

Suffolk County Council Summary Annual Report 2020/21 for the Nayland Parish Council meeting on 13th April 2022.

➤ **Children's Services & Adult Care at the heart of Suffolk County Council's 2022/23 budget.**

In December 2021, Suffolk County Council outlined how it plans to spend more money on public services in 2022/23.

- **More money to support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) with an increase of £1.1m in the revenue budget.**

This follows a review carried out by a team from Lincolnshire, including Lincolnshire County Council and a parent carer network. The review made nine recommendations and they used these to draft an action plan, which can be read online. One of the recommendations made in the review was to work with a third-party organisation to deliver improvements. The council has since secured Impower as a strategic partner, who will bring capacity and extensive experience of working on SEND systems across the country.

There is an £45.1m capital programme agreed in 2020 to create an additional 870 specialist education places over a 5-year period to 2024. At the moment, more than 6,000 children in Suffolk currently have a health and care plan to identify what support they need to help with their special educational needs. The number has nearly doubled from 3,000 in 2014. A further 12,000 pupils have special educational needs and do not require a health and care plan. Currently, there are 2,000 places at either special schools or specialist units for those with more complex needs. We continue to increase the number of places. Children's education and welfare is fundamental.

- **Extra resources for adults in need of care launches the new Cassius service for an improved home care service.**

In early June 2021, it was announced that SCC are partnering with Alcove, Rethink Partners and Provide CIC to deliver their innovative care technology service to people in Suffolk over the next 3 years. From July 2021, the Cassius service gave our social work practitioners, occupational therapists and other front line professionals, new ways to support people to live better and independent lives. Initially the service launched with a high impact, targeted range of technology that will continue to grow into the full Cassius collection. This means that the technology can be customised to meet people's needs and to address individual challenges which will help them live independently at home for longer. More details on the Suffolk Website here.

- **Additional funds to prevent flooding and fix footpaths**

In December 2021, the Council 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.

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 were presented for approval by councillors in February.

➤ **Another Year of COVID 19 but with restrictions easing – however still be aware !!**

23rd March 2020 marks the 2nd anniversary of the first lockdown. We have all learnt a lot to manage this prevalent virus and many of us learnt to avoid it. Last year I said *"my belief is that there is always good that comes out of bad"*.

Here is some of the good we have learnt to overcome the unprecedented incident of Coronavirus throughout the year.

- The collection and dissemination of local data and advice to guide the local policy for best practice control.
- The organisation of Home Schooling with the local authority in maintained schools with
- The introduction of "Home but not Alone" free phone line for the lonely.

- The follow up to Test and Trace and now recently totally co-ordinated at the local level since March 2021.
- Local co-ordination of the Vaccination programme with Clinical Commissioning Groups via the Director of Public Health – Stuart Keeble.
- We have all learn to handle the technology to enable on line virtual meetings
- We have saved travelling time and as a result become more productive.
- We should all thank each other for the collaboration that has been achieved.

➤ **Leaders earmarked major investment on road to Covid recovery**

It was announced in late June 2021 that a significant investment of £6.238m was approved to support Suffolk's long-term recovery beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.

Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) approved a significant investment of £6.238m towards a range of strategic, community focussed projects and programmes that support efforts in Suffolk's long-term recovery beyond the Covid-19 pandemic. This money will be used to increase the offer for young people and families, to improve access to housing, to help local businesses get back on track, to address the climate emergency commitment and to drive future public engagement plans. This includes- £2.6m to invest in future housing projects, improve literacy levels, identify families most in need of support and strengthen the local care offer for young people.

➤ **99% of pupils receive a preferred primary school on National Offer Day**

In April 2021, 99% of children were offered a place at one of their parents' three preferred schools and 95% were offered a place at their first preference school.

➤ **State-of-the-art vehicles join Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service's fleet**

In May 2021, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service unveiled three new vehicles, packed with the latest technology, to support firefighters at emergency incidents. The Command Support Vehicles will typically be used as a hub at large, complex incidents, from which officers can manage operations and work with other emergency services.

Some of the new features on the vehicles include:

- Dedicated WiFi, enabling officers at the scene to quickly stream and share data, images, footage and plans with colleagues who are based remotely, for example at the Combined Fire Control Room
- LCD display built into the side of the vehicle, allowing officers to share content with other agencies attending an incident, such as live drone footage and plans
- Latest communications and computer technology with access to live information, weather reports, data on substances and chemicals, and direct contact with other agencies and services

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service has invested £360,000 in the new units, which replace the three existing Command Support Vehicles. Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service have also unveiled state-of-the-art rescue vehicles and equipment to provide firefighters with the latest technology for rescues.

➤ **HRH The Duke of Gloucester officially opens The Hold**

On September 15th 2021, His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester officially opened The Hold, a new archives and heritage centre on Ipswich's Waterfront. The Duke was given a tour of the £20million building, a partnership between Suffolk County Council and the University of Suffolk, which is home to more than nine centuries of history safely preserved by Suffolk Archives. The Duke was shown treasures from the Suffolk Archives collections spanning 900 years of Suffolk's history, including the oldest document - a Charter of King Henry I granting churches and property to the monks of Eye Priory from around 1119.

➤ **MPs from Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex and County Councillors, unite to protect the countryside and communities from the worst impacts of new pylons and cables**

In October 2021, the Offshore Electricity Grid Task Force (OffSET) was set up to review and respond to the Government's Offshore Network Transmission Review (OTNR).

A new group of MPs from across the region, under the chairmanship of Sir Bernard Jenkin, and including County Councillors from the region, has been set up to ensure that the emerging proposals of the Government's Offshore Network Transmission Review (OTNR), and proposals to change the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Planning regime, are effectively scrutinised.

OffSET supports the government's commitment to meet the target of Net Zero by 2050, and the aspiration to deliver 40GW of Offshore Wind, by 2030. *However, this will result in a succession of electricity generation and connection projects in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex, over the coming decades, which will have significant impacts on the environment and communities of the region.*

The group believes that these ambitions and targets cannot be met, on an "at any cost" basis. Therefore, the further development of the onshore transmission system, and the connection of offshore wind farms, and interconnectors, will require a new deal for communities and the environment. It remains a key priority that we speed up the Government's timetable to transition to the offshore transmission system, in order to protect our communities from the damaging effects of multiple cable corridors.

➤ **National Grid informal and Statutory Consultation on the Bramford – Twinstead Reinforcement of the Cables and Pylon connection through South Suffolk and the AONB**

Much time has been spent by many in preparing for these important consultations during 2021 and early 2022. Enough has been said and written. Suffice to say my thanks go to all the work that individuals within the parishes have put into this important consultation for the area and my thanks also go for the support we have all received from the planning and technical team in Suffolk County Council. After much of a battle, I was pleased to have the opportunity of having face to face discussions with the National Grid Team which were most productive.

➤ **Annual Public Health Report focuses on Mental Health impact of Covid-19**

Suffolk County Council, in December 2021, endorsed far-reaching recommendations to improve Suffolk people's mental health and wellbeing. This includes the creation of a dedicated fund of £2.5m and the development of a cross-system group to support community wellbeing in Suffolk.

The strains of the Covid-19 pandemic have meant that the issue of mental health has been in the public consciousness like never before. The unprecedented measures required to reduce the spread of the virus, have placed extraordinary pressures, and demands on the whole population, with around 1 in 5 adults in Britain experiencing some form of depression in the first three months of 2021.

[The report can be viewed here.](#)

James Finch, County Councillor for The Stour Valley Division

April 2022