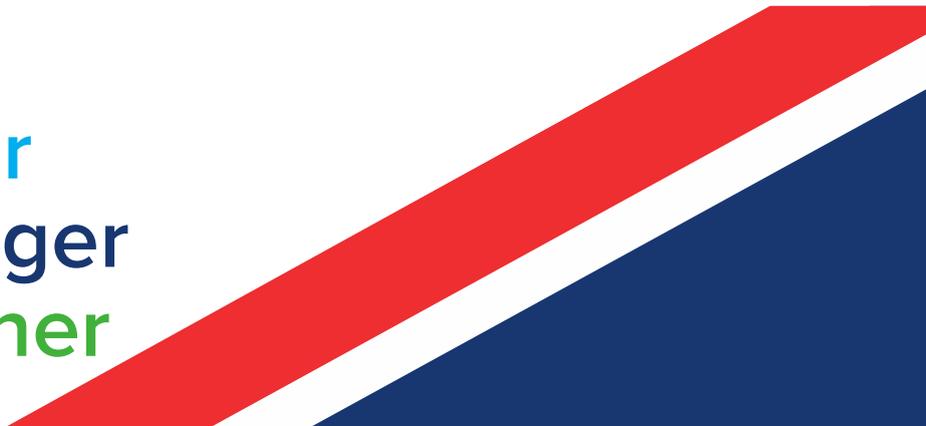


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Samford Division December Newsletter Cllr Georgia Hall



Build Back **Better**
Build Back **Stronger**
Build Back **Greener**

Children's services and adult care at the heart of Suffolk County Council's 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)

Councillor Rout continued:

“Proposing an increase in council tax is not a decision we take lightly, particularly when our costs of living are going up too.

“However, I think there is increasing recognition of the pressure our services are under. In our public consultation, there were more people who agreed that council tax would need to go up next year, 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 helping support those who need it most.

“If anyone does have concerns about paying their council tax, they may be eligible for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which is managed by our borough and district councils. You could receive help if you are on a low income, even if you are working.”

The budget proposals will be presented at a Scrutiny Meeting on Tuesday 11 January 2022, with the final budget discussed at a Full Council meeting on 17 February 2022.

The Scrutiny meeting will be available to stream on Suffolk County Council’s YouTube channel, and public questions can be submitted in advance, details available at www.suffolk.gov.uk

Suffolk County Council approves 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.

Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council’s cabinet member for operational highways and flooding, said:

“Committing this extra funding is a very welcome boost to our already significant improvement programmes in highways.



“The integrity of our county’s drainage systems and footpaths are incredibly important to our livelihoods; functioning drainage systems and well-paved paths support us all to safely travel for work, social or leisure purposes or to access essential services.

“£20m divided across drainage and footpath services will enable our highways teams to resolve more drainage issues, where there may be significant highway or property flooding; and footpath improvements to provide a safer and more accessible network in urban and busy rural areas.

“I look forward to working closely with the teams to ensure that the additional funding is used appropriately; targeting areas that require essential improvements, on a priority basis. I will continue to keep Suffolk’s residents informed on how any additional funding is going to be used.”

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.

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





“Despite the obvious challenges we have faced since the start of this project, I am extremely happy with the progress being made to replace all county council streetlights in Suffolk.

“The project brings many positive changes, with the main one being the reduction in energy use. This will go towards Suffolk County Council’s ambitions to become a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030. I congratulate the teams involved for their hard work and determination during trying times and look forward to seeing more of the county benefiting from these upgrades.”

Show social care a little love this winter

On December 21st the county council launched its first ever dedicated campaign about Social Care.

The campaign is designed to help the public understand more about the Social Care sector in Suffolk, how the various partners and organisations work together to provide care for people, celebrate the amazing care professionals that work in the sector and ask the public for a little patience and flexibility as we all navigate through one of the toughest winters any of us can remember.

Adult Social Care in Suffolk is made up of a close partnership of different organisations including local councils, NHS Trusts, and several private care providers who, when taken together, employ around 22,000 individuals countywide. On any given day the sector supports over 9,500 people to live independently for longer whilst enjoying their lives to the fullest. The sector faces considerable challenges however, including the recruitment and retention of key workers, the increasing complexity of care packages and the ongoing impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, especially on care homes, home care and front-line workers.

To try and demonstrate how busy the sector is, every day the county council's Customer First contact centre handles, on average, over 551 phone calls, webchats, or emails from people about adult social care. On Christmas Day alone, there will be around 1,200 care home staff working hard to ensure that the 5,662 people currently living in Residential or Nursing Homes in Suffolk get to enjoy a good Christmas. Then, on top of that, there are the 3,000 or so home care workers who will be out and about across Suffolk, offering help and support to people who are receiving care within their own homes. Therefore, it is so important that we all show the Social Care sector a little love and support this winter. Please be patient when contacting any Social Care service. They are all working as hard as they can to provide essential support for people. They will do their best to answer you and provide the best care possible as quickly as they can.

I also hope that this campaign will change the way we think and talk about those people who have made working in Social Care their career and passion. Too often those working in the sector are either incorrectly swept up and talked about as if being part of the NHS or worse, forgotten about in conversations entirely. These incredible people have made the choice to dedicate their working lives to the care of others. Whether social workers, mental health practitioners, occupational therapists, home care workers, care home and nursing home staff, and every other role I don't have space here to list - all of them, together,





deserve our praise and thanks for the value they bring to people's lives, and our wider community (and yes – I think they should be paid more too). But, to start with, I invite you to join with me in challenging anyone you see or hear using words like "unskilled" to describe anyone working in Social Care. Ask them to stop, think, and then try again - because of all the words we could use to describe these wonderful people, "unskilled" is certainly not one of them. They are professional care givers and need to be treated with the respect they deserve.

I know that changing perceptions can take time, but we must make a start, and that start is this new campaign.

You can get involved very easily. To start with show your support for Social Care by sharing the council's posts on your own social media, using the hashtag **#SupportSocialCare**. You can help by being a little bit patient when contacting Social Care. Or go further and offer to collect an elderly neighbour's prescription or just by pay them a visit to see how they are.

However you decide to get involved, please show Social Care a little love this winter.

