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December 2023 Town and Parish Newsletter

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As part of financial plans to prioritise those in greatest need, an additional £42.7 million for children's services and £29.9 million for adult care are being proposed. However, inflation and rising demand for services have meant that the council will have to make £64.7 million in savings over the next two years.



National Grid could cause unnecessary disruption to Suffolk communities

Suffolk County Council remains concerned at the lack of coordination between huge energy projects which would affect coastal communities in Suffolk.

In particular, the council believes National Grid should be taking more collective responsibility for its projects, such as with the Sea Link and LionLink schemes. If left unchallenged, these projects could have a significant impact on Suffolk communities.

Sea Link is a proposal for the development of a new 2 gigawatt electricity connection, approximately 140km in length and predominately offshore.

LionLink aims to connect multiple offshore wind farms in the North Sea, instead of individual wind farms connecting one-by-one to the shore.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:

"The east coast of Suffolk is seeing a continual stream of proposed energy projects. It's therefore essential that where they proceed, they are coordinated, and our communities are treated fairly.

"For example, the Sea Link and LionLink projects both propose to connect to the same converter station site near Saxmundham. Yet they do not currently share a proposed landing point or cable route to the converter station site. So as it stands, we would see two lots of disruption for essentially the same goal.

"While the Sea Link team has worked hard to enable their scheme to coordinate with other projects, their colleagues working on the Lion Link proposals have utterly failed. If these projects are to go ahead - and we do have wider concerns - then it's essential they share a landing point and cable corridor to minimise their impacts."

These are points which will be presented at the council's Cabinet meeting on 12 December, as it looks to formalise its response to the current Sea Link consultation, which closes on 18 December.

The council's response will explain that the two projects must share the landing point and cable route and that National Grid Group must coordinate the projects of its subsidiaries so that the projects can be consented to at the same time and be fully coordinated.

Also, if agreed at the Cabinet meeting, Cllr Rout will write to both the National Grid Group and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, asking them to align both the Sea Link and LionLink projects. It will be requested that should the projects apply for Development Consent Orders, the Planning Inspectorate considers both projects simultaneously, using a single panel of examiners, so there is co-ordination.

Cllr Rout continues:

"The council has long been calling for an offshore approach to manage as much of the energy transmission as possible. It's important to note that one of the key alternatives to the Sealink project, would mean more pylons across Suffolk - something which we utterly oppose.

"I can't see how National Grid can be a genuine leader in delivering Net Zero infrastructure unless it improves harmonisation across its projects. It would be wholly unacceptable for the technicalities of

different branches of National Grid, or for the regulator Ofgem, to stand in the way of effective coordination.”

Residents and businesses still have the opportunity to have their say on the [Sea Link proposals](#), the non-statutory consultation closes on 18 December.

Father Gritmas, Gritty Gritty Bang Bang and Spread Sheeran prepared for county's cold snap

An article by Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding.

As temperatures plummet, highways teams have now switched their main focus to ensuring the county's roads are treated and kept free from snow and ice. Despite experiencing mild temperatures in the autumn, our highways teams have been carefully planning our winter gritting operation for months to ensure we are prepared for whatever the weather throws our way.

Over the past week, our 39-strong gritting fleet, named by the Suffolk public, including Father Gritmas, Gritty Gritty Bang Bang and Spread Sheeran went on multiple treatment runs across half of the entire local road network in Suffolk.

The gritting treatment of our roads in Suffolk is vital to ensure people can continue to travel and do so safely during winter. During the 2022/23 winter season, Suffolk used around 12,989 tonnes of salt to treat a total distance of 177,983 miles – which equates to travelling the circumference of Earth over seven times! Suffolk Highways currently has a stock of around 17,000 tonnes of salt across the county for the season ahead and is well prepared for any further drop in temperatures.

Our highway teams are responsible for gritting 36 Priority 1 (P1) routes, which amounts to around 1,259 miles, including all A and B roads, roads to fire stations, hospitals, main bus routes and rail stations. They also have 34 Priority 2 (P2) routes, which amounts to around 843 miles of the network, this includes other bus routes, roads leading to rural villages and access to schools. The P1 routes are completed when road surface temperatures are forecast to drop below 1°C and P2 routes are carried out when the forecast predicts there to be a longer period of cold weather conditions.

This entire operation requires extremely careful pre-planning and running throughout, every single decision to grit or not is based upon forecasted road surface temperatures, whilst also considering the impact of other factors, such as wind and heavy rain.

But gritting the priority network isn't all that the teams do to prepare our county for wintry weather; Suffolk Highways has also refilled 2,100 grit bins across the county at registered locations, such as the bottom of hills, or on junctions of minor roads. Grit bins are owned by [parish and town councils](#) and to ensure that the contents of grit bins are used to make roads safer, our communities are encouraged to monitor how and where the grit is used and if more is required to report it via the reporting tool.

Suffolk's residents can also do their part to support us with our gritting efforts by parking considerately and leaving enough room so that our vehicles can grit the road – if we can't fit, we can't grit!

Anyone who would like to know when and where we are gritting over the coming months, all gritting activities will be posted to Suffolk Highways' X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook and Instagram accounts – so I encourage you to give us a follow and keep abreast of all our team's movements this winter season.

More information on gritting can be found on the county council website, and details of which roads are gritted can be found on [one.network](#), by selecting the 3 lines on the search box, then data layers, driver information then winter gritting routes.

Suffolk Highways' winter gritting efforts form part of the county council's wider 'Winter Matters' campaign, which launched last week, and offers advice to help Suffolk residents stay warm, safe and well this winter.

From stopping the spread of winter illnesses, to heating your home for less, residents can find advice at www.suffolk.gov.uk/wintermatters to help you and your loved ones look after your money, health, wellbeing and safety during the colder months. Information will be regularly shared on the council's social media channels throughout winter, follow Suffolk County Council on Facebook or @SuffolkCC on X, using the hashtag #WinterMatters.

Beware the five scams of Christmas, warn Trading Standards

While shoppers look to snap up a bargain Suffolk Trading Standards is urging them to take a few simple steps to avoid being ripped off. Fake websites, scam texts and bogus competitions are just some of the tactics fraudsters use.

Graham Crisp, Head of Suffolk Trading Standards, said:

“Be wary of offers that look too good to be true and try to stick with reputable websites that you recognise and trust.

“Be suspicious of requests to make a bank transfer and ensure you research any individual or businesses requesting financial or personal details.”

Councillor Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection and Communities, said:

“These sorts of scams can appear very plausible, and all too often innocent people fall prey to them.

“I would urge everyone to just take a few moments to think and assess before going ahead and parting with their money.”

The five scams to look out for over Christmas are:

1. **Scam delivery texts and emails** – You may get an email or text message saying your package has been delayed and it asks you to click on a link to track its status. This link could lead you to a phishing site that steals your personal information. Malicious texts are where someone clicks on a link and provides information, they may then get a phone call from someone claiming to be from their bank who offers to help safeguard funds by trying to convince

someone to transfer money into a bogus 'safe account'. Forward suspicious text messages to 7726 and send scam emails to report@phishing.gov.uk

2. **Fake and copy-cat websites** - The holiday season brings endless emails offering deals, sales, and bargains. Some lead to look-alike websites that trick people into downloading malware, making non-existent purchases, and sharing private information. Authenticate a website by checking the address is spelt correctly. Ideally, type it in rather than clicking on a link, or go to getsafeonline.org/checkawebsite
3. **Bogus charities** - Only donate to trusted, well-known charities. Before giving, check the charity's name and registration number. You can verify this at the Charity Commission's website at charitycommission.gov.uk
4. **Gift Card scams** - Fraudsters impersonate one of your email contacts to ask you to buy a gift card for them as a favour. They will typically say they need help buying it as a present as they are too ill, too busy or have an issue with their payment card. The scammer then asks you to share the serial numbers of gift cards to steal the value purchased. If you receive an email asking for personal information or any form of financial help, call that friend or family member on a trusted number and let them know their account may have been hacked
5. **Fake social media contests, giveaways, and bogus sellers** - Social media platforms are full of bargains but are also where scammers lie in wait with too-good-to-be-true offers. Fraudsters set up fake pages with offers to catch your eye and encourage you to share. These are designed to "pharm" any personal information that you have publicly available on your profile. Search for the official page to see if an offer or giveaway is legitimate.

Anyone losing money to fraud should contact their bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 20 40 or at www.actionfraud.police.uk

Suffolk Trading Standards can be contacted via the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133. For a weekly email from Suffolk Trading Standards go to www.suffolk.gov.uk/JoinTheFight.

Foxhall Recycling Centre redevelopment completed ahead of schedule

The new and improved Foxhall Recycling Centre in Ipswich is now fully open to all customers as construction works have been completed ahead of schedule.


Work on the project began in October 2022 and was originally anticipated for completion in early 2024. The site remained open throughout the build, but service was reduced for business and trade customers and there were temporary restrictions on some waste types while space was limited.

The new site, designed by Concertus Design and Property Consultants and built by R G Carter, increases capacity for vehicles on site, improves access from Foxhall Road and reduces queuing on the highway.

It also has a new raised-level construction, giving better access to containers for users without the need for stairs.

Improvements have also been made to the site's Re-use shop, which sells furniture, sports equipment, kitchen supplies, books, toys and bric-a-brac collected at Suffolk's recycling centres and which would otherwise have been disposed of as waste.

Cllr Richard Smith MVO, Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Transport Strategy and Waste, said:



“The fantastic news that the state-of-the-art facility at Foxhall has opened ahead of schedule is a welcome early Christmas present for us all. I would like to thank the public for their patience while the construction work took place. This is a significant redevelopment of the county’s busiest recycling centre which will serve the people of Suffolk for many years to come.”

Cllr Kay Yule, East Suffolk Council’s Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management, said:

“East Suffolk Council can charge developers when new housing is built in the district and these contributions, known as Community Infrastructure Levy, can then be put towards improvements to local infrastructure for the benefit of the community. We are pleased to have been able to support these essential improvements at the recycling centre with over £950,000 collected through developer contributions. The works, which have been completed ahead of schedule, will enable residents to continue to dispose of their household waste safely and responsibly.”

Jakob Betts, Construction Manager at R G Carter, said:

“Foxhall Recycling Centre is a wonderful example of what can be achieved through teamwork. Its success has been a testament to the collaboration of R G Carter, Concertus and Suffolk County Council, and all stakeholders involved. We have been proud to play our part in this facility, which will help encourage the local community to reuse, reduce and recycle, and play a positive impact on a sustainable future for all.”

The project was originally expected to cost £7.8 million, but the increased cost of materials and high inflation since the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine resulted in the final cost of the refurbishment being £8.3 million. The construction work was all completed within the agreed contract price and the scheme benefitted from a £958,914 contribution from East Suffolk Council through the Community Infrastructure Levy on development schemes.

[To visit the recycling centre, you will need to book an appointment on suffolk.gov.uk](https://www.suffolk.gov.uk). Appointments are not needed to visit the Re-use Shop, which is open 7 days a week.

Suffolk County Council response to local government finance settlement

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities yesterday (18th December) announced its funding package to support councils in England to deliver frontline services.

Responding to this, **Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:**

“Yesterday’s council funding announcement presents more challenges than we, and many other County Councils, expected. It means next year we will have no choice but to consider changes to some of the services we provide.

“The Government is facing considerable financial pressures and requests for funds from all corners of society, not least from councils across the country. We have consistently lobbied for more funding in Suffolk.

“We fully understand this position as we too have increasing demands on our services and rising costs to provide them – but the money we receive is not keeping pace with this need.

“Despite being a financially well-run council, we have significantly less funding than we need – especially in services like SEND, home-to-school transport and children in care. To prioritise these areas, we will have to make difficult decisions about the services we deliver, how we deliver them and council tax.”

Why we have not objected to Sea Link energy plans at this stage

A column by Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment.

Everyone in Suffolk is now becoming aware of the many energy projects being proposed in our region, from the Sunnica solar farm in the west, pylon projects through the centre of the county and a myriad of schemes along our coastline.

Even if you don't live on the coast, many people will still be affected by the impact of these schemes, whether that's proposals for substations that are further inland, or pylons which would carry around much of the extra power that is being produced.

Last week, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet considered Sea Link, which is a proposal for the development of a new 2-gigawatt electricity offshore energy connection between Suffolk and Kent.

This isn't a project which has been granted permission, nor is it at the final planning stage, which we expect to start in the second half of 2024. However, it is at an important phase, which is a statutory consultation.


This has been an opportunity for residents, stakeholders, and local councils to share thoughts about the plans as they currently stand. As the county council, we have staff who put together a comprehensive response, taking into account all aspects of the proposal – from the impact it would have on your community, wildlife, the environment, traffic, tourism, and the list goes on.

At last week's cabinet meeting, we agreed on what the council's position should be on Sea Link. We heard both sides of the argument – the need to support the country's energy security and a future for clean energy, but also the need to protect our communities and environment.

We agree with all these points, but we did not make a formal objection to Sea Link at this point. Let me explain why.

It is true that we think the proposal is not currently satisfactory. There are many pieces of information missing from the current plans, which makes it very difficult to make an informed decision. For example, at this stage the extent of the scheme is unconfirmed, access arrangements are speculative, design and mitigation measures are unformed, and we've yet to see details of how the impact on tourism will be addressed.

But this lack of detail is not a reason to object at this moment. I can't recall any infrastructure proposal presenting all the necessary information during these consultation stages. To object now, on lack of detail, would set a precedent that would see the county council object to all similar applications at the statutory consultation stage. This stance is neither credible nor effective. Furthermore, if the required detail were to be produced, the council would have to withdraw its objection.



I see these consultations as a way for all parties – you, me, the council, residents, and communities – to work together to shape the proposals put forward for the Planning Inspectorate to examine. It's at that point when we can all make an informed decision on whether to object.

In parallel, the county council plays an important role in trying to influence strategic energy issues. By this, I mean ensuring the energy produced in and around Suffolk is transmitted to where it is needed with the least possible impact on our area.

To this end, we have been at the forefront – with the region's MPs – of calling for an offshore grid in East Anglia. Such an approach could remove much of the strain on our county.

So what did the cabinet agree on regarding Sea Link?

We noted that the LionLink project has shown no attempt to coordinate with Sea Link. This means the council would likely recommend an objection to LionLink further down the line. The council expects National Grid to better manage projects under their umbrella to minimise the harm to our environment and the communities.

In addition, the outcomes of the Offshore Coordination Support Scheme and the review of connections in East Anglia, which is due to be undertaken by the National Grid Electricity System Operator, are unknown. Therefore, we cannot come to a reasonably informed conclusion about the Sea Link project at this stage.

We have, therefore, written to National Grid saying they must assess two things: the coordinated connection of windfarms and interconnectors at Bradwell and the Isle of Grain and to determine exactly what a coordinated offshore network would need to look like.

I hope that helps to explain why we have not objected to the Sea Link project at this stage. We will continue to work with local communities to see the best possible final proposal, and then we can make our final decisions.


More public money for adult and children's care, but difficult decisions are needed to balance the books

In the next two years, Suffolk County Council needs to pump almost £74 million extra into protecting the county's most vulnerable residents.

- £74 million extra needed to protect most vulnerable over two years
- £64.7 million savings to be made over two years
- Council set to reduce workforce, services and use savings

As part of financial plans to prioritise those in greatest need, an additional £42.7 million for children's services and £29.9 million for adult care are being proposed.

Along with local authorities up and down the country, the council has been hit hard by inflation and rising demand for services such as children's care, special educational needs and disabilities and home-to-school transport. It means having to make difficult decisions about the services it provides, including £64.7 million of savings in 2024/25 and 2025/26.



The two-year savings proposals, which have been published on the council's website, include:

- £11 million of staffing costs through changing the way services are delivered and restructuring across the council.
- £30.6 million of additional savings from an extension of the council's hugely successful Adult Social Care Transformation programme, which has focused on reducing demand for more expensive social care options by boosting people's independence and ability to stay well for longer through innovative methods including cutting edge care technology. This transformation programme has already saved £30.7 million over the last six years
- £0.5 million of savings by stopping core funding to Art and Museum sector organisations. To assist with the transition, £528,000 of COVID recovery money will be made available to Arts and Museum sector organisations for 2024/25 which will fully cover the funding reduction for one year.
- £140,000 of savings by centralising Suffolk Archives to The Hold and closing the branches in West and East Suffolk. In February 2023, the council committed £3.4m to relocate the West Suffolk Archives branch to the proposed Western Way development. Remaining at its current location would have required over £5 million to protect the historic records and meet modern archive standards. West Suffolk Council has since decided not to progress with the Western Way development, ending that opportunity. Centralising the three branches into one brings Suffolk in line with the majority of archive services across the country and is better value for taxpayers' money.
- £15.9 million of reserves will be used to balance the 2024/25 budget.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:

"This is the most challenging budget-setting process the council has faced for many years. But once again, we are putting adult and children's care at the heart of our plans.

"However, in order to ensure appropriate levels of funding for these key services, and those most in need in Suffolk, we must make difficult decisions about all the other services we deliver, and how we deliver them.


"This is necessary because the demand on council services for those most in need in Suffolk is at an all-time high. The cost of providing many of those services is significant, but the funding that we need is not keeping up. Across the country, councils are having to make similar tough choices.

"Our proposed budget next year will be around £752 million, of which £105m alone is down to these cost pressures from inflation and increased demand.

"We are a well-run council and over the last five years, we have saved £66 million by working smarter and leaner. But we now need to go even further.

"We have spent months scrutinising all the council's spending. There is competition for every pound across all our services, and I understand that each service means something to someone."

Following the recent funding announcement from the Government, Suffolk County Council will not receive enough funding to keep pace with inflation or the level of demand for services. The council has joined national calls for additional funding, and lobbied the Chancellor of the Exchequer direct.



Full details of Suffolk County Council’s financial plans for 2024/25 will be presented to its Scrutiny Committee meeting on 11 January.

The proposals would give the council a budget of around £752 million for 2024/25, made up of funding coming from Government, business rates, charges for services and council tax. The proposed budget would require a 4.99% increase in council tax in next year. This would be made up of a 2.99% increase in general council tax and a 2% increase dedicated to funding adult care.

This means the costs for a household would be:

- Band B property: £23.50 per week (£1.12 per week increase from 2023/24)
(Band B properties are the most common in Suffolk)
- Band D property: £30.21 per week (£1.43 per week increase from 2023/24)

Cllr Rout continues:

"We understand the financial pressure facing the Government with public services everywhere asking for more money. This is money that simply isn't available at the moment, especially after the vital financial support made available during and following the pandemic. This means it is up to local authorities like us to find savings to balance the books.

"I would like to thank the record number of people who completed our online budget consultation, and those who took part in our focus groups.

"Although the majority of people said that they would rather not see council tax being increased next year, I hope they can understand why - for the first time in years - we must ask for the maximum amount possible to help support those most in need.

"Our commitment to make the best possible use of every pound of public money made available to us is absolute."

The budget proposals will be discussed at the council’s Scrutiny Committee and then presented at the Cabinet meeting on 30 January. At the Full Council meeting on 15 February, the proposals will be debated, with a vote taking place on the budget for 2024/25 – the first year of the two-year budget proposals.

The Scrutiny Committee meeting will be available to stream on Suffolk County Council’s YouTube channel, and public questions can be submitted in advance, details are available at www.suffolk.gov.uk.