

## Suffolk County Council Annual report 2019 to 2020

I am attempting to write my annual report during lockdown. We'll all agree that this is a time unlike any other. The freedom of movement, except for essentials, the daily interaction at work with neighbours, friends is greatly missed. We have no idea, as I write, what medicine can combat Covid19, how long it will last. However, we have to be positive and as a song says "We shall overcome"!!

Here is my report. I shall inform you if there are any new developments.

On 13 February 2020, Suffolk County Council approved its **annual budget**. The Council will increase its spending power again this coming financial year, particularly in Children's and Adult services, where demand continues to rise year on year.

In 2020/2021, the Council's budget will rise to £556 million which represents an increase of £37 million (7.1 per cent) from 2019/20. Children's and Adult Services represent around 70 per cent of the Council's overall spend.

This year's budget is based on a 12-month financial settlement from government, rather than the three or four-year agreement which is usually offered.

SCC is delivering essential services, with **extra funding** from government, to address the financial concerns brought about by the Coronavirus. The government originally gave local councils £1.6 billion but this has been quickly used up by increased care fees. Councils are therefore asking for a further £1.6 billion and their financial situation kept under review.

As well as addressing the need to maintain funding for key services, the Council will invest an additional £3.5 million into two one-year programmes, the Suffolk 2020 fund (£3 million) and a highways investment fund (£500,000).

The £500,000 highways investment fund will focus on improving the safety of pupils and parents travelling to and from school, by refreshing lines and cleaning and repairing signs in and around school zones.

The funding is allocated for use within the 2020/21 financial year and looks set to benefit areas around many Suffolk schools, complementing the road marking renewal programme that is taking place as part of the move of civil parking powers. Suffolk Highways officers are developing a plan of how these extra works will be identified and delivered. Further information will be announced in due course.

In January 2020, it was announced that councils in Suffolk will take on responsibility for **local parking management** from 6 April 2020.

Traditionally, roadside parking offences were a matter for the Police. However, parking has become a lower priority for them, so Suffolk County Council is transferring this responsibility to local district and borough councils under a process known as civil parking enforcement, or CPE.

This means each council will be responsible for issuing parking fines, warnings and notices in their area, although a deal has been struck by Babergh and Mid Suffolk councils to have their parking enforced by Ipswich and West Suffolk officers.

A consistent approach is being planned across the whole county, meaning fines will be the same, regardless of which authority manages parking in that area.

In January 2020, **Care Quality Commission** statistics showed that Suffolk is now top of the table for comparator local authority areas.

In Suffolk, 89.04 per cent of Adult Social Care locations are rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission, the standards agency for adult care.

When it comes to the national rankings, Suffolk is performing equally well. Ranked as third nationally for 'Good' or 'Outstanding' rated care locations, Suffolk shines out as a great area for adult social care.

This is particularly impressive when it is considered that Suffolk has over 100 more adult social care locations than any of the other areas listed in the top ten.

Suffolk County Council, like many other local authorities, faces an increasingly large demand for education places for children and young people with **special education needs and disabilities (SEND)**.

In September 2019, a cross-party Policy Development Panel (PDP) was established to review the county's local offer and identify suitable specialist education places.

In April 2019, Cabinet approved a financial investment of up to £45.6 million to support the development of a number of local specialist provisions for children and young people with SEND. The investment, which covers new special schools and specialist units attached to existing mainstream schools, will create over 800 new specialist education places in the county.

**Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service** has undergone its most comprehensive, independent inspection in many years and has been rated as "Good" for its effectiveness, efficiency and how well it leads and manages its staff.

The report praises many aspects of the service, particularly how well it collaborates with other emergency services and agencies, how it responds to fires and other emergencies, how it ensures fairness and promotes diversity, and the financially sound way the service is run.

Firefighters in Suffolk are joining forces with ambulance colleagues to provide frontline care during the pandemic. 30 firefighters have been trained to work alongside paramedics.

In August 2019, the new shared Police/Fire station formally opened in Beccles. This is the eleventh shared community Fire and Police facility in Suffolk with stations already operating in Leiston, Newmarket, Saxmundham, Felixstowe, Woodbridge, Ixworth, Elmswell, Debenham, Framlingham and Clare. There are also plans for further joint stations in Stowmarket and Ipswich.

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