

January 2016 TJHC

May we take this opportunity to wish you a Happy New Year. Cllr Jones sends her apologies this evening as she is attending another ward meeting.

Financial Overview – 2015/16 and beyond

As you are aware, the Chancellor announced the Autumn Statement and Spending Review 2015 to Parliament in November. Then we received the Provisional Financial Settlement shortly before Christmas.

We are currently examining the figures in detail to work out exactly what the settlement means for Suffolk Coastal. The proposed budget for 2015/16 will then be brought before Cabinet and Scrutiny at the beginning of February, ahead of it being presented to Full Council at the end of that month.

However, at this stage, it looks likely that we will have to increase our portion of the Council Tax – for the first time since 2010.

The reality is that our funding from central Government has already 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 has announced it is planning to remove the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) over the next four years – which will mean a significant cut in our core funding of over £2million by the end of the Parliament.

Like many district councils, for Suffolk Coastal, New Homes Bonus (NHB) also represents an essential part of the council's core income – a fact that the Government itself recognises by including it in Core Spending Power.

Taken together, the RSG exemplifications in the provisional Settlement and the preferred NHB option will see funding from these sources reduce from over £3.6m in 2015/16 to around £500,000 in 2019/20.

Although we knew we were going to face some reduction to our budget, this settlement is worse than we had expected. So it is possible that, like most councils, we will be forced to increase our portion of Council Tax by up to 2% in the next financial year.

While Suffolk Coastal remains committed to continuing to find innovative ways of making savings through increased partnership working and improved efficiency, we need to make sure that we are in a position to protect frontline services, help provide more affordable homes and support economic development in the District.

Suffolk Coastal is already the strongest economy in Suffolk. Our Business Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy for the next four years focus on how we, as a council, can invest in our local communities to enable them to flourish.

Latest Devolution Update

On 7 December, Norfolk and Suffolk's Leaders met to consider the shape of our devolution proposals and decide what more needs to be done before the final version can be sent to Government.

Good progress is being made across all of the work streams, with ongoing support from civil servants.

The leaders also agreed to start a dialogue with colleagues in Cambridgeshire to explore the possibility of closer co-operation with those councils, although work on the Norfolk Suffolk proposals will also continue as planned.

On 9 December, the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill reached its Report stage in the House of Commons. Some new amendments were tabled, including those relating to the role of the Secretary of State. The Government's approach to devolution remains one based on collaboration and consensus, as in the case of the Norfolk and Suffolk proposals.

A Grant Thornton survey of larger businesses in Norfolk and Suffolk showed that over half of respondents support having more local control over infrastructure, economic development and skills:
https://www.suffolkchamber.co.uk/news/chamber_news/over_half_of_norfolk_and_suffolk_businesses_support_devolution_says_new_survey/

The next steps will be to continue to work on our proposals, with a view to completing them in the New Year.

We have also commissioned the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) to run a series of seminars (one in each of the councils participating in the Norfolk and Suffolk devolution bid) to allow all

councillors the opportunity to share their views and ideas on our emerging proposals, in a politically-led environment, as well as ask questions about the proposals.

Waste Collection – Brown Bins

Can you be clear when you are speaking to people that Suffolk Coastal is not planning to charge for collecting organic waste (brown bins).

There does seem to be some confusion in the local community, so we need to make sure people are aware that we have made this decision.

Cabinet did review our arrangements after the County Council cut its financial support (recycling credits) for this service. However, it was decided we will not impose a charge.

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. This will be reviewed annually.

New Headquarters

The buildings which will house our new headquarters, opposite Melton Railway Station, are now really starting to take shape. The external cladding, windows and sedum (green) roofing are now being put in place, so you can get a good idea of how the new HQ will look.

Work is on schedule to be completed during spring next year (2016), ahead of Suffolk Coastal taking over the building to fit it out to our requirements. We should be able to move in during the autumn.

A lot of work is going on internally to engage staff in ensuring the building meets our requirements and, as you will have seen, we are also currently in the process of trying to select a name for the building. If you have any suggestions, please send them to:
accommodation.scdc@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

With reference to the sale of the existing headquarters, we received a very positive response to placing it on the market and are currently in the process of considering the offers on the table to ensure we get the best deal for Suffolk Coastal and the tax payers of this District.

Once we have selected the best option, we will report our recommendation to Full Council, before moving forward with the sale.

Weather Latest

The District has experienced heavy rain, which can/did cause river levels to rise, as the water runs off. For all the latest information on the weather and flood warnings, see:

- <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/map>
- <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings>

Is your business prepared?

East Suffolk businesses are being encouraged to take up support to ensure they are prepared against disruption.

Severe weather is one of the main reasons for business disruption in the UK as well as loss of data and supply chain issues also having significant impact on a business.

The new online toolkit BERT (The Business Efficient Resilience Toolkit) has been launched by the Environment Agency, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils and Groundwork to help businesses across east Suffolk prepare and recover from these types of disruption.

The toolkit aims to help businesses develop and build a resilience action plan and comes with a free support package provided by Groundwork, which includes telephone support, workshops and individual support to coastal businesses in Suffolk and Norfolk.

Following completion of the full check on BERT, Groundwork can provide free telephone & email or on-site support to help the business prioritise its recommended actions and work towards their implementation.

For more information about the toolkit,

visit: www.getbusinessresilient.co.uk

Or contact Groundwork on **01473350370**

or email: suffolkbusinessadvisor@groundwork.org.uk

Environment Agency – planned works Slaughden.

I have already forwarded the information to the Town Clerk but as a reminder the EA are holding a drop in on the 20th January 2016 at the Church Hall 2-6pm for more info please call 03708 506506

SCDC welcomes considerate dog walkers

You may have seen in the paper that Suffolk Coastal is urging all dog walkers to be considerate of others in a popular new community park in South Felixstowe.

Following high levels of complaints of dog fouling and dogs being allowed to wander freely through the childrens' play areas at Martello Park, the council is urging dog owners to clear up after, maintain proper control of their dogs at all times, and to also be on the look out for offenders.

This problems effects some other areas/towns and acts as a reminder to all dog owners.

Not cleaning up immediately after your dog has fouled any relevant public land is an offence under the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996. Offenders can receive a fixed penalty fine of £80, or if convicted of the offence a fine of up to £1,000.

Any litter bin can be used for dog waste. If there are no bins available, dog waste must be taken home and disposed of in your grey-lidded wheeled bin - leaving bagged dog waste behind is a littering offence for which fixed penalties of £80 can be issued.

Carol Poulter said

"I would urge all dog walkers who use and enjoy Martello Park to remember that this is a shared space for the whole community, including families with small children, so it is particularly important that they remember to take sufficient bags and to clean up after their dogs at all times – it is absolutely unacceptable for any dog walker to fail to clear up after their dog has fouled besides children's play equipment.

It is also particularly important that dog walkers keep their dogs under proper control at all times – you may believe that your dog is just playful or boisterous, but unwanted attention by over-friendly dogs can cause distress to others, particularly young children, the elderly and infirm, and other dog walkers with smaller or more nervous dogs. To help reassure other users of the park, we are therefore also asking all dog walkers to keep their dogs on a fixed lead at all times within the area."

Anyone who observes a dog walker failing to clear up after their dog in this, or any other area, and has information that would enable the individual responsible to be identified and contacted, can contact Suffolk Coastal on **01394 444000** in confidence.

Information that may enable an investigation to take place can include the following:

Name of offender if known

Address of offender if known

Address into which offender is seen to enter

Details of vehicle seen to be used by offender

Date, time and specific location of incident.

Other News

Good news for Coastal projects: There was good news for Coastal Community Teams across East Suffolk in December with the announcement that a number of coastal regeneration projects have been awarded development grants to help enhance and improve the area's coastline.

You may remember that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) came to Landguard Fort, Felixstowe, in July to launch the Coastal Revival Fund and appeal for people to bid for up to £50,000 funding to revive heritage assets which are important to their local communities.

The DCLG has revealed that coastal projects at Bawdsey, Felixstowe and Lowestoft have been selected from over 220 applications to receive a share of the £3million Coastal Revival Fund (CRF).

Coastal revival funding will be used to help secure key coastal attractions, public areas and heritage structures along the Suffolk coastline. The Felixstowe Coastal Community Team (CCT), known as Felixstowe Forward, has been awarded £27,900 for the Discover Landguard project at Landguard Fort. The grant will help to further develop this key heritage site.

Managed by the Deben CCT, the Bawdsey Radar project and quay visitors centre has been awarded a total of £45,000. The Lowestoft CCT will receive development grants for the regeneration of both the South Lowestoft seafront and the historic Scores. Both projects have been

awarded £25,000 by the CRF, which will be used to kick-start work to improve and enhance these key tourist areas.

For more information about the work of the East Suffolk CCTs, please visit: www.coastalcommunities.co.uk/coastal-teams/felixstowe
www.coastalcommunities.co.uk/coastal-teams/deben-peninsula
www.coastalcommunities.co.uk/coastal-teams/lowestoft

For details of the wider Coastal Revival Fund announcement, and other recipients of funding, see: www.gov.uk/government/news/iconic-coastal-heritage-sites-set-for-3-million-makeover

I mentioned this last year - Clean for The Queen

Clean for The Queen is a campaign to clear up Britain in time for Her Majesty the Queen's 90th birthday, which will be officially celebrated in June 2016

When she came to the throne litter was not the problem that it is today. Food packaging, plastic bottles, takeaway meals and cigarette butts have all contributed to a growing menace that affects our wildlife, streets, countryside and sense of pride.

What better way could we show our gratitude to Her Majesty than to clean up our country?

The campaign is calling on individuals, volunteer groups, local councils, businesses and schools to do their bit. You can start now and also take part in our Clean for The Queen weekend on 4, 5 & 6 March 2016.

Please encourage people to register their interest and help Clean for The Queen, at: www.cleanforthequeen.co.uk/home/2365

We hope you find the information within the report useful. Despite the challenging times we are in, Cllr Jones and I look forward to working with you all in the coming year.