

# Parish Report – February 2023

**Councillor: Andy Mellen**

Division: Thedwastre North

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For information on local support during the Cost-of-Living Crisis, visit:

[www.suffolk.gov.uk/CostOfLiving](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/CostOfLiving)

## **Cllr Graham Newman**

Residents may have seen the sad news that Cllr Graham Newman, until recently chairman of Suffolk County Council, passed away recently after a short illness. Cllr Newman was a Conservative Councillor for Felixstowe and served his division since 2005.

## **SCC Financial Budget**

SCC is currently going through the process to approve the budget for 2023/24. At the beginning of January, the Scrutiny Committee examined the proposals in preparation for them to go to Cabinet and then Full Council. The Conservative administration's budget proposes a 3.99% increase in tax, broken down into a 2% rise in the Social Care Precept and a 1.99% increase in the general tax. The Council aim to make most of its savings through transformation schemes, as well as taking savings from ongoing unfilled vacancies amongst the Council's workforce.

Our opposition group have proposed an additional rise of 0.89% to improve services, and have tabled this as a budget amendment – to be discussed at a full council meeting on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> Feb.

## **GLI Budget Amendments – Funding Vital Services**

Our proposal of a 0.89% increase would generate an extra £3.3m of income for the council. For a Band B property this equates to a £9.94 annual rise, or 19p per week..

Currently, SCC is not on track to achieve Net Zero by 2030. Our Group proposes to invest in a Carbon Budget Officer, to help develop a clearer pathway towards Net Zero. In addition, we propose to facilitate a county-wide review into Suffolk's speed limits, in the hope to provide residents with a clearer path to more appropriate travel in their communities.

On the frontline, we will use £1m to actively recruit Occupational Therapists and Social Workers, as well as invest more into Suffolk Libraries to help maintain their necessary services through the cost-of-living crisis. In addition, we would invest £1m in providing wider capacity of community transport to be used to help achieve Net Zero.

## **Carbon Budget – SCC is Not on Track**

At the beginning of January, the Scrutiny Committee met to examine the Carbon Budget. This document attempts to calculate the amount of carbon SCC emits through its services. More importantly, it shows the Council's progress towards achieving Net Zero by 2030.

This year's carbon budget shows that SCC is not on track to reach Net Zero by 2030. Current forecasts show that SCC will still be producing 10,000 tonnes of CO2 in 2030 – that's still half of what we are emitting now.

Our Group believes more needs to be done to improve the accuracy of calculating all of SCC's emissions, which is why we have proposed employing a Carbon Budget Officer to provide a sole focus on improving the reporting of carbon emissions.

### **SCC's Further Investment in Trees & Hedgerows**

SCC are planning to invest £110,000 in managing and inspecting trees and hedgerows. The money will be used to ensure that trees and hedgerows are given the best chance to thrive.

Currently, the Council has planted around 50,000 trees and hedging plants this planting season. This comes as the latest science indicates trees can capture nearly twice the amount of carbon as previously thought. Our Group believes this highlights the greater need to plant more trees, and more importantly how crucial it is to not unnecessarily cut trees down.

For more info, visit: <https://phys.org/news/2022-12-uk-woodlands-carbon-previously.html>

### **A14 Re-surfacing work**

Work by Highways England to replace the concrete road surface on the A14 between Woolpit and Stowmarket was due to start this month, initially with overnight closures to start setting up the contraflow. Last week it was announced that the work programme is postponed and there appears to be some confusion about what is happening. The latest information I have been able to find is that the work is only being pushed back by a few weeks. The whole project is expected to take around 18 months to complete. Further information is available at [www.nationalhighways.co.uk/A14concrete](http://www.nationalhighways.co.uk/A14concrete)

### **Bus work**

As part of ongoing work aiming to restore some of the lost bus services, it has been identified that Vertas (the council's wholly-owned facilities subsidiary) has some vehicles available during the school day, and some work is being done to see if there a service could be provided to villages in the west of the county using this resource.