

Date: 1st February 2023
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For information on local support during the Cost-of-Living Crisis: 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

County Council budget

For the 2023/24 budget the county council is proposing to increase the council tax precept by 4%, (2% social care, 2% general tax) below the 5% cap they are allowed. There are growing pressures from inflation, social care and childrens' services. By not going up to the full cap they are missing out on £3.78million and they will have to part fund a predicted shortfall partly by not budgeting for the extra social workers and occupational therapists they need. This is justified by the argument that in previous years they have not been able to recruit them.

Green-led group's proposed amendments

Our group (Green, LibDem and Independent) believes that the growing needs of our citizens during this cost of living crisis means the council would be more prudent to increase general tax by an extra 0.89%.

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.

This would allow the council to:

- Budget for the £1m needed to recruit and pay the extra occupational therapists and social workers required,
- Invest more into Suffolk Libraries to help maintain their services, which are becoming more important with the cost-of-heating crisis.

The council's budget survey of residents found that when asked to choose one thing they'd like to see more money spent on, most chose the environment, including net zero and wildlife. Currently, SCC is not on track to achieve net zero by 2030.

- We would also provide £1m for Suffolk Community Transport to help them invest in and electrify their minibus fleet.
- We propose investing in a Carbon Budget Officer, to help develop a clearer pathway towards Net Zero.
- We also propose a county-wide review into Suffolk's speed limits, to provide residents with safer roads in their communities.

Carbon Budget – SCC is Not on Track

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>

A tribute to Cllr Graham Newman

Following on from the sad news of the death of Cllr Newman, there will be a Memorial Service for him in Felixstowe. The memorial service will be held at St John's Church, Orwell Road, Felixstowe at 11am on Saturday 25th February.

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, he was always decent and honest and a pleasure to speak with and served the Council with great dedication.

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