

## **Report for Nedging with Naughton PC from County and Councillor Robert Lindsay 9.3.21**

### **Suffolk County Council Budget**

The Suffolk County Council Budget was voted through Full Council on February 11<sup>th</sup>. This year's budget is based on a 12-month financial settlement from government, rather than the 3 or 4 year agreement which is usually offered. Key points include:

- A council tax rise of 4% (2% basic council tax and 2% Social Care Precept), representing an increase of £53.55 for a Band D property.
- A council tax income forecast to be £7.9m lower than usual, to be met by using reserves.
- Planned spending is £597.9m, 7.4% more than 2020-21.
- £15.3m of spending to address ongoing COVID-19 costs.
- No proposed reductions in council services or personnel.

### **Green Budget Amendment voted down**

My political group submitted an amendment to the administration's budget. This would have authorised the use of the full 3% social care precept to avoid impacting SCC's reserves and generate an extra £3.45m for social care at a cost of only £13.41 per year to a Band D household. The extra income would have provided funding for wider services, including a new officer for the flooding team to unlock more government funding, and the re-enablement of concessionary bus passes on community transport. The amendment was not passed.

### **Up to 10 year delay to flood repairs**

It has emerged from a report to the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Scrutiny subcommittee on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, that funding restrictions meant it would take highways ten years to repair all the highways flooding issues currently on its list.

Meanwhile, the County Council has been told it will receive £27m from Government for highways repairs, maintenance and drainage in 2021-22, a reduction from £31m the previous year. This has necessitated the use of £2m of reserves to top up the grant. In the past settlements have been agreed several years ahead but the government is currently deciding year by year. This makes it impossible to plan long-term for road maintenance and repair.

### **Suffolk & Norfolk County Council submit joint bid for £6m flood funding**

Suffolk and Norfolk County Councils have submitted a joint bid for £6m from a Flood and Coastal Resilience fund, to invest in flood protection schemes across both counties. The proposed projects would also capture water for reuse. If the bid is successful town and parish councils will be encouraged to get involved through measures like permeable paving, water butts and 'rain gardens' that can cope with occasional flooding and these projects would be in place by 2027.

### **Suffolk moves school bus contracts from Norse to Vertas**

The county's school buses have been run since 2013 by Suffolk Norse, a joint venture in which Suffolk has a 20% stake. However, Suffolk Norse went into losses in the last two years and has handed notice in on the contract. Suffolk cabinet decided on 23 February to move the contract in-house by handing it to its wholly owned company Vertas.

The 40 home-to-school transport routes and a school swimming service will be delivered by Vertas from September onwards. The move does mean the county can look at replacing diesel with electric vehicles as the technology becomes viable, to help meet its zero carbon by 2030 commitment.