

District Councillor's Report – Jan 2021

An Update On Covid-19 In Suffolk

Regular bulletins are being produced to give a snapshot of the current Covid-19 situation in Suffolk - along with updates on the work being carried out as part of Suffolk's Local Outbreak Control Plan. You can find the bulletins [via the Suffolk County Council website](#). The good news is that, by my reading of the stats, deaths in Care homes are low and falling. Sadly, deaths in hospital are now higher than during the first peak and should little sign of abating.

Support Payments Available For Those Told To Self-Isolate On Low Incomes

More residents on low incomes or benefits can now get financial help if they are told to self-isolate due to COVID-19 as Suffolk councils extend support payments to help more people.

Previously Test and Trace Support payments could only be given to people meeting certain criteria, including on benefits. Now Councils across Suffolk have extended this, using their discretion, to help those on low incomes but not on benefits.

Councils across Suffolk are helping administer the Government grant scheme to help people remain at home and do their bit to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Details about the Test and Trace Support Payments can be found on District and Borough Council websites and how to apply for it. This is part of a range of measures that councils across Suffolk have introduced to support communities and businesses during the coronavirus pandemic, which includes the new Suffolk Support and Advice Service phonenumber to help those facing financial difficulty.

[Read the full story](#)

Local Restrictions Support Grants for businesses

National lockdown

With the announcement of a National Lockdown commencing on the 5th January, it is clear that many businesses will be impacted. The Council is awaiting detailed

government guidance on the operation of business grant schemes for the National Lockdown. For the latest details please consult:

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/features/our-covid-19-response/businesses/>

Tier 4 Business Grants

Tier 4 restrictions were in place in Suffolk from the 26th December – 4th January. We are still awaiting clarification on business grant schemes for Tier 4 areas, in the meantime, businesses are strongly advised to apply for the LRSG (Open) for the period Suffolk was in Tier 2 (from 2nd December to 25th December), if the business believes it is eligible for it. More details and the necessary application forms are at:

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/features/our-covid-19-response/businesses/>

Councillors To Consider Budget For 2021/22

Councillors are set to discuss the first draft of Mid Suffolk District Council's budget. Recognising the financial challenges that many residents are facing in light of the pandemic, the draft budget includes an increase in council tax of just 1.66% - the equivalent of £2.80 a year (23p a month) for an average Band D property.

The proposals will allow investment to support:

- the recovery and growth of the local economy
- strengthened communities
- better physical and mental health for residents
- building affordable and sustainable homes
- tackling climate change and enhancing biodiversity

The budget is set to be considered by Mid Suffolk cabinet members on Monday 4 January and by Overview and Scrutiny on Monday 18 January. It will then receive further consideration at the next cabinet meeting before going to Full Council in February. If approved, it will come into effect on 1 April.

Mid Suffolk District Council cabinet member for Finance, Cllr John Whitehead said: "This budget has been prepared during one of the most challenging and uncertain times due to the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the council's finances, staff, residents and local economy. The council has played a significant role in responding to the pandemic, supporting businesses and the most vulnerable in our communities, as well as running essential services – and we will continue to play a crucial role in the district's recovery, with our residents continuing to face challenges over coming months and years.

“This will not be without cost – but thanks to consistent leadership and wise management of public funds over many years, our finances remain in a robust position for 2021/22. This means we can keep our share of council tax low, but still deliver our vision to create great communities with bright and healthy futures that everyone is proud to call home.”

Ahead of the budget decision and next year’s council tax bills landing on doormats, residents can check their details and let the council know of any changes 24/7 by signing up for an online account via the website. Through an online account, residents can opt for paperless billing, check their balance, see instalments, update their details and see council tax reduction and housing benefit claim information as well as viewing bills online.

Councils Look To Slash Fleet Emissions

Babergh and Mid Suffolk will consider proposals to cut their fleet’s carbon emissions by up to 90% – supporting the councils’ carbon neutral aims.

Next month, on 4 and 7 January, Cabinets at Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils will consider proposals to move their vehicle fleet to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO).

The proposals form a major step in [the councils’ Carbon Reduction Management Plan](#), which sets out how net zero carbon emissions aim to be achieved by 2030. Currently, the councils’ vehicle fleet represents 26% of the councils’ total CO₂ emissions, approximately 880 tonnes per year. If approved, the move would see a significant reduction in pollutant emissions for the fleet, including up to a 90% reduction in CO₂. It would also support a circular economy, as the HVO fuel is produced from sustainable feedstock, including waste cooking oil.

The fleet includes the councils’ 35 waste lorries, as well as some vehicles used by the public realm and housing services. Moving to the new fuel will initially cost around £50k per council. An estimated further £56 - £97k per year, per council, over the next three years, will also need to be agreed to cover fuel costs. However, by using HVO, lower maintenance costs and longer engine life for the vehicles are expected.

Policing Precept Increase

Suffolk’s Police and Crime Commissioner, Tim Passmore has just published his proposals for the policing element of the council tax precept for the next financial year. He is proposing to increase it by the maximum allowed - £15. Attached below are details of the proposed increase and a short survey asking for your views on it.

[pcc-proposes-more-officers-for-the-county-through-policing-precept](#)

Regards

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