

## **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.

## **Cabinet backs consultation on devolution deal worth over half a billion pounds for Suffolk**

On January 24<sup>th</sup>, Councillors 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 this afternoon.

## **Council's net zero plans making progress**

The council has been keen to lead from the front with its ambition to reduce its own emissions and energy costs, while inspiring and supporting others to do the same.

It is one of only a few local authorities in the country to publish a 'Carbon Budget'. This looks in detail at its environmental impact, to identify actions and costs needed to reduce emissions.

Calculating the council's carbon emissions is a complex process. Papers released last month, ahead of a Council Scrutiny Committee meeting on 9 January, explain the work that the council has been doing in the last year, as it works towards net zero by 2030.

The council is reducing the emissions that it is directly responsible for, following a £12.8m 'spend to save' investment to decarbonise its buildings, making them more energy efficient and cheaper to run.

Changes it is making include moving its small vehicle fleet to fully electric by 2025, it has upgraded street lighting across the county, changed to a renewable electricity tariff, and is increasing the number of solar panels across its estate.

But one of the elements that will determine the council's progress to net zero, is the ambition shown by the businesses in its supply chain. Although these are not carbon

**Chris Chambers - County Councillor for the Gipping Valley Division**  
**Mob : 07595310290    E-mail : [chris.chambers@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:chris.chambers@suffolk.gov.uk)**

emissions directly produced by the council, its suppliers and contractors still affect the council's target.

## **Working to reduce our energy consumption and costs**

### **A column by Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment**

One year ago, I announced that Suffolk County Council will begin presenting a carbon budget alongside our annual finance budget.

Our finance budget underpins everything we do - it outlines how much money there is to spend, where that money comes from and how we plan to spend it.

A carbon budget is equally as important, as it allows us to measure the council's carbon emissions, monitor our environmental impact, and identify actions and costs needed to reduce emissions.

Papers released last month, ahead of yesterday's Council Scrutiny Committee meeting, explain the work that the council has been doing in the last year, as it works towards net zero by 2030.

Data from the last couple of years has been interesting, with Covid playing a big part. With many staff working from home and not travelling as much, we saw a notable drop in our carbon emissions. Naturally, this has risen again slightly as staff have begun to come back into office, but levels are declining.

Over the last couple of years, we have reduced our carbon emissions by 15%, or 4,000 tonnes of CO2 equivalent. That is really encouraging progress, but I'm very open about the fact we still have a long way to go and much work to do.

Since March 2019, when we declared a climate emergency, I have been adamant that achieving net zero by 2030 will be tough. But it's a challenge that we simply must rise to, so that we can stand tall as an authority knowing that we're doing the best we can to reduce our operating costs as an organisation and eliminate as many carbon emissions as possible.

The council is not immune to the rising energy costs that you are experiencing too. Our work to reduce emissions also has an important role to play in making our buildings more efficient and cheaper to run.

Some of the changes we are making, are really an extension of some of the things we have all been doing around our own homes to save energy. For example, monitoring temperatures and adjusting the level that heating is set to, switching off electrics that don't need to be on all the time, not heating unoccupied rooms, and installing more efficient LED lighting.

**Chris Chambers - County Councillor for the Gipping Valley Division**  
**Mob : 07595310290    E-mail : [chris.chambers@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:chris.chambers@suffolk.gov.uk)**

We have closely monitored the gas consumption in one of our properties, Constantine House near Ipswich Town Football Club, and have managed to reduce it by 80% over a 12-month period. We can take learning from that project to apply to many of our other buildings, to save even more energy and money. However the challenge is that the 90 or so buildings that we own are all different!

There are many other technical things we are doing and looking at installing, such as de-stratification fans, thermal insulation improvements for buildings, remote energy metering, installing micro-louvres, digital twin computer modelling of hydraulic systems, hybrid boilers and heat pumps.

Again, this is the same approach many of us are taking in our own homes – investing in energy efficient changes now to save money in the long term. As a council, it's particularly important that we continue evaluating and reviewing our systems and are aware of future technologies so that we can continue to invest in the right way to deliver savings and value for money to Suffolk's residents.

Talking of investment, that brings me on to our plans for how we spend money in the new financial year. I'd like to thank all of you once more, who took part in our budget survey late last year – over 2,600 of you.

Adult and children's care were at the heart of our budget setting last year, and are again this year. This is exactly what you told us in the public survey too, so we are all in agreement about investing more in these areas, and it meets one of our four ambitions for Suffolk - to look after people's health and wellbeing.

This year, it's a case of being prudent across all areas of the organisation. Even though we have created £15.5m of savings, our frontline services are protected and receiving more funding.

Alongside an increase in our funding from Government, and a history of excellent financial management at the council, I'm proud that we've been able to navigate our way through the extremely turbulent, economic waters caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and Vladimir Putin's illegal war in Ukraine.

We will be able to ensure that the services which mean the most to people, are still provided.

## **People are the priority in working out new ways to provide social care**

### **A column by Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care**

Anyone who has had even a cursory look through this year's County Council budget recommendations, will have seen some large savings associated with adult social care under the heading of "Transformation". So, I thought I would talk a little bit about what this means and why it really shouldn't be looked at as just a money saving exercise.

**Chris Chambers - County Councillor for the Gipping Valley Division**  
**Mob : 07595310290     E-mail : [chris.chambers@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:chris.chambers@suffolk.gov.uk)**

Adult social care has been successful over the last 5 years at finding new and innovative ways of working. Of course, right in the middle of that was the need to work entirely differently during the pandemic, but beyond that, teams across the council have been outstanding at finding new ways to deliver the very best care they can, whilst at the same time managing to save around £33M so far which has been used to support other services under pressure.

Let me be clear - value for money matters, especially when you consider that with the additional money recommended to be invested this year, adult social care will have a net budget of £326M - that is over half of the entire County Council net budget. Every penny spent in adult social care could potentially support a child with special educational needs, help maintain the road and infrastructure of the county, or support any of the other essential services the council provides, so yes - the money really does matter. However, I assure you saving money is never the main focus of finding new ways of working in adult social care. That has always been, and will always be, to do all we can to help people to live fulfilling and independent lives in their community.

So when the council talks about transformation within the budget recommendations, what exactly do some of those new ways of working look like? One of the best examples of working in a new way, that not only provides better care for people but also saves money, would be our Cassius digital care service. Cassius was created in partnership with leading technology experts 18 months ago. We've achieved an incredible amount since the launch, with over 2,500 referrals and currently around 1,900 people being supported with care technology either as part of their package of care or as a standalone way to help them live well. This has helped maintain their independence, boosted their confidence, and given peace of mind to their families - truly incredible outcomes for people. But Cassius has also been able to generate over £2.5m worth of savings by using technology to better manage people's care needs, delaying or avoiding entirely more expensive traditional care options.

Another new way of working, included within this year's proposed budget, is to explore the use of some simple technology to better monitor the time spent by carers during home care visits. Our hope is that this will ensure carers are spending the correct time with people. This technology is already used by some private care providers, and widening this out could potentially benefit others who would be able to better manage the rotas and routines of their own staff. It will certainly benefit the people being cared for, who will always get the care and support they need and are entitled to. At the same time the council would be able to ensure people are well looked after, whilst also only paying for the care that is being delivered, getting best value for money for the taxpayer.

I am really proud to say that in all my discussions with officers over the various transformations happening within adult social care in Suffolk, I am constantly impressed with their eagerness to find better ways to support people. For them the person and family receiving the care and support is always their first priority.

Sometimes others like to portray the budget process as a pure numbers game, where investment is good, and savings are bad. They create a myth that services can only be

**Chris Chambers - County Councillor for the Gipping Valley Division**  
**Mob : 07595310290     E-mail : [chris.chambers@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:chris.chambers@suffolk.gov.uk)**

improved if you just spend more money on them. Well that simply isn't the case, certainly not in Suffolk.

This year, if the budget gets approved next month, we will be spending over £30M more on adult social care, but most of that new money will be used to support the care sector with inflationary pressures and helping to provide higher care fees. Ultimately, it will be the various transformation programmes, those exciting new ways of working, that will be the catalyst for better services and even better care for the people of Suffolk, and I for one am looking forward to seeing them develop and grow.