

A Joint Report to Gt Bealings Parish Council, from the Suffolk Coastal District Councillors for Woodbridge Ward - January 2016.



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Financial Overview – 2015/16 and beyond

As you are aware, the Chancellor announced the Autumn Statement and Spending Review 2015 to Parliament in November. Then SCDC received the Provisional Financial Settlement shortly before Christmas.

SCDC is currently examining the figures in detail to work out exactly what the settlement means for Suffolk Coastal. The proposed budget for 2015/16 will then be brought before Cabinet and Scrutiny at the beginning of February, ahead of it being presented to Full Council at the end of that month.

However, at this stage, it looks likely that we will have to increase our portion of the Council Tax – for the first time since 2010.

The reality is that our funding from central Government has already been cut by 40 per cent in the last five years. In the same period Suffolk Coastal also froze its portion of the Council Tax, leading to a reduction in our net budget of £3.7 million.

Now Government has announced it is planning to remove the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) over the next four years – which will mean a significant cut in our core funding of over £2million by the end of the Parliament.

Like many district councils, for Suffolk Coastal, New Homes Bonus (NHB) also represents an essential part of the council's core income – a fact that the Government itself recognises by including it in Core Spending Power.

Taken together, the RSG exemptions in the provisional Settlement and the preferred NHB option will see funding from these sources reduce from over £3.6m in 2015/16 to around £500,000 in 2019/20.

Although we knew we were going to face some reduction to our budget, this settlement is worse than we had expected. So it is possible that, like most councils, we will be forced to increase our portion of Council Tax by up to 2% in the next financial year. We will want to be in a position to protect frontline services and provide affordable homes where possible.

Latest Devolution Update

On 7 December, Norfolk and Suffolk's Leaders met to consider the shape of our devolution proposals and decide what more needs to be done before the final version can be sent to Government.

Good progress is being made across all of the workstreams, with ongoing support from civil servants.

The leaders also agreed to start a dialogue with colleagues in Cambridgeshire to explore the possibility of closer co-operation with those councils, although work on the Norfolk Suffolk proposals will also continue as planned.

Waste Collection – Brown Bins

Suffolk Coastal is not planning to charge for collecting organic waste (brown bins). There does seem to be some confusion in the local community, so we need to make sure people are aware that we have made this decision.

Cabinet did review our arrangements after the County Council cut its financial support (recycling credits) for this service. However, it was decided we will not impose a charge.

This is an important issue for Suffolk Coastal. We have an excellent track record on recycling. In 2013/14 we were in the top 10% of local authorities in the country (coming 19th out of 352 authorities) with a recycling rate of 57.44%.

Although we recognise that there will be financial implications for this Council, the decision to not charge for this service was taken to allow us to build on this good recycling performance.

New Headquarters

The buildings which will house our new headquarters, opposite Melton Railway Station, are now really starting to take shape. The external cladding, windows and sedum (green) roofing are now being put in place, so you can get a good idea of how the new HQ will look.

Work is on schedule to be completed during spring next year (2016), ahead of Suffolk Coastal taking over the building to fit it out to our requirements. We should be able to move in during the autumn.

With reference to the sale of the existing headquarters, we received a very positive response to placing it on the market and are currently in the process of considering the offers on the table to ensure we get the best deal for Suffolk Coastal and the tax payers of this District.

Once we have selected the best option, we will report our recommendation to Full Council, before moving forward with the sale.

Other News

Good news for Coastal projects: There was good news for Coastal Community Teams across East Suffolk in December with the announcement that a number of coastal regeneration projects have been awarded development grants to help enhance and improve the area's coastline.

For more information about the work of the East Suffolk CCTs, please visit:

www.coastalcommunities.co.uk/coastal-teams/felixstowe

www.coastalcommunities.co.uk/coastal-teams/deben-peninsula

www.coastalcommunities.co.uk/coastal-teams/lowestoft
