



March 2019 Parish Newsletter
Cllr Karen Soons
karen.soons@suffolk.gov.uk

Suffolk County Council 2019/20 budget approved

On 14 February, Suffolk County Council concluded its budget setting process for this coming financial year (2019/2020).

From 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, Suffolk County Council will spend almost £10 million a week across all its services following approval of this budget of £519.3 million.

Over the period 2011-12 to 2018-19 the Council has made over £260 million of savings in response to reductions in funding from Central Government and increasing demand for services. For 2019/20 the Council has proposed a range of savings totalling around £13 million. These savings are required to help balance the budget - something that the Council must do by law.

Recognising the unrelenting rise in demand and the complexity of support required by vulnerable children and adults in Suffolk, the Council are significantly increasing spending in these two top priority areas.

The net budget for Adult and Community Services (ACS) will rise to £243m and the net budget for Health, Wellbeing and Children's Services (HWCS) will rise to £147m. This is an increase of just over £14 million for ACS and HWCS. ACS and HWCS will account for 75% of the total spend in 2019/2020 – three in every four pounds the Council spends.

General council tax will rise by 2.99% this year. The Council are also applying the final 1% of the six per cent Social Care precept allowed over the years 2017/18 to 2019/20. The overall increase in council tax is one per cent less than for 2018/19.

The four-year investment in surface-dressing our roads continues into its third year and the Council will treat 1,000 miles of Suffolk's roads by the end of 2020 as promised. The Council has also maintained Suffolk Fire and Rescue's budget and protected Suffolk's Library services.

The Council is looking to maximise the financial contribution from its medium-term programmes, which focus on transforming how the Council delivers its services and

works with other authorities and public sector partners. The Council's transformation programmes have saved over £12 million in 2018/19 and £12-£13 million of savings are planned for 2019/20.

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Cllr Richard Smith, said:

"There are no easy choices at this point. Every call we have to make on where to find savings is tough at this point, but we must balance the budget by law and it is right to focus our efforts on our highest priority areas to protect and support our most vulnerable residents.

"I accept that in order to protect these services that represent such a large part of our overall spend each year, we must find savings across the remaining service areas. This does mean that we are proposing a number of savings from the Council's highways budget and further staff reductions. This is the stark reality as we continue to experience significant financial challenges in the public sector."

Cllr Smith added:

"We are doing our best to set a fair budget for everybody in Suffolk. I think we have done that, and I am proud of what we have achieved.

"We will work hard over the next 12 months to bring that budget into reality and we will work hard with our many partners across Suffolk to deliver our pledges."

Funding agreed for Citizens Advice in Suffolk

On 11 February, it was reported that Citizens Advice in Suffolk will no longer see any difference in their funding for 2019/20. This is due to a collaboration between Suffolk County Council, NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group,

Suffolk County Council proposes to reduce the funding given to Citizens Advice by 50% (£187k), in 2019/20. Under the joint agreement now in place with the CCGs, a total of £187k will be provided by NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk and NHS West Suffolk CCGs. So, funding for Citizens Advice in 2019/20 will remain the same as the previous year (£374k).

Doctor Ed Garratt, Chief Officer for Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG and West Suffolk CCG, said:

"By working together with our colleagues at the Council, we have been able to identify future funding for Citizens Advice. This is a great example of Suffolk's authorities supporting each other to find solutions.

“We are delighted that we have been able to make this joint announcement before the Council approves its budget for this coming financial year, as all parties recognise the positive contributions made by our local Citizens Advice, including to the health and wellbeing of people across Suffolk.”

The Council has continued to work with Citizens Advice representatives throughout this process, most recently carrying out a public consultation to understand the equality impacts there may be as a result of proposed funding changes, and how these might be mitigated.

This consultation recognised that the Council has been supporting Citizens Advice to mitigate the funding reduction, whilst also facing its own financial constraints and increasing pressures to provide social care and many other services to vulnerable people.

Suffolk Family Information Service celebrates 20th anniversary

In 1999, the Council launched an impartial information service to provide childcare advice to families.

Suffolk Family Information Service specialises in helping parents find childcare and early education, and provides information, advice and assistance to families of children from birth to 20 years (25 for young people with a disability or special need). The Service also provides advice to Suffolk based childcare providers including day nurseries, childminders, pre-school playgroups and school-based childcare.

Like many Family Information Services, service planning began in 1998 in response to the government’s green paper 'Meeting the Childcare Challenge'.

Originally most parents phoned a helpline for help to find childcare, now families search for childcare on the [Suffolk InfoLink website](#). This is an online directory including a comprehensive list of Ofsted registered childcare and early education providers, and Local Offer information and services for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities.

Have your say on the future of the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is asking the public for views on how it manages the risks it faces across the county, as well as five different areas of its work, from how it responds to automatic fire alarms, to firefighters’ shift patterns.

This eight-week consultation is part of a statutory process, with information feeding into the fire service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for the next three years (2019 to 2022); essentially a plan for how it provides its services.

The fire service regularly assesses all foreseeable risks that could affect its operations. This includes considering one-off type events such as countywide flooding and terrorist attacks, in addition to the more usual responses to fires, animal rescues and road traffic collisions.

A key part of this review is to invite the public to share their views through this consultation and at a number of events around the county. The particular areas which the fire service is seeking feedback on are:

- Automatic Fire Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals
- Response to Road Traffic Collisions
- Shift Patterns
- Specialist Rescue Capabilities
- Speed of Response to Emergency Incidents – Performance Measures.

Mark Hardingham, Suffolk's Chief Fire Officer, said:

“By constantly reviewing our service, we can ensure a balance of our Prevention, Protection and Emergency Response services to communities across Suffolk, keeping residents safe.

“This has helped Suffolk to largely reflect the national trend amongst fire services, with an overall reduction in the number of 999 calls, fire deaths and injuries in recent years.

The consultation will run from Monday 11 February to Sunday 7 April 2019. The draft IRMP, supporting documents and online consultation are available at www.suffolk.gov.uk

Staff from the fire service will be available on the following dates

- **4 March:** Bury St Edmunds: Sainsburys, Bedingfield Way 10-12pm
- **14 March:** Haverhill: Sainsburys, Haycocks Road 10-12pm
- **21 March:** Newmarket: Tesco, Fordham Road 10-12pm

Important Information: Suffolk School Travel Changes from September 2019

Suffolk County Council (SCC) is implementing changes to its School Travel Policy from September 2019. The Council has already written to all schools and Town and Parish Councils with information about the policy changes and how they may affect families in their area.

Statutory School Age School Travel Policy

Children living in Suffolk who will be starting at a new school in September 2019 will be eligible for SCC funded school travel when they are over 2 miles (under 8 years old) or 3 miles (aged 8 or over) walking distance from their nearest suitable school that would have had a place available for them. This would be whether or not an application was made for a place at that school. Full details about SCC funded school travel, including additional arrangements for low income families and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), can be found at www.suffolkonboard.com/schooltravel

New pupils

In the first year of change the new school travel policy will only impact on those starting or moving school with effect from September 2019.

- For those starting at secondary/upper schools, parents will be informed if their child is eligible by 30 April 2019.
- For those starting at primary/middle schools in September 2019, parents will be informed if their child is eligible for SCC funded travel by 14 May 2019.
- If parents do not hear from the Council by the date shown above and believe their child is eligible for SCC funded school travel, they should contact the Customer Service Team on 0345 606 6173 or email them at customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk. Information about those who are eligible to SCC funded travel will be provided to the child's current and receiving school.

Returning pupils

The new policy is being phased in. This means that children who receive SCC funded school travel in the 2018/2019 school year will continue to receive this whilst they continue to attend the same school, unless they turn 8 years of age and live between 2 and 3 miles from their current school, or move house - at which time eligibility would be reassessed.

To opt-in (apply) for SCC funded school travel

For transport in September 2019 and all future years, families whose child/ren are eligible for SCC funded school travel will need to opt-in to receive their transport. This is a change from previous years.

The opt-in process for those pupils who are eligible for SCC funded school travel for the 2019/2020 school year opens on **1 March 2019** with a deadline of **31 May 2019**. SCC will be using various communications channels to cascade the opt-in message to parents/families.

This important change means that parents whose children are eligible will have to opt-in by 31 May **each year** for school travel to be provided in the following school year as this will no longer be provided automatically.

This includes:

- Those currently eligible and who have SCC funded school travel under the old policy arrangements because they will be in Year 1 to Year 6, or Year 8 to Year 11 in September 2019 (and have not moved address) or
- are eligible under the new travel policy.

Recent research has shown that some families, although eligible to SCC funded school travel, do not use their seat(s). Suffolk County Council consequently is funding seats which are unused and therefore, SCC are asking families to opt-in.

Post-16 Travel Policy Statement for September 2019:

The Post-16 Policy has not changed other than agreed increases to the cost of a seat until the charge equals the average cost. For September 2019/2020 school year the charge will be £750 per annum.

The financial contribution for students with SEND for 2019/2020 school year will be £690.

Suffolk Brokerage Service:

If any school or local community would like to access capacity building support to assist them in running travel arrangements themselves, they can contact customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk.

For more information on how Town and Parish Councils can get involved see the Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy at www.suffolkonboard.com/smot

Bury Leisure Centre awarded first county-wide Exercise Referral quality standard

Bury Leisure Centre has become the first Exercise Referral Scheme in Suffolk to be awarded a new county-wide quality standard.

The new quality standard has been developed by Suffolk County Council Public Health, and county wide partners, for GP Exercise Referrals Scheme (ERS). Suffolk is the first authority in the country to develop a county-wide quality standard of this kind. Schemes can apply for accreditation via the QUEST Accreditation scheme at questnbs.org

Joint Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) report on SEND.

Inspectors from the two organisations returned to Suffolk in January to see how SEND services had progressed since their inspection in December 2016.

Following that visit, inspectors ruled Suffolk was not effectively meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities) Inspectors have acknowledged that some improvements have been made, but say children and young people relying on SEND services have not yet felt the benefit.

They concluded that sufficient progress had been made regarding governance and leadership of the strategic planning and delivery of the 2014 national SEND reforms.

However, the inspectors ruled that insufficient progress had been made in the three other areas requiring improvement.

These were:

- the poor timeliness, integration and quality of SEND statutory assessments and plans and the delivery of subsequent individual packages of support
- the lack of understanding among parents and carers of the support available and the inadequate quality of the local offer, including access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), and
- the lack of joint working to monitor, quality assure and maximise the effectiveness of work undertaken to improve outcomes for children

Councillor Gordon Jones, SCC's Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills, said: "The report highlights that there are still major improvements to be made and that we must increase the pace of change.

"The findings of the inspection steer us to how we need to do more to ensure that all Suffolk's children and young people benefit from a more joined up and consistent system of support that is clearly communicated to them.

"Many of Suffolk's services are working well to support the county's children and young people with SEND, but much more needs to be done to ensure they are able to achieve their full potential regardless of the challenges they may face."

Cllr Jones pointed out that major investment had recently been made in SEND services by the local authority and its NHS partners.

This has included more than £1m in funding for speech and language therapy and the creation of over 400 new specialist placements in our existing special schools and units since the last inspection.

Cabinet recently approved 3 new special schools and 36 specialist units attached to existing mainstream schools, which combined will create over 800 new specialist education places in the county.