolk.gov.uk/offerday .

£10million of road surfacing work took place during spring and summer 2016

Suffolk County Council allocated £10million additional investment from its reserves into the 2016 programme of road surface dressing during the spring and summer months before September. This preventative maintenance work helped avoid potholes forming in future years on the roads that are treated by delivering approximately three million square metres of new surfacing; particularly focusing on rural roads across the county. This intensive programme of work equates to delivering three times the usual amount of new surface dressing, and is equivalent to dressing 500km of road surface. To put that in perspective, Suffolk has around 6500km of road network so this year's work will cover almost 10 per cent of the network. To carry out this work in the most effective manner, surface dressing will take place in the areas of the highest priority, based on the Council's recently adopted asset management approach to highway infrastructure. This surface dressing work can be affected by poor weather as the dressing materials need the right conditions to set correctly. Any programmed work that was unable to be completed during this summer has been carried over to this spring.

Suffolk Annual Public Health Report 2016

The Director of Public Health released his annual report in January 2017 setting an ambition to improve mental health services in Suffolk over the next 10 years. Suffolk *Minds Matter: Suffolk Annual Public Health Report 2016* was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board and proposed recommendations for long-term improvement to mental health in Suffolk.

An estimated 1 in 100 people are affected by severe mental ill health in Suffolk and around half of lifelong mental ill health conditions develop before the age of 14. In the same month that the Prime Minister outlined government commitments to better mental healthcare for young people and the wider population, this new report sets a Suffolk-wide aspiration for improved mental health at all ages. The independent report, which has been produced in collaboration with a range of partners, lists seven cross-cutting recommendations to promote good mental health and reduce demand in Suffolk over the next five to 10 years:

1. To work to promote mental health and to reduce stigma and discrimination;
2. Promote emotional wellbeing and resilience in communities throughout Suffolk by working to address the social determinants of mental health;
3. Ensure those with physical health needs have good mental health, and that those with mental ill health have equal support to improve their physical health;
4. Promote the mental health of women and ensure children have the best start in life;
5. Ensure the effective recognition and treatment of depression in older people, especially those at increased risk;
6. Work to promote active healthy ageing programmes to delay the onset of dementia at any age;
7. Reduce suicide in Suffolk by 10% over the next five years using the 2012-14 data as our baseline.

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