

November 2022 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

Cost of living to impact council's budget

SCC is keen to hear from Suffolk residents, businesses and local communities, as it decides its budget for next year. An online survey has been launched, and a number of focus groups will be held, for you to have your say on the services which are important to you. A summary of your responses will be included in the report considered by the council when agreeing the budget in February 2023. The budget setting process includes your thoughts, advice from council officers, elected members from political groups, businesses and partners in health and other public service organisations across Suffolk. Setting our budget each year is always challenging, but I always strive to offer taxpayers the best possible value. We work hard to maintain all our services and invest where can, which is what we were able to achieve last year. However, this year is going to be much more difficult. Many people that I speak to think that councils are not affected by the increase in the cost of living – unfortunately this is not the case. Many of the pressures households are facing, we are facing too. The high rates of inflation mean that our day-to-day costs are going up, the things that we need to buy today are markedly more expensive than this time last year. On top of which, we are still feeling the effects of the pandemic, and continue to see more demand for our services, particularly caring for adults and young people. All this means that we need a significant increase to our budget, just to be in a position to provide the same level of service as last year. If we want to spend more money on one service, we must reduce the spend on another, that's the balance we have to find. The two main ways in which the council can increase its budget, are an increase in the money it receives from Government, and by increasing its share of council tax bills. Last year, SCC increased its overall share of council tax by 2.99%, the equivalent of 80p per week for a Band D property. It continues to lobby central government, alongside many local authorities, to evidence the need for more funding for local services. With careful financial planning and management, the council has saved hundreds of millions of pounds in recent years. This has been achieved through transformation programs which have made the organisation leaner, whilst still protecting many services from large-scale reductions. It also committed £12.8m to the decarbonisation of its estate, which has already achieved impressive results. One of the council's main operational buildings has seen a year-on-year reduction in gas consumption by 84%, meaning financial and carbon savings. A proposed budget will be presented at a Cabinet meeting in January 2023 and the final budget will be discussed at Full Council in February 2023. The online survey is open throughout October and November, and focus groups are being organised with local community groups and for members of the public. Details of these will be shared on the council's website and social media channels in due course. For more info: www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/budget-council-tax-and-finance/the-budget-for-suffolk/

£7.8m redevelopment of Foxhall Recycling Centre to begin

It was announced on October 4th that work on a major expansion of the Foxhall Recycling Centre near Ipswich is set to begin. RG Carter Ltd has been appointed by SCC as contractor for the £7.8 million project, with work scheduled to start on October 17. The new design will increase capacity for cars on site, reduce queuing and improve access from Foxhall Road, and provide greater capacity to meet future growth. The site will have a raised level construction, giving better access to the containers for users without the need for stairs. Containers can also be emptied without the need to close the site. The funding includes £794,414 from East Suffolk Council through the Community Infrastructure Levy collected from new housing developments in the East Suffolk area. Work is scheduled to complete in early 2024 and the site will remain open to the public during construction. The project will be conducted in phases to keep the centre operational throughout the build, but at certain times this may result in fewer booking slots being available to the public. The Re-Use shop will change location in the new layout and will need to be closed for a period early next year to allow this to take place. The project will also see the installation of a feeder lane from Foxhall Road, making access into the site safer. Of the 11 recycling centres around the county Foxhall accounts for

19% of recycling and waste, collecting more than 12,500 tonnes a year. This is a significant investment in Foxhall recycling centre that will bring benefits to its users for many years to come. Whilst the centre will remain open during work this will be a complex project which will, inevitably, result in some disruption at times, so I would ask the public to be patient while improvements are being made. Foxhall is the busiest recycling centre in the county, so once complete this really will be a flagship site for Suffolk residents.

Next round of new SEND places agreed by Cabinet

On October 11th the Council's Cabinet agreed a new wave of funding to continue its programme to provide places for children and young people with SEND. The £3million agreement marks the start of Phase 3 of the Capital Programme to create three additional specialist units providing 42 additional places for students with special educational needs and disabilities. This follows Phase 1 of the programme which created 825 new places across Suffolk and Phase 2, which was signed off in June 2022, and will create up to 73 new places. So far, £45million has been allocated by SCC to deliver the new places for Phase 1 and Phase 2 - £15million of which has been provided by the Department for Education. In addition, Cabinet also agreed to support the Department for Education's High Needs Provision Capital Funding (HNPCF) for 2023/24 of £7million to be spent on the development of units attached to mainstream schools to support students with social, emotional and mental health problems and speech, language and communication needs. This will create up to 168 new spaces, and is an addition to previous funding agreed from the Department for Education in 2022/23 for up to 78 new places. The third item signed off was Cabinet's support for the application for funding for two free schools from the Department for Education. One of these will be in east Suffolk and support children with severe learning difficulties and the second will be built in Sudbury for those with autistic spectrum disorder and complex social, emotional and mental health problems. If the bids are successful, both schools will teach children and young people from across Suffolk. In total, Suffolk will deliver up to 1,317 new places for children and young people with SEND by 2025/26. We are seeing a continued increase in demand for specialist places for children and young people with SEND in Suffolk and it is vital we continue to stay ahead of this increased demand. I have seen first-hand the positive impact that these units have for children with additional needs, and their families. The next step for Phase 3 is for schools across Suffolk to express an interest in having a specialist unit and, following these expressions of interest, the most suitable sites will be chosen. This programme for improved provision is informed by the SEND Sufficiency Plan 2022-25. New special schools opened in Suffolk include Castle EAST, a communication and interaction school in north Suffolk; a social, emotional and mental health school in west Suffolk named Sir Peter Hall; and a communication and interaction school in south Suffolk, Woodbridge Road Academy.

Campaign launched to boost metal packaging recycling rates across Suffolk

On October 3rd, a new initiative encouraging households to recycle metal packaging was rolled out by the Suffolk Waste Partnership. 'MetalMatters' will see residents targeted with educational messages via a communications campaign comprising social media and outdoor advertising activities. Expected to reach more than 350,000 households, the programme will run for a six-week period, commencing on Monday 3 October. The Suffolk Waste Partnership is proud to support MetalMatters, which is run by Alupro, the Aluminium Packaging Recycling Organisation. Designed to improve metal packaging recycling rates, the programme has reached more than seven million households nationwide since its launch in 2012. For more information about MetalMatters visit: www.metalmatters.org.uk. To find out more about recycling in Suffolk visit www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk.

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