

# February 2022 Town and Parish Newsletter

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## Council prepares budgets for its finances and the environment

### Column by Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment

For the first time in its history, Suffolk County Council will be presented with TWO budgets at its Full Council meeting in February.

One of these budgets is the Financial Budget, which has been a regular feature of Full Council meetings ahead of the new financial year. This is where I present how we propose to generate and spend money to provide the best possible services for everyone in Suffolk.

But this year, for the first time, a detailed Carbon Budget will also be presented. This is an important step, as it will allow the Council to monitor its progress against our ambitious target of being a Net Zero organisation by 2030.

I'll explain more about the Carbon Budget shortly, but first I want to address our Financial Budget – what the last year has been like, what pressures the council is under, and how you will play a key role to enable the council to provide and invest in the services that many residents need to access.

It has been a very difficult budget to consider, especially with Covid continuing to make life challenging on every level, both professionally and personally. This is true of the council's finances too - we also continue to face rising costs. In addition, the demands on our services have hugely increased, particularly for our adult care and children's services.

The pandemic continues to have a big impact on our aim to help everyone stay active, healthy and lead independent lives – as well as supporting those with more complex needs, by providing social care, through our amazing team of care workers.

Covid has brought challenges to the services we provide to children and families, from childcare to supporting young children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). I'd like to thank our teams that have worked tirelessly to ensure children and families have been supported during this time.

I'm pleased to say that I've worked with my colleagues to propose a budget which will not see any reductions in our services, and invests further where it is most needed.

For example, we propose to increase our family services budget by £1.1m from next year, to specifically address the recommendations made by the recent independent SEND review – this is in addition to our previous commitment of £45m to develop SEND provision.

In the public consultation we ran at the end of 2021, you told us that highways and the environment were your top priorities, after children's services and adult care.

We plan to invest in these areas, for example an additional £1m over the next four years, to be spent on things like road signs and responsible verge cutting. Over the next 3 years, we have also committed to £10m to specifically deliver an increasing number of drainage schemes, and £10m to improve footpath quality and access. There will also be a £12.8m investment to decarbonise the buildings that we own.

To maintain the services we provide, and to invest further, we will be asking you for an extra 1.99% in Council Tax and an additional 1% in Adult Social Care Precept. We did have the

option of asking for another 1% on top of these increases, but decided against this as we believe that the lower amount will be sufficient to provide a balanced budget, with no need to reduce any of our services.

If you live in a Band B property – the most common type of property in Suffolk – this works out an additional £0.62 per week, compared to your bill last year.

In our public consultation, there were more people who agreed that council tax would need to go up, 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 supporting those who need it most.

As I mentioned, in February we will also be presenting Suffolk County Council's first ever Carbon Budget. We want to be a Net Zero organisation by 2030 -this means reducing our impact on climate change where we can. We do this by reducing our carbon emissions as much as possible, for example making our buildings more efficient, procuring goods and services from suppliers who have a similar Net Zero ambition, moving our vehicles over to electric, and investing in our environment.

A Net Zero Carbon Budget for the council enables us to evaluate the impact of decisions we take. It provides a baseline for measurement every year, against which we can track our progress.

These are two budgets which I'm extremely proud to be involved with. I think both will have a positive impact on Suffolk – both in terms of looking after our residents, but also protecting the environment and county in which we are privileged to live.

### **Suffolk County Council waives fees for Platinum Jubilee events**

It was announced on January 18<sup>th</sup> that to mark the celebration of Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Suffolk County Council will be waiving street party road closure fees.


On Sunday 6 February 2022, Her Majesty the Queen will celebrate her Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years of service. To celebrate this milestone, events will be taking place across the Country, particularly over the four-day Bank Holiday weekend, between 2 and 5 June 2022. This bank holiday gives communities and people throughout the UK the opportunity to come together and celebrate with their neighbours.

For all events on Sunday 5 June 2022, which is being referred to nationally as the 'Big Jubilee Lunch', Suffolk County Council will not be charging fees normally associated with road closures.

The following website has been set up for those who are looking to organise a street party as a group of residents, or as a local authority, for an event in a large public space, such as a park:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent>.

As part of the main criteria for a road to be closed, the road must be residential with no through traffic (i.e. a cul-de-sac or traffic not able to access another road from the event road, etc.) and only resident traffic will be affected.



To be allocated traffic management to assist with an event, all applications must be received before 11pm on Sunday 27 March 2022. Traffic management will consist of 5 traffic cones, 1 road closure sign and an advance warning sign, which may be delivered to the chosen drop off point, up to Thursday 2 June 2022.

If any applications are received after 11pm on Sunday 27 March 2022, these may still be processed. However, Suffolk County Council cannot cover the costs of traffic management for the event, nor will Suffolk County Council be able to provide any form of traffic management equipment. This is due to possible supply chain constraints and other operational demands.

For full details, including street party event criteria, information on insurance and licences, please ensure you visit this link <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/PlatinumJubileeEvent>

If you have any queries, please contact Suffolk County Councils Customer Services team on 0345 606 6171 or email [customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk)

Find more information on how to get involved in celebrating Her Majesty's historic reign, at [platinumjubilee.gov.uk](http://platinumjubilee.gov.uk).

### **Warm Homes Suffolk Fund to heat up cold homes this winter**

It was announced on January 27<sup>th</sup> that residents can cut energy costs and reduce their carbon.

Suffolk residents who are struggling to keep their homes warm, can contact a new project which offers funding and free advice at [www.warmhomessuffolk.org](http://www.warmhomessuffolk.org).

Suffolk's councils have joined together to establish Warm Homes Suffolk, which launches today. The team will be on hand to offer expert advice on reducing energy bills, energy usage and identify benefits that residents may be entitled to, to help keep their homes warm.


The work of Warm Homes Suffolk will also help the county towards its target of Net Zero by 2030, as the project aims to better insulate homes and provide more efficient heating, meaning less carbon is released into the atmosphere.

A successful bid was made to the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for £2.7 million pounds of funding to run Warm Homes Suffolk - The Warm Feeling Fund. This is part of the Government's (Local Authority Delivery phase two) LAD2 Scheme, designed to improve the energy efficiency of Britain's homes.

The bid was led by Suffolk County Council, on behalf of all councils in the county.

**Councillor Andy Drummond, Chair of the Suffolk Environment Cabinet Members group, said:**

“With an imminent spike in energy costs for all households, Suffolk's authorities have joined together to offer valuable support and advice to residents. We want to assure people that help is out there, so that you don't have to live in a cold house, or become unwell, by worrying about your energy bills.



“If you, or anyone you know is having difficulty heating their home, or is concerned about their energy bills, please get in touch with Warm Homes Suffolk.”

For eligible residents, the scheme can offer a range of home upgrades, including cavity, loft and external insulation, installation of solar photovoltaic systems and switching central heating to more efficient low carbon heat pumps.

The scheme is available to homeowners, those renting and landlords. There are some conditions to meet before being able to access funding, which is aimed at residents who are:

- earning under £30,000 per annum
- currently receiving benefits (or think you may be eligible)
- living in homes with a low energy rating

If you are a landlord with tenants and property that meet the above criteria, then you could receive a subsidy of up to two-thirds for work which improves the energy efficiency of your property, up to the value of £5,000.

More details and further information about eligibility can be found in the on the Warm Home Suffolk website [www.warmhomessuffolk.org](http://www.warmhomessuffolk.org), or by calling **03456 037 686**. Lines are open Monday to Friday between 9am and 4pm.

