

# Annual Report 2016/17

## Cllr Gary Green

### SCC freezes Council Tax for seventh year in a row

SCC's share of council tax is to be frozen for a **seventh** year in a row. This means that Suffolk residents will not pay any more than they did in 2010/11.

The council has made savings in-excess of £200million since the Government's deficit reduction programme began in 2011/2012 and faces the need to make further savings leading to 2020. The budget passed in April saw a ZERO% increase in base Council Tax.

We decided to implement the 3% National Adult Social Care Levy this means with the extra funding from the Social Care precept ACS spending will cope with the continuing financial pressures caused by the welcome rise in the national living wage and the Council would increase the rates paid for places in care homes in Suffolk and thereby strengthen the care sector.

The budget for Adult Social Care and Children's Services increased again this year. SCC has achieved its target savings and looks set to achieve next years.

### £10million of road surfacing work taking place during spring and summer 2016

Suffolk Conservatives allocated £10million additional investment from its reserves into 2016's programme of road surface dressing during the spring and summer months before September. This preventative maintenance work helped avoid potholes forming in future years on the roads that are treated by delivering approximately three million square metres of new surfacing; particularly focusing on rural roads across the county.

This intensive programme of work equates to delivering **three times** the usual amount of new surface dressing, and is equivalent to dressing 500km of road surface. To put that in perspective, Suffolk has around 6500km of road network so this year's work will cover almost 10 per cent of the network. To carry out this work in the most effective manner, surface dressing will take place in the areas of the highest priority, based on the Council's recently adopted asset management approach to highway infrastructure.

This surface dressing work can be affected by poor weather as the dressing materials need the right conditions to set correctly. Any programmed work that is unable to be completed during this summer will be carried over to next spring.

### First stretch of Bury St Edmunds Eastern Relief Road

The first part of the Bury St Edmunds Eastern Relief Road opened Friday November 11 2016. The 350 metre stretch of road, which is part of a £15million scheme and jointly funded by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, via its Growth Deal with Government, Suffolk

County Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council, will make possible the delivery of 500 new homes and provide access to the new Sybil Andrews Academy and Community Sports facility.

This new stretch of road will also open up one part of the Suffolk Business Park site – which will create thousands of jobs and millions of pounds for the local economy.

When completed, the road will run from Skyliner Way to junction 45 of the A14. The design of the road also incorporates a Sustainable Drainage System, which retains and purifies water locally, allowing it to filter into the ground in a way that imitates its natural path.

J Breheny Contractors were appointed by Suffolk County Council in February 2016, with construction beginning in March 2016. The road is on track to be completed by summer 2017.

### **Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service proposals reflect consultation feedback**

Suffolk Fire and Rescue has published revised proposals for service changes which form part of its 2015-18 draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). These proposals were discussed at the Council's Cabinet meeting on Tuesday 17 May 2016.

Following an extensive 14 week consultation, the following proposals are recommended to the Council's Cabinet, informed by the consultation feedback and the professional view of the Chief Fire Officer Mark Hardingham:

- Maintain the existing two fire engines and the on-call fire fighters at Sudbury Fire Station
- Maintain Wrentham Fire Station and 8 on-call firefighters, replacing the existing fire engine with a smaller rapid response fire engine
- Remove the second full-time fire engine at Princes Street, Ipswich and reduce the number of full time fire fighters at Princes Street by 16 instead of 20. The additional four fire fighters will be used to crew on-call fire engines across the county during weekdays
- Maintain the on-call fire engine and the on-call fire fighters at Princes Street, Ipswich
- Remove the third fire engine at Ipswich East Fire Station but reduce the number of on-call firefighters from 21 to 15 instead of the 13 that was originally proposed
- Remove the third fire engine at Bury St Edmunds Fire Station but reduce the number of on-call firefighters from 21 to 15 instead of the 13 that was originally proposed
- Remove the third fire engine from Lowestoft South Fire Station but reduce the number of on-call firefighters from 21 to 15 instead of the 13 that was originally proposed
- Develop plans for a new 'blue light' fire station in Ipswich, or a refurbishment of the existing Princes Street station, to share facilities with Police and Ambulance services

These new recommendations support the future of the Service; they maintain the current 35 fire stations across Suffolk and do not directly impact on the response of the first fire engine attending any 999 incident across the county.

The proposals, together with those being made through reducing senior management and support office functions, provide savings of around £1million. Further review and discussion will follow in preparation for the 2017/18 budget to consider if additional savings are required.

These proposals ensure that the service remains fit to continue to provide a balance of Prevention, Protection and Emergency Response services to communities across Suffolk:

- Prevention – working with young, elderly and vulnerable people to promote healthy lifestyles, community safety and fire prevention
- Protection – working with business to support them meeting their legal fire safety protection requirements
- Emergency Response – providing 24/7 999 emergency response services across the county and in support of significant emergencies across the country

## Education attainment in Suffolk

Validated figures published on the Department for Education's website confirm that Suffolk's GCSE progress has for the first time risen above the national average. Suffolk is now ranked in the top half of all authorities for progress at GCSE level, at **55<sup>th</sup> out of 151**. This is a real improvement since 2014 when Suffolk was ranked 119<sup>th</sup> for English progress and 108<sup>th</sup> for maths.

It is important to recognise that the way a school's progress is measured has changed this year nationally. Progress 8 is the Government's new way of measuring GCSE results. It measures how well pupils of all abilities have progressed by comparing them with students who achieved similar levels in Key Stage 2 across the country. More information about the new Progress 8 measure can be found on the Department for Education's website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure>.

Across Suffolk, 60.1% of students achieved the national measure of attaining a grade C or above in English and maths. This is **3% higher than last year** and marks a **6% increase since 2014**. Suffolk students have also closed the gap to the national average state funded schools from 6% in 2014 to just 3% this year. Suffolk continues to be above the national figure of 59.3% for all schools. This is a real sign that Suffolk is making good progress.

We are now into the fifth year of the Raising the Bar programme which aims to improve levels of educational attainment and ensure that every child in Suffolk is able to achieve their full potential. Since the programme began in 2012, there has been a more than 20% rise in Suffolk Schools being judged 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. This rate is currently improving more than twice as fast as those across the country. We will not become complacent and will continue to build on the momentum of the positive results we have seen since the programme started and will continue to ensure that every child and young person in Suffolk reaches their full potential.

## Broadband

The Suffolk Better Broadband Programme continues to progress well, and remains ahead of schedule to deliver over 96% coverage of all Suffolk premises by 2019. Currently, we stand just over 90% coverage (as of February 2017), so nine out of ten Suffolk premises can sign up to superfast broadband, and start benefiting from it. Areas are listed on the Suffolk County Council website.

## **Suffolk Annual Public Health Report 2016**

Director of Public Health released his annual report in January 2017 setting an ambition to improve mental health services in Suffolk over the next 10 years.

Suffolk *Minds Matter: Suffolk Annual Public Health Report 2016* was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board and proposed recommendations for long-term improvement to mental health in Suffolk.

An estimated 1 in 100 people are affected by severe mental ill health in Suffolk and around half of lifelong mental ill health conditions develop before the age of 14.

In the same month that the Prime Minister outlined government commitments to better mental healthcare for young people and the wider population, this new report sets a Suffolk-wide aspiration for improved mental health at all ages.

The independent report, which has been produced in collaboration with a range of partners, lists seven cross-cutting recommendations to promote good mental health and reduce demand in Suffolk over the next five to 10 years:

1. To work to promote mental health and to reduce stigma and discrimination;
2. Promote emotional wellbeing and resilience in communities throughout Suffolk by working to address the social determinants of mental health;
3. Ensure those with physical health needs have good mental health, and that those with mental ill health have equal support to improve their physical health;
4. Promote the mental health of women and ensure children have the best start in life;
5. Ensure the effective recognition and treatment of depression in older people, especially those at increased risk;
6. Work to promote active healthy ageing programmes to delay the onset of dementia at any age;
7. Reduce suicide in Suffolk by 10% over the next five years using the 2012-14 data as our baseline.

**Cllr Gary Green**