

**County Councillor Lisa Chambers  
Newmarket & Red Lodge Division  
Town and Parish Council report  
March 2015**

- **SCC freezes council tax for fifth year in a row**

SCC's share of council tax is to be frozen for a fifth year in a row. This means that Suffolk residents will not pay any more than they did in 2010/11.

The council has successfully delivered savings in excess of £130m over the last four years. However, with the government's deficit reduction programme set to continue until at least 2018/19, there is a forecast of a further £120m budget shortfall that will need to be addressed over the next three years. The council tax freeze was agreed as part of the budget proposals for 2015/16, which include savings of £38.2million, to be made across services delivered by the council during the financial year 2015/16. The bulk of these savings (£24.6m) will be delivered through wide-ranging transformation programmes which will result in the council becoming a leaner and more focused organisation. The remaining savings will be made by reducing previous contingency budgets, set aside for major projects and change management as well as making other budgetary savings from within service areas. Meanwhile, over the last five years, there has been a reduction of around 47% in workforce numbers across council services.

Everything the county council does is built on a bedrock of strong financial management. The best way we have help people across Suffolk is by managing resources as carefully as possible and keeping council tax down.

- **Changes to children's centres get green light**

Children's centre services in nine areas across Suffolk will be made more accessible for those most in need.

A review of children's centres in Suffolk, including a wide-ranging public consultation, was concluded earlier this year. It recommended that services in nine children's centres be moved from their existing locations to different settings, either using other local community facilities or neighbouring children's centres. There would also be additional outreach work included, to ensure that our excellent children's centre services really get to those most in need of them. At the same time, the changes would allow the council to dispense with buildings that were either too expensive or not fit for purpose and so save money for the Suffolk tax payer. The decision, which was confirmed at a meeting of SCC's cabinet last month, will save up to £265,000,

thus putting the services on a more sustainable footing. The nine centres affected are at: Brett River, Hadleigh; Jigsaw, Thurston; Meredith, Ipswich; On Track, Haverhill; Quayside, Ipswich; Reydon and Southwold, Reydon; Roman Hill, Lowestoft; Sea Breeze, Felixstowe; and Woodlands, Glemsford.

As Gordon Jones, SCC's cabinet member for children's services, said: "This decision will allow us to deliver more services for the community, from more locations. The needs of children and their families have changed over time and we must continue to develop our services accordingly."

We strongly support the values inherent in the Sure Start programme and want to do all we can to ensure that our excellent children's centre services reach those most in need. These changes to services in nine locations will do just that: enabling us to put these much-valued services on a more sustainable and accessible footing for the future.

- **SCC backs proposal for joint depot, transfer station and household waste site**

SCC has been working in partnership with St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council to develop a joint waste-transfer site, council depot and household waste recycling centre.

The favoured option is to create a West Suffolk Operational Hub (WSOH) for all these important services on land at Hollow Road Farm in Bury St Edmunds. An alternative option is to use land at Rougham Hill for a waste transfer station if the preferred option is not successful. At its meeting last month, SCC's cabinet offered its full support to the proposal to develop a WSOH at Hollow Road Farm and will now consult local people, alongside the two councils in the west of the county, prior to the start of any planning process. The Hollow Road Farm proposal presents the opportunity for all three local authorities to develop services in the same location, saving money for local tax payers. A joint approach will also free up the sites currently used to deliver depot, waste and recycling services, for future commercial development in the area. Consultation on the potential WSOH takes place between Friday 6th March and Monday 6th April 2015. Information is available through the Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Councils' website at [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/wsoh](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/wsoh). Comments and questions can also be emailed to [wsoh@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:wsoh@westsuffolk.gov.uk). During the consultation, a public drop-in session will take place on Monday 16 March 2015 from 3pm until 8 pm at Great Barton Village Hall, Elms Close, Great Barton, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 2NR.

We are committed to working with our fellow councils in Suffolk to provide a more joined-up approach to service provision and so get a better deal for Suffolk's residents. This project is one example we are currently seeking to develop. But, as ever, it is vital we hear the public's views on these proposals, and would urge anyone who is interested to have their say.

- **Applications invited for the Leading Lives Benefit Fund**

Applications are currently being encouraged for the Leading Lives Community Benefit Fund for 2015.

Leading Lives is a Suffolk-based social enterprise, formerly part of SCC, which provides support for a wide range of people. This year, they are awarding grants of between £1,000 and £5,000 to Suffolk-based charities and community groups who support people with learning disabilities, older people with dementia, people with autism, young people in transition and family carers. This year's fund has been doubled in value to £30,000 to enable larger grants to be awarded and more projects to be supported. The fund has been set up to further Leading Lives overall vision to enable vulnerable people to lead the life they choose. The fund will support projects that allow vulnerable people to live more independently, to gain new skills, to stay safe and to participate in the life of their communities. Criteria for funding and an application can be found on our website [www.leadinglives.org.uk](http://www.leadinglives.org.uk) Please share this information with organisations and individuals who you believe may be interested in applying.

Leading Lives is an excellent enterprise, and one that has gone from strength to strength since moving outside SCC. Their benefit fund is an excellent initiative and one that will provide a great deal of help to many people in Suffolk.

- **Have your say: County-wide adult autism survey launched**

SCC's autism survey has been launched as part of the council's commitment to empowering adults in Suffolk to live independent, healthy and fulfilled lives.

The survey can be completed by adults with autism themselves, their carers, or, of course, together. Responses will help the county council learn more about what is important for people living in Suffolk with autism and help to ensure there are innovative and accessible local community-led support networks available.

As Alan Murray, cabinet member for health and adult care, said: "We would like to hear about experiences in accessing local services and through this raise awareness of the voluntary community support groups in place that will help those affected by autism to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. Responses to the survey will help to identify new and exciting ways that will inspire Suffolk people to work together and support each other to build 'autism friendly communities.'"

The survey can be found on-line at [www.surveymonkey.com/s/adultautismsuffolk](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/adultautismsuffolk) If a paper copy of the survey is required please contact: Steven Emmerson on 01473 265350, or [emailsteven.emmerson@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:emailsteven.emmerson@suffolk.gov.uk).

We are committed to supporting adults with autism and helping them to lead normal lives. That's why we want to hear from them. The more we learn from

those with autism and those who support them, the more we can help find ways to help them, and enhance the opportunities available to them and their carers.