

## **Proposed Green and Liberal Democrat Group budget amendment for Mid Suffolk District Council's 2023/25 Budget**

### **Background:**

The last year has seen a huge amount of turmoil in world affairs. The illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the ongoing conflict have had knock-on effects around the world, causing steep rises in the price of energy and food. These price shocks have hit everyone, and have impacted ordinary families here, who have seen the price of basic staple foods go up by 16.9%<sup>1</sup> over the past year. Energy costs have also shot up dramatically, and whilst the government has put in place a generous and substantial support scheme for households and businesses, even with this support the price of keeping people warm has risen markedly over the past year. We are also approaching a “cliff-edge” where the current energy price limit will go up again<sup>2</sup>.

Alongside this is the looming problem of climate change. In July 2022 the temperature in the UK passed 40 °C for the first time, but this was not an isolated event: Around the world, many countries experienced extreme heatwaves, drought and wildfires. Average temperatures are rising faster than predicted by the IPCC models, and scientists forecast continuing climate instability. It is increasingly urgent that carbon emissions are reduced to stave off the worst climate change scenarios. Mid Suffolk is not immune from the impacts of a changing climate, and our residents will inevitably be affected. The UK has made a legally binding commitment to reduce our climate emissions to zero by 2050, and locally the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan has also set an ambitious target for the county's emissions. This council has also declared a climate emergency in 2019 and has made good progress on reducing its own emissions.

One way to address both the cost of living crisis and climate emissions is to invest in energy-saving measures. Energy conservation, i.e. reducing energy use at source, has the potential to provide multiple benefits: Reduced costs for the householder as well as lower requirement for energy production and hence lower emissions. It is the classic “two-birds-with-one stone” measure. Whilst central government has put in place various schemes to support and encourage home energy-saving measures over the years, there has not been sustained and consistent support. There are currently various funding pots available but local authorities have to bid for these, and then have tight deadlines to spend the funding. No current country-wide scheme is in place. The Warm Homes Suffolk scheme is excellent – but current funding limits its scope. Mid Suffolk had an effective scheme to provide subsidised insulation about 15 years ago.

We therefore believe that funds from Mid Suffolk should be used to address the problems detailed above. Actions could include, but would not be limited to, improving home insulation and other energy-saving measures – identifying and investing in measures that will best support our residents in the most sustainable way.

### **Proposed amendment:**

**That council ring-fences £2 million from the Strategic Transformation and Infrastructure Reserve and other unspent reserves such as the Strategic Priorities – Housing Reserve to tackle the energy, cost of living and climate crises in Mid Suffolk**

**Proposer: Councillor Andrew Mellen; Seconder: Councillor Rachel Eburne**

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<sup>1</sup> Figures from the ONS, published 18 Jan 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Ofgem energy price cap will be reviewed, new rate to come into effect on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023