

Parish Report - December 2019

Councillor
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Please note: I will be away visiting my daughter in New Zealand from 27 December – 11 February but will still be contactable by email and in an emergency by my mobile (07889389443).

Impact of general election moratorium

The election moratorium started on 6 November, and consequently a number of decisions and meetings at Suffolk County Council have been delayed.

The 2020/21 budget proposals would normally have been scrutinised in early December, but this has now been postponed to a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 7 January. Following this, the budget proposals will go to Cabinet on 28 January and finally to Council on 13 February.

The Council is unable to launch consultations during the moratorium, so the long-awaited children's centre consultation will need to wait until the new year. We still don't have any information about when exactly this consultation will be ready. Similarly, the council will not be able to publish the first draft of the Ipswich Northern Bypass business case until after the election.

Finally, the Council has made the decision to postpone any meetings of the Climate Emergency Policy Development Panel until the new year.

2019/20 budget monitoring – quarter 2 report

Based on Quarter 1 spending, it was forecast that the Base Budget would be overspent by £1.3m (0.2%). At Quarter 2, it is now expected to only be overspent by £0.2m (0.04%).

The expected overspend on the Dedicated Schools Grant budget has also reduced, from £6.7m at Quarter 1 to £6.3m at Quarter 2.

The main areas of budget pressure are still within Adult and Community Services, Children and Young People, and Growth, Highways and Infrastructure.

Adult and Community Services

ACS is forecast to overspend by £0.7m against its 2019-20 Revenue Budget of £242.6m – a reduction of £0.4m from the projected £1.1m overspend reported at Q1. This change reflects a £0.3m improvement in the position for Care Purchasing and a £0.4m increase in the underspend

for area social work teams. It is offset by a £0.3m increase in forecast spend in various other areas of ACS primarily within the Emergency Duty Service.

Children and Young People

CYP is forecasting an overspend of £0.5m against Base Budget (reduction of £0.6m since Q1), and an overspend of £6.3m on budgets funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant (reduction of £0.4m since Q1).

The Home-to-School Transport budget forecast has increased from Quarter 1 to show an overspend of £1.2m. This increase of £0.4m is due to costs associated with additional temporary staff, and the potential implications nationally of a legal case currently ongoing between a complainant and North Yorkshire County Council regarding the ability to sell surplus seats on buses which are not compliant with Public Services Vehicle Accessibility Regulations.

Growth, Highways and Infrastructure

GHI is forecasting an overspend of £1.7m, equating to 3.7% of the net budget. This is an increase of £0.1m from the position at Q1.

The overspend is still mostly within Operational Highways, due to an overspend within the street lighting budget.

Plans for civil parking enforcement across Suffolk

Civil parking enforcement is expected to be rolled out across Suffolk from 31 January 2020. Currently Ipswich Borough Council is already responsible for parking enforcement, however across the rest of the county it is the police who are responsible.

Under the new plans, West Suffolk Council and East Suffolk Council will take on the responsibility of parking enforcement in their own areas. IBC and WSC will also cover the Mid-Suffolk and Babergh area on an agreed operational split: WSC will operate in the northern two-thirds of Mid Suffolk and the western half of Babergh, and IBC will operate in the remaining areas.

A consistent approach is being planned, to ensure that fines are the same across the whole county

Rights of Way Improvement Plan published

Suffolk County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2020-30) was agreed by the Cabinet on 6 November.

The delivery plan focuses on four key areas: managing green access infrastructure; improving green access infrastructure; promoting green access; and developing healthy and sustainable communities.

Measures proposed by the plan include creating a digital map of the county's footpaths and bridleways and a new system to prioritise maintenance of highly-used routes. The plan also focuses on sustainable travel choices and the health benefits of walking and cycling.