

Parish Report February 2013

Councillor

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Budget

As mentioned in a previous Parish Report, the County Council's budget for the next financial year will be set in February.

The budget will first be agreed by the Cabinet at the end of January, and then agreed by all councillors at the Full Council meeting on the 14th of February. The County Council is intending to make the following savings:

Saving Ref.	Task	Saving 2013-14 (£'m)
A	Improve efficiency and remove unnecessary processes across the organisation	9.7
B	Reduce management costs across the organisation	0.5
C	Rationalise office accommodation	1.3
D	Share of profits from Eastern Facilities Management Solutions Ltd.	0.2
E	Redesign home to school transport	0.2
F	Target resources in children's services to reduce demand	2.5
G	Change the relationship with schools	0.2
H	Adult Care in Depth Review	7.0
I	Reduce expenditure on library services	0.3
J	Re-let the highways contract	2.0
K	Work with District/Borough Councils to reduce costs of Suffolk-wide waste services	0.8
L	Reduce the number of uniformed fire fighters	0.2
	TOTAL	24.9

The announcement for the budget follows an announcement that S.C.C is planning a 0% Council Tax increase for 2013. I will keep you updated as to the progress of the budget, and whether it is approved at the Full Council meeting on the 14th of February.

Cabinet

The Cabinet will be meeting on the 29th of January to not only approve that the budget is sent to Full Council for final agreement, but to also discuss a few other items including:

- Suffolk Travel Card – to re-introduce some form of public transport travel card to help provide uniform discounts and easier ticketing, particularly for those young people in the County who need to reach further education establishments and employment. Previously the County Council had an explore card, but this was withdrawn as part of a budget cut in 2011, and since then both the Lib Dem Group and many young people have been campaigning for its return. This also includes continuing funding for the Kick-start scooter loan scheme in Suffolk.

- Suffolk Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy – a requirement under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, states that Suffolk must have one of these. It will focus on four strategic themes including:
 1. Every child in Suffolk has the best start in life;
 2. Suffolk residents have access to a healthy environment and take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing;
 3. Older people in Suffolk have a good quality of life, and;
 4. People in Suffolk have the opportunity to improve their mental health and wellbeing.
- Sizewell C Proposed Nuclear Power Station – Suffolk County Council's response to Stage 1 Consultation – Suffolk County Council's Cabinet is set to respond to the first consultation for the Sizewell Nuclear plant, by supporting the idea itself, but making a number of comments about lack of information from EDF the company who have applied to build the plant.

For more information and a copy of the reports that are set to be discussed, please head to – <http://committeeminutes.suffolkcc.gov.uk/meeting.aspx?d=29/Jan/2013&c=The%20Cabinet>

Highways Procurement

The County Council has provided a latest update as to the progress of re-letting the highways contract.

“In December 2012, Suffolk County Council announced Balfour Beatty Living Places as the Preferred Bidder for the contract to maintain and improve Suffolk's highways from 1st April 2013.

Following a period of extensive and constructive discussion with Balfour Beatty Living Places, Suffolk County Council has not been able to confirm and clarify commitments made to the point where it can provisionally award the contract. It has therefore been decided that the procurement process will revert to the previous stage where Suffolk County Council can liaise with any, or all, of the bidders who submitted final tenders (including Balfour Beatty Living Places), before again identifying a preferred bidder.

This does not affect the county council's ambition to identify a private sector company that will be responsible for the design and implementation of highway maintenance and improvement works, winter gritting, street lighting, traffic signals and bridge works throughout the county.

A key objective to achieve £2 million of recurring revenue savings in year 2013/14 and to help the council's transport department achieve efficiency savings of 1.5% per year remains in place.”

This latest update casts doubt on whether the savings presented in the budget are going to be achievable for this year, and what is going to happen once the current contracts expire on the 31st of March. I will keep you updated on this situation.

Suffolk drops down national GCSE rankings table

After the release of the GCSE grades across the Country yesterday, Suffolk has now dropped to 141 out of 152 authorities for GCSE results.

Whilst this clearly isn't good enough, some of it can be attributed to the grade boundary shifts that occurred in the summer 2012 for English and English Language. For more information and for the County Council's reaction, please head here - <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/your-council/about-suffolk-county-council/news/gcse-grade-boundary-controversy-continues/>