

## **Annual Parish Report 2020-21**

During this most challenging of years, the LDGI Group have worked hard to continue holding Suffolk County Council's administration to account. We have adapted to the new way of working and the introduction of online council meetings and have been present at every Scrutiny, Cabinet and Full Council, representing the people of our divisions.

During lockdown we lobbied for key residential streets to be shut down to allow people to work and exercise. We called for official objection to Sizewell C and implemented a ground-breaking biodiversity strategy, as well as creating a new database for paid and unpaid carers.

### **Suffolk County Council Budget 2021-22**

The Suffolk County Council Budget was voted through Full Council on February 11<sup>th</sup>. A council tax rise of 3.99% (1.99% basic council tax and 2% Social Care Precept, representing an increase of £53.55 for a Band D property, from £1,343.61 in 2020-21 to £1,397.16 in 2021-22.

### **LDGI Group Budget Amendment**

The LDGI Group submitted a budget amendment to Full Council on February 11<sup>th</sup> alongside the administration's Budget. The key change proposed by the LDGI Group was to authorise the use of the full 3% social care precept, unlocking the maximum available funding without impacting SCC's reserves. This would generate an extra £3.452m for social care at a cost of only £13.41 per year to a Band D household, freeing up general council tax funds to be spent on other projects and investments including:

- £700k for establishing a COVID-19 grant scheme for Suffolk charities and arts & culture venues.
- £500k for a solar energy scheme for Suffolk businesses.
- £500k to re-enable the use of concessionary bus passes on community transport and demand responsive transport across Suffolk.
- £15k for a citizen's assembly on how Suffolk can build back better while recovering from the pandemic.
- £75k to enable community reviews of highways signage in the local area.
- £50k to expand the flood management team to ensure SCC is applying for all flooding grants it is eligible for.
- A demand-scoping exercise on where demand is for bus routes, a priority list for where future routes need to be, and a feasibility study on establishing an SCC-owned bus company to serve rural areas if commercial bus companies cannot.

This budget amendment was unfortunately voted down by the administration.

### **Motions from the Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group**

My Group proposed four motions to Council in 2020-21:

- A call for the Council to publicly oppose EDF Energy's proposed Sizewell C development and retract any 'in principle' support for nuclear power.
- A 20mph scheme to reduce speed limits in all suitable residential areas from 30mph to 20mph, for a price of £4m. Communities would have been able to opt out.
- A biodiversity motion that would implement a new biodiversity strategy.
- A carer's motion that will create a database of both paid and unpaid carers and offer increased support.

The first two motions were rejected, though the Council backtracked on Sizewell C just two months later and now states that they cannot support the build in its current form. The biodiversity motion passed.

### **Biodiversity strategy adopted**

At Full Council on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December, Suffolk County Council unanimously passed a motion that will see Suffolk County Council developing a biodiversity strategy and embracing biodiverse land management practices. The motion was proposed by the LDGI Group and supported by all other groups.

### **LDGI Group motion on carer's database receives unanimous support**

At Full Council on March 18<sup>th</sup> the LDGI Group presented a motion designed to improve the county's support offer for carers. The motion will see the Council working with Suffolk Family Carers to form an opt-in register for paid and unpaid carers, who will be offered increased support including advice, signposting to key services, and the option to be consulted on key policies affecting carers.

### **Suffolk County Council decides to oppose Sizewell C**

The Cabinet at Suffolk County Council agreed on 22 September that they can no longer support EDF Energy's proposals for Sizewell C in their current form. However, the Cabinet maintained their support for the principle of a new nuclear power station in Suffolk.

These concerns will be submitted as Relevant Representations to the Planning Inspectorate.

### **Calls for road closures during lockdown to enable walking & cycling**

The LDGI Group called on Suffolk County Council to close roads that are used by residents to get their daily exercise, to ensure that walkers/cyclists can exercise safely and maintain social distancing.

### **Cabinet approves 5-year cycling plan for Suffolk**

In June 2020 the Cabinet approved a 5-year cycling plan for Suffolk, which identified 148 potential routes to be prioritised. This is as a result of a motion proposed by the LDGI group in July 2018, which called on the council to produce a strategic costed 5-year cycling plan.

### **Climate emergency recommendations published**

In July 2020, the Cabinet approved the recommendations of a cross-party policy development panel outlining how the council should respond to the climate emergency and reduce emissions. This followed a motion from the LDGI group in March 2019, which declared a climate emergency and committed the council to be carbon neutral by 2030.

### **Automatic number plate recognition camera project (ANPR)**

Suffolk County Council is working with the police to run a 2-year ANPR camera trial in speeding hot spots across the county. The cameras will be used to help detect and deter speeding offences that have been highlighted in towns and villages and educate drivers on the importance of road safety.

An ANPR camera will be installed at a site where it has been identified by a local council, with support from their county councillor, that there is a problem with speeding and/or rat-running on roads with a 20 or 30mph speed limit. The devices will be moved between sites and will remain in situ for up to one week per site. There is the option of extending this period if needed.

BUS SERVICE; I have been trying with others to see if we can re-instate some sort of bus service .At the moment the community bus service is restricted due to COVID.

**HIGHWAYS; I HAVE YET AGAIN ASKED THAT ST NICHOLAS CLOSE AND BOTTOM OF RISING SUN HILL IS REPAIRED**

## **MID SUFFOLK**

Again the council has agreed the council tax level,  
The bin service was disrupted due to the weather, and COVID. You will not be charged for any days the brown bin was not collected.

**COST OF KEEPING OLD HQ SAFE;** I have discovered it has cost £300,000 to just keep the old Needham building safe and secure!

**JOHN PEEL CENTRE STOWMARKET;** The council having bought the old Nat West building has agreed a long term lease with the john peel centre so that there can be a entrance form the high **street** and give more space for activities and a café.

**ALL VEHICLES TO BE CONVERTED TO HYDRATED VEGTABLE OIL'** This will include refuse lorries and any other the council uses, as part of it,s bid to be carbon neutral.

**COUNCIL BUYS ANOTHER RETAIL PARK ;** although the government has stopped the borrowing form the public Works Loan Board the council has purchased a business park in **BASINSTOCK** at the cost of £3million

**NEW CAR PARK AT WOOLPIT HEALTH CENTRE.**A deal has been made with the developer to give land to the health centre to improve parking facility, which is overloaded particularly when doing vaccinations sessions

**Cllr Penny Otton**

**County and District Councillor**