

I hope you all had an enjoyable festive period and wish you all the best for 2024.

As previous years, energy projects of all shapes, sizes, routes and forms will dominate the area. Thank you again to all those that responded to the last consultation either as groups or also individually. Some are already aware; The Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) and Suffolk County Council (SCC) will be launching a newsletter on NSIPs. The newsletter will be written by SCC every time a Cabinet Member Report is published and distributed to all Suffolk parishes shortly after by SALC. The aim of the newsletter is to provide factual updates on projects to help ease some of the time burden NSIPs place on town and parish councils and I attach the 1<sup>st</sup> version is attached (to the email) if not already distributed. I will endeavour to also email this out but please do look out for the emails from Salc.

We have experienced yet more stormy weather and rainfall, The fields remain waterlogged, landowners are being contacted, please do advise where possible. I did post reminders of useful contacts etc out but please do add to websites/newsletters etc.

Best wishes  
TJ

### **Budget**

As mentioned in previous reports - it should not come as a surprise to anyone that public finances are under pressure at the moment - especially with the impacts of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and post-COVID financial recovery and the related inflation being felt across the western world.

This impact is being felt in homes here in Suffolk. Whether that is in the bills we pay and goods we buy – everyone is feeling the pinch. Suffolk County Council is no different. We have a set budget for delivering public services but increasing costs, coupled with rising demand, means we have to make difficult decisions in order to balance the books.

As per last month's examples, protecting vulnerable children is currently costing Suffolk County Council £8.8 million more than we have available, home to school transport is costing £11.4 million more and adult care £3.5 million more.

Let us be clear, this is not mismanagement. We set budgets based on existing and forecast demand and, rightly, have a legal obligation to provide those services for people who qualify. This issue we (and many other councils) are facing is one of extraordinary levels of need that show no signs of abating. We are a well-run council.

Most people will not know that we have saved £66 million in the past five years by working smarter and leaner. But, faced with the most challenging budget-setting situation for many years with significantly more demand than we have the money for, we must make difficult decisions.

So, later today, (03.01.24) we will be publishing our budget plans for the next two years. I wanted to take the opportunity to let you know this is happening because openness and transparency are a core part of a council's role in public life.

Colleagues have spent months scrutinising all the council's spending – looking for ever more ways to save money by doing things differently or, in some cases, stopping doing them. We recognise that there is competition for every pound across all our services and understand that each service means something to someone.

Once again, we are putting adult and children's care at the heart of our plans because it is the right thing to do. However, to ensure appropriate levels of funding for these key services, and those most in need in Suffolk, we must make judgements about all the services we deliver and how we deliver them. Across the country, councils are having to make similar tough choices.

In the next two years, Suffolk County Council needs to pump millions of pounds extra into protecting the county's most vulnerable residents. Alongside this, we need to make millions of pounds worth of savings and look at council tax.

Full details of Suffolk County Council's financial plans for 2024/25 will be presented to our Scrutiny Committee in January and a final decision will be taken by all councillors in February.

In the meantime, we will continue to lobby the Government for more funds. We have joined national calls for additional support and lobbied the Chancellor of the Exchequer direct. We understand the financial pressure facing the Government with public services everywhere asking for more money. This is money that simply is not available at the moment, especially after the vital financial support made available during and following the pandemic. This means it is up to local authorities like us to find savings.

I appreciate that this feels a bit stark, but it is an honest account of the challenges we, and all county councils, are facing. It is our job to find the solution and to that I say that our commitment to make the best possible use of every pound of public money made available to us remains absolute.

Cllr R Rout.

**Reminder** - More than 1,700 people have already had their say in Suffolk County Council's consultation to Shape the Future of library services in Suffolk.

Residents still have time to have their say by visiting [www.suffolk.gov.uk/LibraryConsultation](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/LibraryConsultation) before **Friday 26 January 2024**.

Easy-read and translated versions are available at the above website.

Alternative formats of the consultation are available on request, please

email: [Libraries.consultation@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Libraries.consultation@suffolk.gov.uk)

Those who cannot access the consultation online can request a printed copy or assistance with completing the survey by calling 0345 603 1842.

I will be sitting on the main development site forum and Cllr R Smith and I will be sitting on the SZ C forum, Cllr Nicholls will sit with a cabinet member on the Northern Transport forum with HW officers. You may have picked up from the newsletter published by SZC Co that they have secured to independent chairs for these Fora – Brian Stewart (who used to be chair the Sizewell C Community Forum pre-examination) and Christine Abraham (who you may know as the previous CEX of Community Action Suffolk). Dates to note are:  
SZC Forum – 2 April (please may I have any questions in writing by the 22<sup>nd</sup> March to submit before the deadline.)

Main Development Site Forum – 16/1 (please may I have any questions in writing by the 10th to submit before the deadline.)

Northern Transport Forum – 6/2 (I can submit written questions, please email by 2/1/24)

Southern Transport Forum – 12/2 (I can submit written questions, please email by 05/02/24)