

Suffolk County Councillor Report – Robert Lindsay

Motion on Local Government Funding

Following massive budget cuts by the county in February, my political group – Green, LibDem and independent – is proposing a motion to full council next week that will note that the government’s autumn spending statement last year failed to address the needs of local authorities and their residents. It asks the council to urge the next government to put in place proper long-term funding for local government and, as a matter of urgency close the £4billion funding gap (over next two years) for councils in England. One in five English local authorities are in danger of issuing a Section 114 notice this year or next, (effective bankruptcy) and half of English councils are not confident that they have the money to fulfil their legal duties next year.

While Suffolk itself is not thought to be in imminent danger of a Section 114, its budget in February proposed taking heavily from reserves to meet the funding gap. Officers warned in the paperwork that some of the cuts meant services could well suffer – particularly for people not in education or employment.

District Council Report – Leigh Jamieson

Swimming Pool Funding

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have both been awarded funding to help ease financial pressures and reduce the carbon footprint of the districts’ swimming pools. The successful bids for Sport England Phase Two Swimming Pool Grants funding will enable and Hadleigh Pool & Leisure to install important equipment over the coming months.

In total, Hadleigh Pool & Leisure received £103,500, with the funding also going toward pool covers as well as the replacement of fluorescent lighting with LED lighting.

Funding Boost

Twenty town and parish councils across Babergh are set to receive more than £677K in developer contributions to help community infrastructure keep pace with housing growth.

The latest bid round for communities wishing to benefit from future CIL funding is now open until Friday 31 May. Successful bids will receive their funding decision in Autumn 2024, subject to approval by Cabinet.

Compost giveaway.

Babergh gave away free compost on a first come first serve basis in Morrisons car park last Sunday. The Council timed the free giveaways to coincide with International Compost Awareness Week (5-11 May):

In June, an additional loose compost event takes place in Stowmarket.

Councils Property Arm

Babergh and Mid Suffolk’s commercial property investment company, CIFCO, continues to generate money for the districts with more than £1.26m in net income raised last year.

This means that since establishing CIFCO Capital Ltd it has generated a net income of more than £12m for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils.

During previous administrations, the councils borrowed a total of £99.2m to invest in commercial property. This now comprises of twenty-two properties with eighty-three tenants based, mainly, in the eastern region split across industrial, retail and office sectors to balance risk.

The cost of the loan repayments to the councils is covered by income received from CIFCO, with further net income on top making a regular and significant contribution to the councils’ finances.

Car Parking Charges

Overview and scrutiny committee returned the decision on charging to the cabinet asking them to look into the possibility of including a free hour’s parking. The decision, which will then be final, comes up in the June meeting.