

Suffolk County Council meeting Thursday 11 February 2021, vote taken on the Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group Amendment to the Budget

Amendment to Agenda Item 7 Revenue Budget 2021-22 and Capital Programme 2021-24 – Proposed by Councillor Elfrede Brambley-Crawshaw and seconded by Councillor Penny Otton.

Motion Text:

Our key political priorities:

1. **Supporting the community through COVID-19** – Supporting community groups and charities through the pandemic and the recovery period.
2. **Green income generation** – Creating new income streams through green energy.
3. **Preparing for an uncertain future** – Ensuring that Suffolk is ready for a future of uncertain funding, an increasingly unstable climate, and the need to move towards carbon neutrality.
4. **Improving public transport** – Public transport is a lifeline to many of Suffolk’s rural communities, and will be vital in a greener post-pandemic Suffolk.

Rather than crisis management and short-term planning, the LDGI Group is planning for the future. Our budget amendment is aimed at recovery and improvement following the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as starting Suffolk on the journey to reaching zero carbon by 2030.

The LDGI Group would authorise the use of the full 3% social care precept, unlocking the maximum available funding to provide the full service our customers need without impacting our dwindling reserves. This will generate an extra £3.452m for social care at a cost of only £13.41 per year to a Band D household (less than 26p per week), freeing up general council tax funds to be spent on other vital projects and investments that will better prepare Suffolk for the future.

One-off expenditure

Project	Cost (£'000)
Community municipal bonds scheme	5
Pandemic recovery engagement exercise and citizen’s assembly	15
Set aside for bid preparation for any potential funding to re-establish the Explore Cards scheme for children’s bus passes	50
Electric bike rental scheme	200
Renewable Energy Fund solar scheme	600
COVID-19 grant scheme for Suffolk charities and arts & culture venues	795

Total	1665
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Ongoing expenditure

Project	Cost (£'000)
Project Manager for floods team to assist with grant applications and project delivery	50
Zero emission transport officer	50
Online portal for ongoing reviews of highways signage	75 (costs may decrease in subsequent years)
Increased funding for necessary footpath maintenance	112
Enable the use of concessionary bus passes on community transport and demand responsive transport	500
Total	787

Capital expenditure

Project	Cost (£'000)
Fundamental review of speed limits in Suffolk, with the aim of reducing limits in residential areas. Communities will be able to opt out if they wish.	1000 per annum for four years
Total	1000

Of the proposed £3.452m spend, £1.665m is one-off expenditure, meaning that in 2022-23 there will be £1.665m additional income available for other projects that will not need to be taken from reserves. Once the fundamental review of speed limits is complete in 2024-25, that figure will rise to £2.665m additional income per year.

1. Supporting the community through COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a large impact in Suffolk. 18% of working adults in Suffolk work in sectors directly affected by lockdown, in sectors like accommodation, retail, or food & drink. Since the beginning of the pandemic claimants of Universal Credit have risen by 23,782 or 75%. During lockdown there were more than 51 foodbanks in Suffolk and since March the Free School Meals team have received over applications for over 5000 children.

Following consultation with the Collaborative Communities Board, the LDGI Group will establish the projects below:

- Set aside £15k for a pandemic recovery engagement exercise to source new ideas, engage the community in participative democracy, and make sure Suffolk improves after the pandemic, with greater resilience than we had before. This will include:
 - A non-political citizen's assembly focusing on Suffolk's recovery efforts, with a particular focus on groups disadvantaged by the

- pandemic including BAME people, carers, and people who have lost their jobs. To report findings by the end of 2021.
 - A resident's survey covering the same issues as the citizen's assembly, available online, by post, over the phone, and other accessible formats.
- Following a business case, authorise a one-off use of £0.795m to establish a grant scheme administered by the Collaborative Communities Board to deliver relief to charities and arts & culture venues. Providing small grants of under £10k for keeping venues running will enable more Suffolk businesses and charities to survive the pandemic.

2. Green income generation

To tackle the climate emergency and the continuing uncertainty of local government finances, the LDGI Group will pursue bold and ambitious options for income generation. The green energy sector is an emerging industry capable of generating jobs and income.

Following business cases and feasibility studies, the LDGI Group will establish the following projects, with any profits generated to be invested into further green income generation:

- £0.6m to scale up the current GHI Renewable Energy Fund to fit solar PV onto businesses, and rent them the energy generated. The solar panels would still be owned by SCC. The start-up costs would be recouped over time.
- £0.005m (£5k) for legal costs to establish a community municipal bonds scheme in partnership with Abundance. This creates a source of funding at a lower interest rate than the PWLB. Abundance is paid an initial 'set up' fee drawn from the funds gathered from investors, and an ongoing 'agency fee' again paid by investors, meaning that the local authority has almost no costs outside of paying back the investors after the term ends. The funds generated through the municipal bonds scheme will only be used for green energy projects.
- £0.2m for a hybrid electric bike rental scheme for Ipswich & Lowestoft. Following a business case, the most commercially viable option from the below would be selected:
 - *Delivered by private sector:* A pilot scheme delivered through a partner organisation such as Beryl, who would provide roughly 132 bikes and 33 e-bikes and retain the profits.
 - *Self delivered:* Run by SCC itself, the bike scheme would have a 5-year lifespan and provide roughly 100 e-bikes. Rental income generated would be spent on repair and replacement and the bikes would be sold at the end of the scheme.
 - *Delivered by the Big Issue:* Run through the Big Issue's newly launched Sharebike UK scheme, which does not charge councils and

puts profits towards creating jobs for its street vendors in the bike workshop. This option would be cost neutral.

3. Preparing for an uncertain future

The LDGI Group will take the following steps to ensure that Suffolk is ready for a changing future:

- Following a business case and feasibility study, establish an insulation equivalent for Solar Together Suffolk for group purchases of insulation. This scheme would be self-funded and administered by GHI staff. All of Suffolk's buildings, including homes, schools, and businesses, must be better insulated in order to achieve carbon neutrality. Well-insulated homes can save lives, especially during a pandemic when people must remain at home.
- Support Suffolk New College to develop and progress their sustainable construction learning route, which will include a training scheme for air source heat pump installers and insulation installers. This could include applying for joint funding or working together to reach out to schools.
- £0.05m per year for a Project Manager for the floods team to assist with grant applications and project delivery for large flood management projects. This would increase the team's capacity by a third and generate an increased income in funding. Expanding the flood management team will ensure Suffolk is sufficiently protected from an increasingly uncertain climate.
- Following a business case and feasibility study, undertake a fundamental review of speed limits in Suffolk, with the aim of reducing limits in residential areas. Spend £1m every year for four years to lower speeds, which will lower emissions, encourage walking and cycling, and increase road safety. Communities will be able to opt out if they wish.
- Set aside £0.075m (£1000 per division) for ongoing reviews of highways signage. An online portal would be developed, enabling local communities to participate in ongoing reviews of the highways signage and recommend signs for removal or replacement.
- £0.112m for necessary footpath maintenance, supporting people's mental and physical health and wellbeing across Suffolk, as well as reducing car use. Footpath usage has increased sharply during the pandemic, and more funds will be needed to maintain the high standard of Suffolk's footpaths.

4. Improving public transport

The LDGI Group will commit to improving Suffolk's public transport network, ensuring that rural communities and vulnerable people can stay connected, and that Suffolk is prepared for our target of carbon neutrality by 2030. Projects will include:

- Set aside £0.05m to prepare a bid for Government funding should it become available to re-establish the Explore Cards scheme, in which every school child is automatically sent a bus travel card, entitling them to half price travel.

- £0.5m to enable people to use their concessionary bus passes on community transport and demand responsive transport, which was removed from most of Suffolk in 2019.
- £0.05m for a zero emission transport officer, to complete the following projects:
 - Scope out where demand is for bus routes and a priority list for where future routes need to be, with cost estimates based on electric.
 - Run a feasibility study on establishing our own bus company to serve rural areas if commercial bus companies cannot.
 - Establish a plan for zero-emission transport infrastructure in Suffolk, including electric buses, focused around where the housing growth is.
 - Help drive the shift from car use to buses, walking and cycling, including creating milestones and targets in order to reach 25% reduction in car use by 2030, as recommended by the Suffolk Climate Partnership.

Total results	
For	13
Against	46
Abstain	9

Conservative Group

Councillor's Name	For	Against	Abstain
Mark Bee		Against	
Peter Beer		Against	
Stuart Bird		Against	
Stephen Burroughes			
Louis Busuttil		Against	
Jenny Ceresa		Against	
Chris Chambers		Against	
Andy Drummond		Against	
Mary Evans		Against	
Robert Everitt		Against	
James Finch		Against	
Jessica Fleming		Against	
Quillon Fox			
Mick Fraser		Against	
David Goldsmith		Against	
Tony Goldson		Against	
Nick Gowrley		Against	
Gary Green		Against	
Matthew Hicks		Against	
Rachel Hood		Against	
Beccy Hopfensperger		Against	
Christopher Hudson		Against	
Gordon Jones		Against	

Michael Ladd		Against	
Stuart Lawson		Against	
Guy McGregor		Against	
David Nettleton		Against	
Graham Newman		Against	
Alexander Nicoll		Against	
Colin Noble			
Kay Oakes		Against	
Patricia O'Brien			
Russ Rainger		Against	
James Reeder		Against	
Andrew Reid		Against	
David Ritchie		Against	
Craig Rivett		Against	
David Roach		Against	
Keith Robinson		Against	
Richard Rout		Against	
Richard Smith MVO		Against	
Karen Soons		Against	
Colin Spence		Against	
Joanna Spicer		Against	
Jamie Starling		Against	
Melanie Vigo di Gallidoro		Against	
Paul West		Against	
Robert Whiting		Against	
Steve Wiles		Against	

Labour Group

Councillor's Name	For	Against	Abstain
Jack Abbott			Abstain
Sarah Adams			Abstain
Helen Armitage			
Kathy Bole			
Kim Clements	For		
Sandra Gage			Abstain
Peter Gardiner			Abstain
Mandy Gaylard			Abstain
Jack Owen			Abstain
Keith Patience			Abstain
Bill Quinton			Abstain

Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Group

Councillor's Name	For	Against	Abstain
Trevor Beckwith			Abstain
Elfrede Brambley-Crawshaw	For		
John Field	For		
Paula Fox	For		

Richard Kemp	For		
Robert Lindsay	For		
Inga Lockington	For		
Victor Lukaniuk	For		
Penny Otton	For		
Caroline Page	For		
Andrew Stringer	For		
David Wood	For		

Independent

Councillor's Name	For	Against	Abstain
Steve Ardley	For		
Jane Storey		Against	