

A Joint Report to the Meeting of Great Bealings
Parish Council
from the Suffolk Coastal District Councillors
for Woodbridge Ward May 2016



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This report provides an overview of the Suffolk Coastal District Council key challenges and achievements for 2015/16.

Council Tax 2016/17

We have agreed to put up Council Tax bill for this coming year (2016/17) by just under 2%.

This is disappointing, as we have kept Council Tax frozen at 2010 levels, but it needs to be put into context – the increase will be less the £3 (or about 25p a month) for a Band D property, with their Council Tax rising from £149.40 to £152.37 a year.

This is the first time we have done so since 2010 and it is important that we explain the reasons for this increase – and the fact we are investing in building a strong and vibrant economy. The reality is that our funding from central Government has 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 is removing the Revenue Support Grant, significantly reducing our core funding by over £2.5 million by the end of this Parliament. Another essential part of our funding, the New Homes Bonus is also likely to be cut. Taken together, funding from these sources reduce from over £3.6m in 2015/16 to around £500,000 in 2019/20. We recognise that Government is doing this as part of the drive to reduce the national deficit, but on a local level we need to properly fund our services.

Further Transformation in East Suffolk

The Simultaneous Cabinet Meeting in mid-March attracted considerable public and media interest. It resulted in the Cabinets of both Councils agreeing that the officers should develop a Business Case to explore the possible benefits of Suffolk Coastal and Waveney formally merging.

We were the first councils in Suffolk – and among the first in the country – to go down the partnership working route, appointing a joint Chief Executive in 2008. The success of this partnership working has been central to our ability to make £16million efficiency savings since then. Although we have a strong track record of partnership working with Waveney, it is important to stress that this is not a fait accompli and we are at the start of a long process. These proposals are still at a very early stage.

But, in the current economic climate, when Councils are being forced to put up Council tax for the first time in six years, we have a duty to continue to explore new and innovative ways of making savings. As such, we need to look closely at the benefits of a merger, but we will only take this forward if we feel it will help us to deliver better services and value for money. However, before any merger could take place, it would have to be agreed by both Full Councils, as well as there being public consultation and the Boundary Commission being involved.

Any such proposal would be subject to a lengthy and full democratic process, which would be in the public domain over a period of years and would not be implemented before the 2019 elections.

Business Plan

At a time of great challenge for local authorities across the country, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils have published their vision for the delivery of services to communities across the two districts. The East Suffolk Business Plan presents the Councils' key priorities and ambitions between now and 2023 and details how they will seek to improve the lives and opportunities of all local communities.

This is the first time the Councils' have ever produced a joint Business Plan and, as one of the most progressive local government partnerships in the country, it is a natural progression following many years of innovation. To read our Business Plan, visit: www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/east-suffolk-means-business-business-plan

Devolution

Following the announcement by the Chancellor, George Osborne, about the Devolution proposals for East Anglia (Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire), Suffolk's Leaders and Chief Executives met on Wednesday, 23 March, to begin discussions on the detail which needs to be worked through before all councils vote on a proposed deal later in the year.

Ahead of any decisions being taken, we are all agreed that we must engage with communities and other key groups to make sure they both understand what is and isn't part of the proposed deal but also to hear what their views on it are.

We will keep you updated, as this engagement process develops but for the latest Devolution information see: www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourcouncil/a-devolution-proposal-for-suffolk/

Homes

We are investing £1.68million in creating more affordable homes to ensure people can stay within the communities where they are raised and work. This money has come through Section 106 money we have built up over the years into unlocking the development potential in the District to provide more affordable homes.

We are now looking to bring in new specialist staff to help us decide the best ways of using this money, but it may be that Suffolk Coastal may effectively become a developer, buying

land to build affordable homes on, getting them built and then selling them to the people that need them. We will obviously have to work closely with colleagues on the Town and Parish Councils, as well as developers, to get this moving, but this is an exciting new innovation for Suffolk Coastal and shows our commitment to making things happen in this area.

Housing

A total of 175 affordable homes have been completed in the District since 2010/11. Of these 58 were completed in the last year, including 14 homes developed by demolishing existing homes no longer fit for occupation;

Sale of Melton Hill

At the end of January, we selected a preferred bidder for Melton Hill, subject to contract, ahead of our move to the new building in Melton.

The selected preferred bidder, Active Urban Property Group (AUPG), held a Community Planning Weekend on Friday and Saturday, 15 & 16 April to develop the vision for the new development, and then staged a Report Back Presentation on Tuesday, 19 April.

The exhibition presentation can be viewed at;

www.jtp.co.uk/cms/pdfs/01151_CPW-exhibition_160414_S.pdf

and the report back presentation can be viewed at;

www.jtp.co.uk/cms/pdfs/01151_broadsheet_spreads_M.pdf

The design team will move forward to prepare a detailed planning application for the site, which it is anticipated will be submitted in the summer. At the Community Planning Weekend participants said they wanted to continue to be involved in the development of the proposals. So, at the Report Back, it was announced that a new project website will be created and an update meeting will be held in late June or July (date and venue to be announced).

New Offices

The work to build Suffolk Coastal's new headquarters, opposite Melton Railway Station, is progressing well. The move will reduce our running costs, saving £8million of tax payers' money over 20 years.

We will be taking over the building soon to fit it out to our requirements with the intention of moving into it during the autumn. The building will officially be named 'East Suffolk House' after Councillors and members of staff came up with suggestions.

Customer Services in local libraries

Work to develop and upgrade Suffolk Coastal District Council's Customer Services in Woodbridge Library is virtually complete. The development is part of the Council's plan to provide more services in the heart of the community at our current shared facility within Woodbridge Library and supports our move to new council offices.

The development is part of our work to take services out into the heart of communities, working in partnership with Suffolk Libraries in Woodbridge and Felixstowe offering customer services, tourist information and benefits advice in central locations.

New website

Our website is currently being updated – look out for a new look and feel later in the spring.

The www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk website will incorporate both Suffolk Coastal and Waveney websites onto one platform and aims to be clearer and more accessible through smartphone devices and tablets.

Brown bins

Brown bins will continue to be collected for free in Suffolk Coastal following a decision in November. The issue was prompted in response to Suffolk County Council's decision to reduce funding of recycling credits in this area.

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.

Part Night Street and Footway Lighting

Work to install an 'intelligent lighting system' to all our street and footpath lights has now been completed. This allows us to move to part night lighting (effectively switching off the majority of street and footpath lighting between midnight and 5.30am), in line with the current Suffolk County Council and other District and Boroughs in the county.

The Town and Parish Councils, among others, were informed of this work and consulted about the plan to introduce part night lighting in 2014. However, we intend to send round further detailed information about the plans ahead of any move to implement part night lighting during the summer months (after the clocks go forward), as well as issuing a press release and putting information on the website.

Sizewell C

Suffolk Coastal District Council and Suffolk County Council are taking a joint local authority approach to the challenges and opportunities presented by Sizewell C - the proposed nuclear power station expansion at Sizewell.

EDF Energy's Sizewell C Stage 1 consultation ended in February 2013 and since then the Councils have been working jointly in a number of areas. It was widely expected that EDF's Stage 2 consultation would begin in early 2016 but recent news has cast doubt on this and it not now expected until later this year.

All the public documents including the Sizewell C Joint Local Authority Group (JLAG) meeting notes can be viewed at www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/sizewell/

A Monthly Update from the Chair and Vice-Chair of the JLAG can be downloaded from www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/sizewell/sizewell-c-councillors-monthly-update/

Enabling Communities

We've had another successful year supporting our communities through our councillors Community Enabling Budgets.

This year, each councillor had £5,500 to spend on supporting community projects, local organisations and initiatives. In total they have spent over £200,000 across the district.

Locally we have spent the following amounts on behalf of Suffolk Coastal District Council.

Cllr Colin Hedgley

Just42 £1000

The extension of the Children's Work project.

Lofty Heights £3000

Setting up an office function for the Lofty Heights project.

Little Bealings Parish Council £1000

Contribution to the '20's Plenty' speed campaign for Little Bealings

Cancer Campaign in Suffolk £1500

To run sun awareness workshops in primary and secondary schools in the Woodbridge area

Cllr Geoff Holdcroft

Lofty Heights £2000

Setting up an office function for the Lofty Heights project

Little Bealings Parish Council £1000

Contribution to the '20's Plenty' speed campaign for Little Bealings

New Horizons Club £443.43

To cover the costs of food, safety and first-aid training and new games for participants to use and enjoy during the lunch sessions.

Woodbridge Riverside Trust £2056.57

To run a music event to bring together the history of Sutton Hoo.

Cancer Campaign in Suffolk £1000

To run sun awareness workshops in primary and secondary schools in the Woodbridge area

Cllr Patti Mulcahy

Little Bealings Parish Council £1000

Contribution to the '20's Plenty' speed campaign for Little Bealings

New Horizons Club £400

To cover the costs of food, safety and first-aid training and new games for participants to use and enjoy during the lunch sessions.

Home Start £2500

To develop a post-natal depression service in the Woodbridge area.

Woodbridge Rugby Club £310

Installation of four 15m high lighting columns around the practice pitch area.

Woodbridge Society £1250

To organise a community event in Woodbridge to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death and the legacy of his work

Cancer Campaign in Suffolk £1000

To run sun awareness workshops in primary and secondary schools in the Woodbridge area.

Please remember this is your council tax money we are spending. Please let us know where and who you would like this year's allocation of £5,500 per councillor spent.

Cllrs Colin Hedgley, Geoff Holdcroft & Patti Mulcahy