

Parish Report February 2023

Councillor

Richard Kemp

Tresco
New Road
Long Melford
Suffolk
CO10 9JY
01787 378149
richard.kemp@suffolk.gov.uk



Information Updates

For information on local support during the Cost-of-Living Crisis, visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/CostOfLiving

Latest SCC COVID information is available here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/>

For information on supporting Ukrainian refugees in Suffolk, email: refugeesupport@suffolk.gov.uk or ukrainesupport@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk

Cllr Graham Newman's Memorial - We Pay Tribute

Following on from the sad news that Cllr Newman has passed away, there will be a Memorial Service for him in Felixstowe. Cllr Graham Newman was a Conservative Councillor for Felixstowe and served his division since 2005.

Our Group send our thoughts and prayers to his family and will be in attendance as appropriate.

SCC Financial Budget

SCC is currently going through its process to approving the budget for 2023/24. At the beginning of January, the Scrutiny Committee discussed the papers in preparation for them to go to Cabinet and then Full Council. The budget proposes a 3.99% increase in tax, broken down into a 2% rise in the Social Care Precept and a 1.99% increase in general tax. The Council aim to make savings through increasing the number of unfunded vacancies amongst the Council's workforce.

Our Group believes that impact council services have faced this year requires the Council to increase general tax by an additional 0.89%. We have proposed how we would spend the additional funding to protect services from the rising demand and costs.

GLI Budget Amendments

Our Group has proposed amendments to the Conservative budget for 2023/24. Initially, we would propose to increase the general tax closer to the Government-recommended amount, which is a 0.89% increase. This equates to a £9.94 annual rise, or a 19p weekly rise for a Band B property, and would generate just over £3.3m.

Currently, SCC is not on track to achieve Net Zero by 2030. Our Group proposes to invest in a Carbon Budget Officer, to help develop a clearer pathway towards Net Zero. In addition, we propose to facilitate a county-wide review into Suffolk's speed limits, in the hope to provide resident with a clearer path to more appropriate travel in their communities.

On the frontline, we will use £1m to actively recruit Occupational Therapists and Social Workers, as well as invest more into Suffolk Libraries to help maintain their necessary services through the cost-of-living crisis. In addition, we would invest £1m in providing wider capacity of community transport to be used by those with full concessionary bus passes.

Carbon Budget

At the beginning of January, the Scrutiny Committee met to discuss the Carbon Budget. This is a document that is intended to calculate the amount of carbon SCC emits through its services. More importantly, it shows the Council's progress towards achieving Net Zero by 2030.

This year's carbon budget shows that SCC is not on track to reach Net Zero by 2030. Current forecasts show that SCC will still be producing 10,000 tonnes of CO2 in 2030 – that's still half of what we are emitting now.

Our Group believes more needs to be done to improve the accuracy of calculating all of SCC's emissions, which is why we have proposed a Carbon Budget Officer is employed to provide a sole focus on improving the reporting of carbon emissions.

SCC's Further Investment in Trees & Hedgerows

SCC are planning to invest £110,000 in managing and inspecting trees and hedgerows. The money will be used to ensure that trees and hedgerows are given the best chance to thrive.

Currently, the Council has planted around 50,000 trees and hedges this planting season. This comes as the latest science indicates trees can capture nearly twice the amount of carbon as previously thought. Our Group believes this highlights the greater need to plant more trees, and more importantly how crucial it is to not unnecessarily cut trees down.

For more info, visit: <https://phys.org/news/2022-12-uk-woodlands-carbon-previously.html>

Cabinet backs consultation on Devolution Deal worth over half a billion pounds for Suffolk

Councillors have agreed to progress to consultation on Suffolk's proposed devolution deal which would hand the county more powers and funding.

Councillors have agreed to progress to consultation on Suffolk's proposed devolution deal which would hand the county more powers and control of over half a billion pounds in investment. The decision was made at a meeting of Suffolk County Council's Cabinet on 23rd January 2023.

A public consultation will be undertaken in early summer 2023 which will give residents and businesses the opportunity to have their say on Suffolk's proposed devolution deal. To enact the deal, a resolution to change the County Council's governance to a Directly Elected Leader and Cabinet model will need to be taken to Council for consideration. If approved, the Directly Elected Leader's election will be held within six months of that decision.

Plans to boost funding for Citizens Advice to support people during Cost of Living Challenges

Suffolk County Council plans to increase its funding to Local Citizens Advice in Suffolk by £45,000, to support Suffolk Residents during the current Cost of Living challenges.

The Council has set out in its 2023/24 budget proposals, that it plans to increase the amount of funding it provides to the Citizens Advice Bureau from £120,000 in the 2022/23 financial year, to £165,000 for the 2023/24 financial year. Suffolk County Council's budget proposals will be voted on in February.

The additional funding reflects the increased demand the service is seeing in light of the current cost of living pressures.

Local Citizen Advice officers across Suffolk are supporting Suffolk residents who need support in applying to the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme. The scheme was re-launched in October 2022 with an online application form. Suffolk residents can visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/LWAS to find out whether they may be eligible for financial support through Suffolk's Local Welfare Assistance Scheme.

Citizens Advice provides free, confidential, independent and impartial advice on a wide range of topics. Find your local office at www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Further details of cost of living support available for Suffolk residents and organisations can be found at www.suffolk.gov.uk/costofliving

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