



County Councillor Jessica Fleming

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Firstly, thank you everyone for your support this year, please get in touch with your comments, ideas and suggestions which are always most welcome.

The past year has been dominated by the unusual autumn and winter storm events and the council budget. The Revenue Budget for 2024/5 totals £753 million (up £53m from 2023/4), this has been balanced through transfer from the corporate risk reserve, council tax increase and tight budgeting. Our Chief Financial (Section 151) Officer has made it clear that drawdown from reserves will not be possible in future years. Council tax has been raised by the limit of 4.99% of which 2% is ring fenced for social care. Overall the financial position is sound though challenging.

The council conducted a public survey last autumn to assess spending priorities. Comments supported funding (in priority order): Highways & Infrastructure; Children and Young People; Public Health & Communities; and Adult Social Care. Comments tended not to support further council tax increases on lower bands.

The council is responsible for an array of services including Registrars, Coroners, Libraries, Museums and Archives, Asylum Seekers referred by the Home Office, Community Safety, Fire & Rescue Services, Trading Standards as well as Roads, Waste Disposal, Adult Social Care, Childrens Services including Special Needs and Disabilities (SEND), School Transport, Public Health. More information on these services and partner organisations can be found on the web platform www.suffolk.gov.uk

- **Storms and Flooding** – As lead local flood authority, the county council has a duty to investigate ‘significant’ flooding under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act. These investigations help to establish the source of flooding, factors which may have caused or exacerbated the flooding, the impacts on people, services and infrastructure. Usually around 4 Section 19 events occur annually, this year there were at least 100.

The Council has hired (7) new engineers to address urgent flood problems, gathered over 800 flood reports from homes and businesses, and accessed funding from the Government relating to Storm Babet. Work is ongoing.

- **Supporting SEND** – Along with its NHS partners, the council was jointly inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) last November which found significant concerns with the SEND service provided by the NHS and Council. (This was the first joint inspection.) As a result changes have been made, a Shadow Improvement Board set up with membership from both SCC and its NHS partners and a new approach developed that incorporates stronger joint working arrangements. The council has invested additional funds to secure essential specialist staff and is committed to improving all aspects of the service.

- **Bus Service Improvements** – The council will receive £3.6 million of Government funding over the next two years on strengthening and expanding Suffolk’s bus network from the Department for Transport’s Bus Service Improvement Fund Phase 2 to deliver improvements to public transport in Suffolk. Suffolk’s Enhanced Partnership, which represents the county council and local bus operators, has agreed to allocate £1.2 million to support operator - and local community-led proposals for new or enhanced services across the county.
- **Highways Contract** - Milestone Infrastructure, part of M Group Services commenced its new contract on 1 October 2023. Milestone is the Council’s new contract partner for up to 20 years under a contract to provide projects including but not limited to maintaining roads, pavements and rights of way, drainage, hedge trimming, construction of new road schemes, snow-clearing and gritting.
- **Nationally Significant Infrastructure and Large-scale Energy Projects in Suffolk** - Energy developers are bringing forward large-scale energy projects following the latest publication of National Grid's Transmission Entry Capacity (TEC) Register (a list of projects that have secured the right to connect to National Grid’s network if consented 2008 by Government). These connection offers form a legally binding contract with National Grid. The current list shows that new projects connections are possible at Bramford near Ipswich, and at Yaxley, near Eye. Other solar arrays are also emerging with the expectation of grid connection.
- **Norwich to Tilbury Pylon Scheme** - Over the past year this scheme has undergone both non-statutory and now statutory consultation on its plans for onshore transmission of power from offshore wind. The National Grid Electricity System Operator has completed a study to assess options for transmission in East Anglia - The [ESO East Anglia Network Study](#). ESO reports on nine potential options for the Norwich to Tilbury scheme including offshore and hybrid schemes.
- **Sizewell C** - Construction ‘began’ on 15th January 2024 under the terms of its Development Consent Order for the twin 3.2GW nuclear power stations. The council obtained significant improvements to plans during the project’s examination by the Planning Inspectorate, including maximising transport of construction materials by rail and sea rather than by road. For more information refer to [Suffolk County Council’s role in Sizewell C](#) . During construction the council will have a number of responsibilities:
 - Oversight of discharge requirements (equivalent to planning conditions) to maintain control over highways, archaeology and flooding
 - Project governance including chairing the Transport Review Group
 - Administering funding secured through a Deed of Obligation (a legal agreement between Sizewell C, Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council to limit the scheme’s impact on local communities during construction).