

ANNUAL PARISH REPORT 2019/20

Councillor

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Covid-19

Together we are all facing the daunting challenges of Covid-19. The advice and information on coronavirus is constantly changing. For the most up-to-date guidance, please use the following links:

- Latest Government advice: www.gov.uk/coronavirus
- Latest SCC information: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19>
- Suffolk schools guidance: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/schools-guidance/>

If you have any specific queries, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Stay Home. Protect the NHS. Save Lives.

Budget 2020/21

Suffolk County Council's 2020-21 budget was agreed on Thursday 13 February. This included a council tax rise of 3.98%, a £3m "Suffolk 2020 Fund", and a £0.5m Highways Investment Fund.

The council received additional funding compared to previous years, which means that there were no major cuts to services in this year's budget. However, most of the surplus funding was added to the council's reserves rather than invested into services.

Both opposition groups proposed amendments to the budget. Our amendment included additional funding for health visitors, increasing social worker salaries, investment in electric vehicle charging infrastructure and increasing funding to Citizens Advice. These amendments were voted down by the Conservative administration.

Motions from the Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group

My political group proposed three motions to Council in 2019-20:

- Asking Suffolk County Council to acknowledge the UN's report into poverty in the UK and to set up a taskforce to tackle poverty in Suffolk (May 2019);
- Calling on the council to cease any further spending on the Ipswich Northern Bypass and instead spend equivalent funds to commission a study to investigate a zero net carbon transport policy for Ipswich and its surrounding communities (July 2019);
- Reversing the council's decision to cut 35% of Health Visitors (October 2019).

Unfortunately these motions were not agreed by the council.

We also planned to submit a motion in March calling on the council to oppose the development of Sizewell C and retract in-principle support for nuclear power. Given the current situation, the March Council meeting was cancelled and our motion has been postponed. We intend to submit it again at the earliest opportunity once meetings at Suffolk County Council start up again.

New Home to School Transport Policy Implemented

The new school transport policy was implemented in September 2019. Children moving to a new school will only receive free transport from the council if it is their nearest school and more than 2 miles from their homes. Parents of eligible children will need to opt-in for free transport each year, if they wish to continue receiving it.

There were a number of issues with the implementation of the new policy and hundreds of applications for transport were still outstanding at the end of August, leaving families unsure of whether they would be allocated a seat on an SCC school bus in time for the start of the new school year.

Suffolk County Council has since undertaken an internal review of the implementation of the new policy. The report from the review group identified nineteen failings and was discussed by the Scrutiny Committee on 12 February. The Scrutiny Committee has agreed to also review the policy itself, although it is not yet clear when this will happen.

Review of Suffolk County Council Boundaries

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England announced that it would be undertaking a review of the number of councillors on Suffolk County Council and the boundaries for their divisions. The first stage of the review has been completed, with the LGBCE determining that the number of councillors should be reduced from 75 to 70.

For the first stage of the review, the Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group submitted a proposal to keep councillor numbers in Suffolk at a minimum of 75, with the potential for an increase to 80. This was based on the need to ensure proper local representation and encourage diversity amongst councillors, which consequently requires a more manageable workload. The Conservative and Labour Groups submitted a joint proposal asking for a reduction to 70 councillors.

The second stage involved a consultation from October-December 2019, to determine where division boundaries should be. The LGBCE are currently developing draft recommendations based on this consultation. Once these are published, there will be a second consultation before the final recommendations are developed. Under the original timetable, the consultation on draft recommendations will run from 5 May until 13 July 2020 and the final recommendations will be published on 30 September 2020. Given the current situation, it is possible that this will be delayed.

Plans to cut Children's Centres

In July the Cabinet announced plans to close children's centres across Suffolk, reducing the services currently available for families and young children. The public consultation on these plans ran from 10 January to 1 March 2020.

Currently there are 38 Children's Centres in Suffolk, and the council is proposing to convert 16 of them into full-time Family Hubs and 11 into part-time Family Hubs. A Family Hub will provide a range of services for families with children aged 0-19. A further nine centres will be repurposed for nursery or SEND provision, and the remaining two centres will be closed permanently.

The Cabinet was originally due to make a final decision on these closures on 21 April 2020. However, this decision has been delayed due to the current situation and a new date has not yet been announced.

Proposals for Ipswich Northern Bypass brought to a halt

Suffolk County Council, along with the district and borough councils, launched a consultation into the Ipswich Northern Route at the beginning of July 2019. The consultation identified three potential routes for the bypass, which will link the A12 and A14 corridors.

However, in February 2020 the Cabinet at Suffolk County Council voted to not proceed with proposals for the Ipswich Northern Route. This decision followed the withdrawal of support for the Northern Route from a number of district councils, as well as vocal public opposition to the plans.

The Cabinet agreed to set-up a taskforce to look at alternative measures for dealing with transport issues in Ipswich. Tom Hunt (MP for Ipswich) and Dan Poulter (MP for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) will be joint chairs of the taskforce, which will likely also include representatives from the district/borough councils and the business community.

Locality Budget

Locality Budget for Melford Ward includes Long Melford, Glemsford, Hartest, Lawshall, Boxted, groups based in Sudbury area serving these parishes.

Funds have been distributed throughout the year as detailed below;

Carried forward from Previous year	£3,000.20
Committed 2018/2019	£ 800.00
Allocated for 2019/20	£ 8,000.00
Total available budget for 2019/2020	£11,800.20

Date	Beneficiary	Proposal	
11/03/2019	Suffolk Pride	Marketing promotion	£ 200.00
11/03/2020	Holy Trinity Church with St Catherine's	Refurbishment of bells at Holy Trinity	£ 600.00
16/05/2019	Cancer campaign in Suffolk	Cancer educational workshop	£ 350.00
22/05/2019	Somerton Parish Meeting	Lighting for Parish Church	£ 780.00
16/06/2019	Edens project	Garden furniture	£ 500.00
03/06/2019	Somerton Parish Meeting	Repairs to Village Notice Board	£ 150.00
31/05/2019	Melford Library	TV	£ 350.00
31/05/2019	Long Melford Village Hall	Refurbishment of Village Hall	£ 500.00
24/08/2019	Lawshall Parish Council	Repairs to bus shelter	£ 600.00
09/10/2019	Long Melford Cricket Club	Kitchen improvements	£ 1,100.00
20/01/2020	Long Melford Parish Council	Melford in Bloom 2020 & circular walks	£ 1,000.00
20/01/2020	Suffolk Family Carers	Transport and Admin costs	£ 50.00
23/01/2020	Fine not Fine	Children's mental health classes at All Saints Primary School	£ 250.00
14/02/2020	Long Melford Parish Council	Poly-tunnel for Long Melford School	£ 500.00
Commitments			
26/07/2019	Glemsford Playing field	Portaloos for outdoor cinema event	£ 168.00
20/01/2020	Suffolk Family Carers	Transport and Admin costs (still to be paid)	£ 300.00
05/02/2020	The Bridge Project	Support for meals on wheels project	£500.00
10/03/2020	Friends of Long Melford Fete	Entertainment at fete	£ 500.00

Total allocated	£8,398.00
Remaining balance	£3,402.20

As in previous years the locality budget has been used to support many groups and organisations as they offer a diverse range of activities, facilities and services within the communities of Melford Ward.

I am always happy to consider and discuss requests for funding towards costs of events, facilities, equipment or projects, please contact me if you would like further information.

Thank you

As in previous years, I would like to take this opportunity to extend a wholehearted and sincere thank you to all of those marvelous volunteers who offer continued and sustained support, volunteers in the form of groups or individuals of all ages and abilities who contribute to our communities with their dedication and commitment in such a wide variety of ways.

Acts of generosity like those listed above are even more important in these difficult times of Covid-19 and social isolation and I urge you **ALL** to be calm be considerate, be caring, share and look out for each other, help and support each other, be **KIND** to each other, and most importantly of all, **BE SAFE**.

"In a world where you can be anything - Be kind."

Author - Caroline Flack

"Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about; Be kind always"

Author unknown