

December 2017 Monthly Parish Newsletter

Suffolk County Council's 2018/19 budget proposals published

Proposals to balance Suffolk County Council's budget in 2018/19 have been published, including an option to increase the basic rate of council tax for the first time in seven years and a range of savings plans.

The proposals were discussed at the forthcoming Scrutiny Committee meeting on Thursday 23 November as part of its annual budget setting process.

The proposed budget changes include the following savings from each service:

Adult and Community Services - £12m

- Working with care providers to look at how best to manage future pricing structures and working with partners including health to reduce demand.

Health, Wellbeing and Children's Services - £0.25m

- Moving towards using digital technology, maximising income and working with Suffolk Libraries to agree a fixed price contract for next four years.

Fire and Public Safety - £0.24m

- Savings from 'blue-light' collaboration including sharing facilities with the police and ambulance services. Further efficiencies within Trading Standards and Health & Safety. Reduction in Citizens Advice grants.

Resource Management – £1.71m

- Use evidence-based approach to reduce highways maintenance requirements where possible. Continue to make best use of property, saving money by sharing buildings with public sector partners. Review contracts for IT services.

Corporate Services – £9.7m

- Reprofile debt repayment in line with recent guidance, maximising efficiencies in contract management and increasing the returns from Wholly Owned Companies.

- **1.99 per cent council tax increase proposed following seven-year freeze**
- **Band D = £1.14 per week**
- **Band B (majority of properties in Suffolk) = 88p per week**
- **£27 million further savings needed to balance the budget**

At this point the council is proposing to take the option to continue into a second year, as permitted by government, the Adult Social Care Precept at three per cent of Council Tax during 2018/19. This money is ringfenced to support adult care – an area of the council's services where demand continues to grow.

All local authorities across the country continue to face significant challenges to meet frontline service requirements in a climate where there is less money and resources available. Since 2011, Suffolk County Council has saved in excess of £236 million. Once again, the council has carefully considered financial forecasts and projected demand to ensure the most vulnerable people in society continue to receive the highest level of support possible in the future.

The council also continues to develop new and innovative ways to deliver services and make further savings. This includes using digital technology to improve efficiency and ensuring health and social care services working better together to improve access for the people that need help. These programmes will support the authority as it seeks to make savings of £56 million by 2021.

These budget proposals have been produced based on figures from the council's current grant from the Government. It is important to note however that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will present his Autumn budget on 22 November which may have a bearing on the county council's budget discussions at the Scrutiny meeting, the following day.

The paper can be seen here: <https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/HomePage.aspx>

Suffolk launches new social prescribing pilot scheme to connect rural communities

Local people joined professionals working in their community today, to celebrate the official launch of the Community Connector pilot scheme at Shotley Village Hall.

The pilot is part of Suffolk County Council's work to join professionals working in health and social care with voluntary groups that provide direct support to promote social prescribing.

Social prescribing supports individuals to find non-clinical ways to improve their physical and emotional wellbeing by providing early support and dedicated time with a trained Community Connector to identify tailored solutions. This often involves accessing opportunities provided by local groups, clubs and activities in their local community.

Suffolk Family Carers are working in partnership to deliver this service. Hayley Hancock, Head of Adult Services at Suffolk Family Carers said: "We are delighted to be able to support people to connect better within their communities. This will benefit individuals by reducing the effects of social isolation. Our Community Connector Adviser will work from the bus with individuals to help them reach their goals."

Whilst social prescribing is not new to Suffolk, the Community Connector scheme is a fresh approach to bringing this way of working to rural and often isolated parts of Suffolk. The pilot will utilise the Suffolk Family Carers Bus twice a week to visit Shotley, Holbrook, Stutton and Chelmondiston.

The scheme accepts referrals from professionals, family members, friends, or neighbours. Self-referrals can also be made. Home visits are also an option. The Community Connector will spend time with individuals to help identify goals and ways of achieving them.

There will also be opportunities to meet with other people working within their communities, either offering advice, ideas, or new activities. For more information, visit: www.suffolkfamilycarers.org/communityconnector.

Suffolk's young people encouraged to get involved in politics as nominations open for Suffolk's Youth Parliament

Nominations are now open for Suffolk's Youth Parliament and young people in Suffolk have until 7th January to submit their nominations.

The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) is the largest elected body of young people in the UK who influence policy. Made up of elected Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) and Deputies, they meet locally and nationally to give young people a voice.

There are currently 2 MYPs in Suffolk and up to 15 MYPs and Deputies will be appointed when elections are held in February.

MYPs assist in running Make Your Mark, the UK's largest youth consultation. The results of the consultation are used to develop services locally and nationally. There are also opportunities to attend British Youth Council conventions and attend the Make Your Mark debate in the House of Commons. Above all, young people are given the opportunity to meet new people, make lasting friends and make a difference.

Results of the recent Make your Mark consultation can be viewed here:

<http://www.thesource.me.uk/home/latest-news-and-views/house-of-commons-sitting-2017/>

Suffolk County Council's Children's Services continue to improve following Ofsted pilot inspection

The council's Children's Services are now rated 'Good' in all areas.

Ofsted have developed a new framework for their future inspections of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS). Earlier this year, Suffolk County Council was asked to be a pilot site for this new inspection framework.

Suffolk County Council's Children's Services were previously judged 'Good' overall at the end of 2015, a grade that only a third of Local Authorities have achieved.

Whilst this was positive, the council recognised that there were still areas for improvement and Ofsted's latest report reflects the action taken to improve in all areas. All areas are now judged to be 'Good'. This puts Suffolk County Council in the top 25% of all Local Authorities.

Inspectors were positive about every part of Children's Services, the quality of work with children, and the passion and commitment of everyone they met. Their report highlights that: "The local authority's commitment to children and families is clear and unambiguous... Staff know children well and are passionate about changing their lives."

Key points made by Ofsted in the report recognise the work of the authority in the following areas:

- **Early Help:** Early help is making a positive difference to the lives of children and families. Children and families benefit from a good range of early help services.
- **Social Care & Safeguarding:** The children and adult Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is well established. It is appropriately resourced and well managed. Thresholds are applied consistently. Information is shared appropriately. Decision-making is timely. The way in which the local authority has rolled out its preferred social work model across all children and young people's services is extremely impressive. The model is encouraging social workers and other staff to work more effectively with families.
- **Children in Care:** The local authority makes good use of its legal powers and acts decisively to protect children who are unable to continue to live at home safely. Social workers clearly understand the importance of achieving permanence for children in care. The emphasis is always on finding the right long-term solution for each child.

- **Strong Leadership:** Senior managers lead by example. They want the best for children, young people and families. They set and expect high standards of themselves and others. They understand the importance of getting the basics right but are not afraid to innovate.
- **Partnership working:** Partnership working, particularly with the police and with health services, is strong. This is evident in the way in which the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has developed. It is also apparent in the role played by health partners in early help. Working closely with other agencies, the local authority has strengthened its response to missing children and child sexual exploitation.

Suffolk County Council's Children's Services is now in the top 25% of all Local Authorities.

Suffolk home to school transport consultation to be reconsidered

Proposals to consult Suffolk residents on changing the way home to school and post-16 travel is provided will be reconsidered by Suffolk County Council on Tuesday 5 December.

Over the last two years, Suffolk County Council has managed to save £2.6 million from its school and post-16 travel service budget, making it more efficient. Despite this, the budget is still £3 million overspent. Changes to the school and post-16 travel policies now need to be considered so the service is affordable and capable of meeting growing demand in the future.

Suffolk County Council's current school and post-16 travel policies go above legal requirements, with around 2400 children and young people receiving free/subsidised school or post-16 travel that we are not legally required to provide, and around 2400 children receiving free travel to schools further away than legally required. The proposed consultation seeks views on options to change these policies.

On 12 September 2017, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet approved a public consultation on school and post-16 travel. This was subsequently reviewed by the council's Scrutiny Committee and referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration.

Suffolk County Council has now carried out additional pre-consultation work with schools, parents, parish councils, bus/coach operators, councillors and young people to look at the challenges in further detail. As part of this, a range of local solutions have been developed that in addition to changing the school and post-16 travel policies, could help reduce the cost of transport and some of the impact of any policy changes. These include, for example increasing sizes of vehicles, extending school opening times, and parents applying for free travel so only the seats that are needed are allocated.

The pre-consultation ran from July – November 2017, and was carried out to help inform the proposed public consultation. During this period, Suffolk County Council heard the views of over 200 people, and facilitated 28 different events, workshops, meetings and discussions.