



COUNCIL

Wednesday, 24 March 2021

CABINET MEMBERS' REPORT AND OUTSIDE BODIES REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT TO COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To receive the Cabinet Members' Report and the Outside Bodies Representatives' Report to Council, for information.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
Wards Affected:	All Wards in East Suffolk
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Steve Gallant Leader of the Council

CABINET MEMBERS' REPORTS TO COUNCIL

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Mary Rudd, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health
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Port Health - on the front line of EU Exit

The UK's first steps as an independent nation outside of the EU started properly on 1st January 2021. For our port health service that regulates imported food entering Felixstowe and Harwich from around the world, this also marks the beginning of a new chapter for them; one where the effects of EU Exit are starting to be felt as checks on EU goods are needed for the first time.

Meanwhile, the UK government, the EU and our fellow regulators from the other major ports are watching with interest, how we respond.

And while we prepare, our existing 'rest of world' import checks must continue.

About us

Felixstowe port is the UK's largest container port and our very own Suffolk Coastal Port Health Authority (SCPHA) is our renowned expert team that is proud to regulate imported food arriving here and at Harwich. The team comprises 81 people and we expect to add another 60 when switching on our new 24/7 service in the coming months.

This incoming food supplies manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers throughout the UK and further afield. In carrying out their statutory responsibilities, the team protects consumers from unsafe or substandard products whilst supporting the many compliant and competent businesses which make their living elsewhere in the system; the producers, farmers, growers and logistics companies, to name but a few.

This briefing note aims to highlight the work of SCPHA at the very moment when the impact of EU Exit is starting to be felt, literally on the front line.

Seamless continuation of trade

In most aspects of our everyday lives we probably won't start to notice the impact of EU Exit until Covid-19 restrictions are eased and we re-commence normal life once more. Changes to passport control at the airport or perhaps price fluctuations for goods and services are the examples that we hear most about, when it comes to our future relationship with the EU.

Even though the UK has left the EU, many of the EU regulations which have protected us and supported legitimate businesses continue to be applied to food imports for the time being, until the UK Parliament decides otherwise and modifies them as it sees fit. This is to ensure a seamless continuation of trade.

EU Exit and the impact on our workload

While the UK was part of the EU, the free movement of goods afforded to all member states meant that SCPHA would never inspect goods of EU origin, just as the EU would never inspect UK exports to the EU. However, now that the UK is no longer part of the EU, we are required to start checking some types of EU imported food and likewise, the EU is starting to check our exports to it.

In recent years, SCPHA has been handling 80,000 enquiries a year and carrying out all the required checks on 30,000 consignments of food. These statistics would not have included food products from any of the 27 member states of the EU. These numbers are therefore set to increase significantly – latest estimates suggest a doubling of workload across Felixstowe and Harwich.

Happily, the checks on EU goods are allowed to be introduced incrementally, during January and October 2021 and then January 2022, by which time we will be treating EU goods in exactly the same way as ‘rest of world’ goods, even though the nature of the EU trade, the modes of transport used and some of the operational challenges will always be different.

But we no longer have access to the IT systems that we used as members of the EU and we’re adjusting to a UK system instead. We remain close to our central government departments for instruction and guidance (DEFRA, the Food Standards Agency and the Marine Management Organisation) and we work hard to translate their policy into delivery, often at short notice. The professional networks we have with the port health authorities at the other major seaports and airports are very helpful to us at key moments!

Incremental changes for EU origin foodstuffs

From April, pre-notification of EU products will commence (whereby importers are obliged to notify us of their imminent imports) along with documentary checks starting on animal products. July will see full identity and physical checks on percentages of EU products of animal origin and possibly non-animal too. This means the emptying of shipping containers, unloading boxes, opening vacuum packs and tins, weighing, cooking, sniffing and even eating produce to be sure that it’s safe. All of the checks are recorded using our award-winning PHILIS software, photos are taken for our records and samples sent to the analyst. These checks are carried out in especially designed workrooms, some of which operate at controlled temperatures too.

Problematic consignments are taken out of the food chain, either temporarily for re-processing or while awaiting further information, or they might be destroyed or re-exported depending on the severity of the problem.

All of these types of checks already happen for produce arriving from ‘rest of world’ countries. We expect to be involved in some operational testing of our readiness for EU imports along with all the parties involved in the new regime, e.g. traders, ferry operators, ports, regulatory bodies, policy makers etc.

Recruiting to deliver

Increased workload brings with it additional income from importers and from DEFRA directly (as reported to Full Council in November 2020). With this, we plan to expand our service to deliver a new operating model for EU trade whilst continuing to manage the ever-changing trade from ‘rest of world’ goods. Recruitment of Port Health Support Officers, IT experts, Official Veterinarians, Port Health Officers and managers goes on at pace and we are expertly supported by our HR business

partner in being able to recruit to the 60 posts that we need to fill.

The UK is experiencing a national shortage of some of the professionals that we're seeking (perhaps predictably), but changes to qualification and competency requirements mean that we're in a good place to 'grow our own' talent whilst retaining our most experienced officers to take the key decisions on the fate of consignments.

A bright future

Our expert teams of professional, technical, IT, administrative and management colleagues have continued to deliver SCPHA's existing imported food responsibilities to the rest of the world, throughout Covid-19 restrictions and the evolving shape of EU Exit, through the transition period of 2020 and now into 2021.

This week's Freeport announcement (Felixstowe and Harwich being one of the eight areas just announced) is potentially great news for economic development and regeneration and could theoretically generate further workload.

Our port health colleagues elsewhere in the UK that are currently expanding their existing service or starting from scratch, have often asked us to help with their preparations and training, which we are keen to do when we are able to.

Our PHILIS system (Port Health Interactive Live Information System) is incredibly successful and communicates with other on-port software to allow us to carry out our statutory roles as swiftly as possible, which of course is a key consideration for the trade. We currently sell it to all the major ports and offer customer support too.

Our website (www.porthealth.eu) continues to be the envy of other port health authorities who themselves subscribe to it for helpful updates and our technical leads support smaller and emerging ports via a national forum where we give our time to support the national picture.

Suffolk Coastal Port Health Authority is part of East Suffolk Council but is also a separate legal entity with the responsibilities of a port health authority. This means that SCPHA delivers the legal responsibilities of East Suffolk Council in an area of the district known as the port health district, which means much of the Haven Peninsula.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor James Mallinder, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment
Contact Details:	james.mallinder@eastsoffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07810 815879

Earlier this month we launched our Pardon the Weeds we are Feeding the Bees campaign.

This year it is bigger and better, with over 100 sites across East Suffolk. This sustainable management of our land really has a big impact on supporting insects and particular pollinators but also engages with our residents.

After a full review of our use of herbicides I am pleased to announce we have reduced our spraying by over 45% and we are now piloting alternative weed control - starting with Foam.

As part of our Nature First theme through 2021, we continue to roll out sustainable management of our graveyards. Old graves of 100 + years have limited cutting to allow wildlife to flourish and as last year's evidence illustrated these areas become a pocket nature reserve often in the heart of our towns. The Greenprint conference took place over Zoom with residents and stakeholders from across East Suffolk participating.

We discussed how we should not only focus resources on reducing our carbon footprint but to also support and preserve our ecology.

Special thanks as always to Daniel Wareing who puts considerable time into organising these events.

Much has been in the news about litter and fly tipping and I continue to communicate to our residents through newspaper articles and social media the correct way to deal with our waste – Education as one of our main tools in dealing with this issue. This month a full review of bin provisions has taken place with town councils at our seaside and market towns. This will include additional bins, increase in frequency of collections and general housekeeping across our public spaces to make sure we are 'clean, smart and tidy' ready to welcome our visitors.

I attended the AONB Suffolk Coast and Heaths steering committee where we discussed the ongoing engagement and influence on major developments on AONB designated land and response to planning applications.

The AONB landscape is fragile and sensitive to changes in development especially where this increases human impact, and we all feel this should have greater significance in all aspects of local and national policy formation.

I sit on the communication committee and I am pleased to confirm we have now a strong agenda of upgrading our social media, and a clear focus on reaching out to our major stakeholders to reconfirm the principles and purpose of the AONB. With ambitions to be more relevant for residents and visitors alike. Do check our social media for further details.

Through my involvement with chairing Suffolk Waste Partnership and with partnership working with Food Savvy we launched a campaign covering 'what we have learnt from the lockdown' i.e., in cooking better and wasting less food. Details can be found here:

<https://www.foodsavvy.org.uk/foodsavvy-unlocked>

And we are supporting the Keep Britain Tidy Nappy campaign to remind residents nappies should always be put in the black bin and not in the recycling bin. In Suffolk approximately 3,000 disposable nappies need to be removed from the recycling every day, this is 150 tonnes of nappies a year. As recycling contamination is currently around 17%, we are focusing on the main areas of contamination through the year. Nappies, food waste and glass bottles.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Stephen Burroughes – Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customer Services and Operational Partnerships
Contact Details:	stephen.burroughes@eastsoffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07783 357940

Customer Services

The CS team continue to deliver and provide superb service under this third period of lockdown. Not easy especially with some having to juggle home schooling as well. Clearly, we have a very dedicated and capable crew and my thanks go to them for doing a great job!

The Customer Feedback Policy has been refreshed and is now 'live', there is a greater focus on feedback on both compliments and comments as well as complaints. Together with the 'Contact us' approach which also went live last month (new e-form reporting system) this will help capture feedback and lessons learned; this data which will be embedded at all levels in respect of continuous improvement; a massive effort by the CE team!

The Customer Performance Framework is in the final stages of development and is planned to go live this month. All aspects of CSA call handling will now be monitored (structure, technical, soft skills) – to help train and improve performance and deliver better customer satisfaction. This is a massive step forward in respect of addressing training needs and improving customer service delivery.

The teams are now entering their busiest period dealing with contacts about garden waste renewal, council tax and county and PCC elections going ahead on 6th May. Our teams also continue to support our partners and broader initiatives such as:

- HBNA
- Social isolation payments
- Making outbound calls to CEV residents (part of communities team project), NHS vaccination calls for James Paget and L.I.F.T

As this month is census month the teams have also been supporting residents to complete the census (a national programme) which is a legal requirement on or from 21st March.

Operational Partnerships

Regular quarterly board meetings continue to take place with our major commercial partners, East Suffolk Norse and Places Leisure.

Norse met the challenge of the severe cold snap we had recently and although bin collections were suspended for a week due to difficult surface conditions and to keep crews safe, the service has now caught up and is delivering the high-quality service we expect. Covid has had an impact of turnover during the last 12 months which is not surprising, but the new season should provide some bounce back.

Places Leisure continue to manage and monitor our assets in the south of the district, clearly with lockdown and the Covid restrictions all centres are currently closed which has clearly had an impact

on income streams but from 12 April some limited services can be resumed. We are in the process of setting up our first board meeting with our new provider Everyone Active who will be running our leisure facilities in the north of the district and who are settling in well. The next few years look to be exciting and everyone will be wanting to get back to getting fit and active when all restrictions are lifted in June.

ICT & Digital Transformation

The smart towns project continues to take shape with the new tender to support the rollout and installation being awarded to Proximity Futures who is our Framlingham pilot provider. Proximity Futures have an excellent track record of successfully installing Wifi and footfall monitoring technologies into towns across the UK.

The pilot digital advice service will draw to a temporary close at the end of March. The advice service has supported 75 businesses with web audits and diagnostics, 50 businesses with 1-2-1 support and has had a huge take up of the workshop programme. The pilot has also formed the learning for the larger 2 year digital springboard business support programme which will be tendered for a provider in April.

Officers will be working with Proximity Futures to determine the installation plan and work on timescales for delivery. Delivery will also be determined by external funding obligations.

The Full Fibre project is still moving forward, and it was announced that City Fibre had appointed a new Contractor to resume the fibre to the Home build in Lowestoft. The company is called Pod-Trak. Pod-Trak are a capable and experienced civil engineering company who have worked on a number of fibre optic projects. www.pod-trak.com. The plan is to resume work slowly and in stages over the next 2 months, repairing defects, finishing partly built areas and then moving on to new areas. The timetable for the resumption of work is as follows:

- March – Recruitment and training. Surveying and testing existing network and agreeing programme of work. Carry out minor remedial work.
- April – Complete remedial works of areas that are not up to standard. This includes grass verges, areas where temporary reinstatement had been done and areas that had not been done to standard.
- April/May – Complete unfinished areas to bring to a “live” state
- May/June – Start build in new areas.

The forecasted completion of the build is June 2022.

Pod-Trak are currently recruiting a team, sourcing as much of their staff and supply chain as they can locally. Many companies and individuals employed by the previous contractor are again working on the project.

In addition to the Fibre-to-the-Home network, CityFibre are building a Public Services Network, connecting 35 public service buildings across Lowestoft. This is being delivered as part of the Suffolk Cloud project for Suffolk County Council. This work is being undertaken by a company called Fibre Network Solutions Ltd FNS (www.fns-ltd.co.uk)

Outside Bodies Representatives Reports

The Fauconberge Trust	
Representative:	Councillor Caroline Topping
Contact Details:	caroline.topping@eastsoffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07825 421117

The Fauconberge Trust is a small trust and it has not had any face to face meetings for obvious reasons. We have, however, kept in regular contact electronically.

The Trust agreed to give the Sir John Leman High School £5400 so that they could purchase laptops and get them out to students that needed them during lockdown. This was very much appreciated by the school for both for its morale boosting for the staff and students as well as providing a valuable resource. The Head Master wrote a very appreciative letter thanking the trust and saying we were the only organisation that had contacted them to see if they needed help.

Following a 'shout out' I put on social media pages for preloved laptops, Tom (The Clerk), also volunteered to collect any preloved laptops that community members had and got them to local schools. This was also well supported and well received by those who needed them, especially those students under Y3 who were working from home but were not the target age range to receive government laptops (*). Through this channel the local U3A also contacted the trust and Tom collected 7 laptops from that organisation and passed them on.

The Trust has also been contacted by members of the public for help with school uniforms.

(*) the Government only provided laptops for students in Years 3 and above. Therefore those in 1 and 2 were not provided for through the Government scheme, even though they were also in lockdown and needed online access for school work and to join in zoom classes, engage with their friends, etc.

East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board	
Representative:	Councillor Judy Cloke
Contact Details:	judy.cloke@eastsuffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07825 386561

Report of a meeting of the East Suffolk Internal Drainage Board on 11/01/2021 via Zoom

CIL funding of £102k is to be claimed and put towards the estuarine works on the Deben.

The Felixstowe Hydrocycle is up and running. Please Google this innovative project, it is fascinating.

There was discussion about Pennywort, but it is not growing in the area covered by the ES IDB.

Close links are being developed with the Army and there had been a joint exercise the previous weekend to ensure the temporary barrier works effectively. The capital scheme for the full barrier is £60m.

A saltmarsh has been established at Kings Fleet near Felixstowe as part of the Suffolk Water Strategy and is expecting a large grant, to aid diversity.

Waveney, Lower Yare and Lothingland Internal Drainage Board	
Representative:	Councillor Judy Cloke (substituted for Councillor Keith Patience)
Contact Details:	judy.cloke@eastsuffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07825 386561

Report of a meeting of the Waveney, Lower Yare and Lothingland Internal Drainage Board on 09/02/2021 via Zoom

A report was received from Giles Bloomfield, Catchment Engineer, stating the checking of all the umping stations had been held up due to the pandemic, but staff will have caught up by April. It is felt the 4 degree change in the average temperature due to climate change contributed to the heavy rains and flooding of the Waveney over Christmas, there was a rainfall of 1 month + in less than 12 hours and the organisation is struggling with the sustained high water remaining.

I asked a question which had been posed to me by a farmer following the Christmas floods, about whether the sluices when operated manually are more effective at water control, but they are not, unless there is a mechanical failure in the auto system.

Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils are pulling together a report on the flooding and this will be issued in due course.

Invasive Pennywort was mentioned, this is not a plant native to the UK, and it grows rapidly, if not checked, blocking pumps, so it is important it is dealt with. It has been spotted in the upper reaches

of the Waveney and the Ant but was not a contributory feature of the recent floods.

Suffolk Police and Crime Panel	
Representative:	Councillor Mark Jepson
Contact Details:	mark.jepson@eastsuffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07825 720601

Councillor Mark Jepson is the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel. In January 2021 the Panel met with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to consider his request to raise the precept.

The following report provides an overview of the functions of the Police and Crime Panel together with the minutes of the meeting.

Councillor Jepson felt it would be beneficial for members to understand why the Panel agreed to the PCC's request to raise the 2021/22 precept by 6.71%.

The Police and Crime Joint Committee at Suffolk County Council is responsible for supporting and challenging the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Suffolk Police and Crime Panel is a joint committee, established according to Schedule 6, Part 2, clause 4(5)(b) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

The Police and Crime Panel has 13 members in total, comprising:

- four county councillors;
- seven representatives from the District and Borough Councils in Suffolk; and
- two independent co-opted members.

The Panel is politically balanced, with the 11 local authority councillor representatives appointed to achieve political proportionality across Suffolk.

The PCC will be challenged and supported by a Police and Crime Panel. The Panel has the role of scrutinising the performance of the PCC and will challenge and support the PCC's activities over a range of policy areas, including the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan.

The Panel will also have a role in the handling of complaints against the PCC and the confirmation of key staff posts within the Office of the PCC.

The Panel has certain statutory functions, set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011:

- reviewing the police and crime plan
- reviewing the PCC's annual report
- carrying out confirmation hearings for certain senior appointments
- carrying out confirmation hearings for the chief constable

- investigating complaints about non-criminal behaviour of the PCC
- support and scrutinise the effective exercise of the functions of the PCC

On the 29th January 2021 The Panel considered the PCC's proposed 2021/22 precept for policing in Suffolk. The Panel had to respond and report in accordance with Schedule 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 ('the Act') and Part 2 of the Police and Crime panels (Precepts and Chief Constable Appointments) Regulations 2012 ('the Regulations'), which included the Panel's power of veto. The PCC explained that the Constabulary was not expecting the option to be able to increase Council Tax which would have resulted in more cost savings needing to be achieved. The PCC advised of the increasing public demands for policing against a backdrop of poor funding settlements from the Home Office. The PCC, in asking the Panel to bear in mind the cash flat settlement from the Home Office, explained that the proposed precept was taking advantage of the Government's flexibility in allowing a maximum increase in Council Tax of 30p per week for a Band D property, equivalent to £15 per year.

He stated that this had been a particularly difficult decision due to the difficult economic situation the country faced, and the hardship for many families and businesses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The PCC acknowledged the difficulty some people faced with paying their Council Tax and explained that he would not have put the proposal forward if it had not been necessary. He hoped that the Panel would be able to reflect on the information provided when considering the recommendations.

The PCC advised that there had been over 1,100 responses to the online survey which included the question 'are you supportive of the proposal to increase the Council Tax by 30p per week for a Band D property?' and that 70% of the respondents were supportive of the proposed increase. The PCC noted that the opportunities for public engagement had been limited due to the pandemic but stressed that the proposals were not just dependent on the survey results and that there had been other opportunities to consult such as online meetings with the Suffolk Association of Local Councils and MPs.

The PCC highlighted the cost pressures and referred to the information in the Medium-Term Financial Plan. He explained that a cautious realistic approach had been taken with budgeting for a potential deficit of £250,000. He referred to the ongoing Savings and Efficiency Programme and that the Constabulary had budgeted to save more than £3m in 2021/22 and also for the three subsequent years. The PCC advised that the collaboration with Norfolk had saved Suffolk Constabulary over £20m per year on a recurring basis and was one of the best examples of inter-force collaboration in England and Wales.

Panel members expressed concern about the plan to build up reserves at a time when residents were using savings to feed families. The PCC was asked how this could be justified and if so, whether it was possible to build up reserves over a longer period. The PCC advised that he had discussed this at length with the Finance Team. The requirement to keep £4m general reserve (1% of the budget) was explained and that the other reserves were earmarked for such items as the new emergency services network radio system organised by the Home Office which was a likely to cost of £4m to £5m. Reserves were also earmarked for the new helicopter system, the cost of which was unknown. The PCC stressed that he did not agree with building up reserves for the sake of it, but it had been made very clear to him that reserves were for specific purposes and in the event of any unforeseen circumstance. The PCC assured the Panel that the reserves would be kept under review and if it were found that the money was not needed for what it had been earmarked for, it would be used to good effect.

The Chief Constable referred to the high cost of national programmes Suffolk would be compelled to take part in, with projected budgets growing and he considered that there was no other option than to build reserves. He advised that the Constabulary's reserves were very low compared to its many peers and although this had been a difficult decision he stressed the need to invest in the organisation. He warned that the Constabulary may otherwise get to a position where reserves would be perilously low, and the PCC would be held accountable for this.

It was explained that the surplus for the current year was due to the Constabulary anticipating it would need to fund Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other costs due to the pandemic, however the Home Office had since identified additional funding, so those costs were now being met. A Panel member queried whether the Constabulary was too reliant on Council Tax income. The PCC referred to the Funding Formula and the limited Capital Grant from the Home Office and Suffolk being the fourth lowest funded force per head of population and therefore, a higher proportion had to be funded from Council Tax. The Chief Finance Officer, OPCC explained that as the Constabulary received a one-year settlement, it had to make assumptions about what funding level it would get from the Home Office in future years. The Constabulary looked at projections around the tax base and the collection fund deficit or surplus in conjunction with the district and borough councils and the County Council.

In explaining the risks if the precept were not approved, the PCC advised that although the Home Office had instigated a pay pause for the next year, it was anticipated this would not carry on over future years and the Constabulary had to be prudent in terms of the provisions available. The PCC also warned that if the precept was not approved there would be insufficient capacity in staff to support the extra recruitment which would result in more officers becoming desk-based.

Decision: The Panel, having had regard to the written and verbal information provided:

- a) supported the PCC's proposal to increase the precept by £14.94 (6.71%) per annum in 2021-22 (9 votes in favour and 3 against) but, in doing so, formally raised its concerns regarding the PCC's 'Reserve Strategy', specifically the principal of increasing the precept whilst continuing to build up the level of reserves - particularly in 2021-22.

APPENDICES – None

BACKGROUND PAPERS – None