

County Councillor's Report to Creeting St Peter Parish Council – March 2023

<p>SCC Financial Budget and Council Tax</p>	<p>The Council's budget for 2023/24 has been approved and will lead to an increase in the county council element of council tax of 3.99% - broken down into a 2% rise in the Social Care Precept and a 1.99% increase in general tax.</p> <p>Council services have faced a gruelling year of increased demand and additional cost pressures. In addition, the Council is not on track to achieve carbon Net Zero by 2030. The main opposition group proposed an additional 0.89% increase (equivalent to 19p weekly) to ensure existing vital services were protected and more direct action could be taken to reduce carbon emissions. Our group proposed to invest in a Carbon Budget Officer, to help develop a stronger pathway towards Net Zero. In addition, we proposed to facilitate a county-wide review of speed limits to enable progress to be made towards safer and more sustainable travel across Suffolk, particularly in local communities.</p> <p>We proposed using £1m to actively recruit, retain and reward frontline staff in adult social care, as well as providing more for Suffolk Libraries to help maintain services through the cost-of-living crisis. In addition, we wanted to invest £1m in providing wider capacity of community transport to be used to help achieve Net Zero through use of electric vehicles.</p> <p>The Conservatives voted against our budget amendments; the Labour group did not submit a budget response, nor did they vote in the budget meeting.</p> <p>The latest forecasts for spending to the end of the current financial year show that SCC is having to use more reserves than anticipated to cover additional costs in running its services. There is a real concern around the long-term effects of the Council's financial strategy, especially when the Conservatives voted against our opposition amendments to create extra revenue and additional income generation.</p>
<p>February Cabinet Meeting</p>	<p>Cabinet agreed to move the West Suffolk Archives in Bury St Edmunds to a new location in the town on Western Way. Our Group have expressed concern about the lack of adequate public transport to the new location – being far from the train station and with no regular bus service.</p> <p>Cabinet also discussed the Fire & Rescue Service's new risk management plan. The plan outlines all foreseeable risks in Suffolk and indicates the service's priorities and proposals to improve the service. Currently, the service suffers from low recruitment, poor retention of officers, unmet response targets, and an increase in demand through extreme temperatures caused by climate change. Our Group support the plan, hoping more investment can now be provided to the essential and increasingly ever-needed service.</p>
<p>Household Support Fund: Extension Granted by Government</p>	<p>The Government has agreed to extend the Household Support Fund, meaning local authorities will continue to receive funding to help residents through the current cost-of-living crisis. The grant is distributed through small payments to support vulnerable households to meet daily needs such as food, clothing, and utilities.</p> <p>To apply for help, visit Suffolk's Cost-of-Living support leaflet at: https://suffolk.pagetiger.com/cost-of-living-support/scc1</p>
<p>New Highways Contract</p>	<p>Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services, has been awarded SCC's new highways services contract. The contract, worth between £800m-£1bn, will begin 1st October 2023 and will last up to 20 years. The service will provide maintenance of roads, pavement, Rights of Way, drainage, hedges, construction of new roads, and snow clearing – this is not an exhaustive list.</p>

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