



FULL COUNCIL

Wednesday, 22 November 2023

Subject	Cabinet Members' Report and Outside Bodies Representatives' Report to Council
Report by	Councillor Caroline Topping Leader of the Council

Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
Wards Affected:	All Wards

Purpose of Report:

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

Options:

Not applicable.

Cabinet Members' Reports to Council

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Caroline Topping, Leader of the Council
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DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Katy Cassidy joined us at the end of October as a Democratic Services Officer with a wealth of experience in facilitating meetings having worked in Education for the last 27 years. This means we are now fully staffed and both Katy and Lorraine Fitch, the new Democratic Services Manager, have been warmly welcomed by Members and Officers.

Matt Makin has been shortlisted for the Learner of the Year Award by the Association of Democratic Services Officers after completing the Certificate in Democratic Knowledge. The winner will be announced at their conference on 23 November.

LEGAL SERVICES

We undertook a planning prosecution after the defendant failed to comply with an Enforcement Notice relating to use of the grounds of a residential address to store building materials. The defendant was found guilty and fined £4,400.

We also provided advice to the Planning Enforcement team on the issuing of a Temporary Stop Notice in Witlesham because the developer had not carried out essential drainage works prior to construction.

The Grant Agreement in relation to the Feel Good Suffolk arrangement was completed between Suffolk County Council and all the other local authorities in Suffolk and we also completed the Lease for the Annex to Suffolk County Council.

Routine legal work, including providing legal advice at Licensing Sub-committee hearings and advising the Housing and Planning teams on various issues is ongoing. We continue to also provide assistance to Port Health and the Coastal Protection team.

COMMUNICATIONS

Our communications and marketing activities continue to help us explain what we are doing (and why), to a variety of different audiences. By doing this we are able to create greater awareness of, and improve trust in, our decisions, services and activities.

We use a range of different channels to communicate with our audiences including the local, regional and trade media and online through our social media channels and website. We are, however, conscious of the need to engage with those who are harder to reach and we are currently producing our second residents' magazine of 2023, which will be delivered to every household in the district before the end of the year.

Meanwhile, our social media performance goes from strength to strength, with increasing engagement on all channels including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. Our most

recent figures show that we enjoyed over 70,000 engagements with people during the past calendar month alone.

Specific, recent communication activities include the support provided to local residents, Members, the media and other stakeholders in relation to Storms Babet and Ciarán. Good communications and regular messaging are hugely important for anyone affected and we worked hard to ensure information was disseminated effectively, thoroughly and as quickly as possible. As a result of the joint effort by all involved, media reporting of our role and the role of East Suffolk Services was generally positive.

Key communications and marketing activities have also played their part in the development of 'Our Direction 2028', our new strategic plan, including the entire design process of a new brand identity and the promotion and support for various engagement events and activities. Our wider efforts on brand and design are being accelerated as part of a clear strategic drive to create greater recognition and awareness of what we do. By improving our efforts in this area, we are able to develop more impactful messaging which genuinely 'cuts through' and encourages increased take-up of our services.

Among a range of different campaigns which we continue to deliver, our cost-of-living programme 'Ease the Squeeze' is being heavily supported and promoted by targeted activity, both online and offline, to ensure maximum awareness of the services we offer in the most effective way possible.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor David Beavan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing
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HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

We are in the final stages of completing four of our schemes. These schemes were under Notices of Deficiencies or Enforcement Notices from the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service. The Notice of Deficiencies have now been removed from two of our schemes and we only have an Enforcement Notice on one retired living scheme and St Peter's Court.

The overall fire risk at St Peter's Court has now reduced to 'Moderate' and we are working hard to carry out design and specification work for the remaining schemes that require compliance works and these will go out to tender in the new year.

We are in the process of forming a new Caretaking Service that will be rolled out across our stock and until this is in place, we will be the eyes and ears on the ground and will regularly inspect communal areas for cleanliness and ensure that exit routes are kept clear. We have a zero-tolerance approach to items left in communal areas that block routes.

On 2 November a new Inspector joined the team who will focus solely on damp and mould reports. With a dedicated Inspector in place, we are confident we can provide an improved and consistent service.

Our Rotterdam Road Depot now has a portacabin in place which allows office-based staff to work on site and be more accessible to the operatives.

HOUSING INVESTMENT

We remain focussed on improving the efficiency and delivery of the Housing Revenue Account Investment Programme. Our Strategic Lead for Housing Investment (Bridget Law) started her maternity leave on 10 November, but we have made an internal appointment to cover the main elements of her role until Bridget returns.

Elliott Dawes has been promoted to the role of Development Programme Manager and will be supported by a newly appointed Senior Development Officer.

The consultation process for three Stock Condition Surveyors commenced on 31 October and these appointments will increase the pace of the much needed stock condition work which is already underway. The Housing Estates Surveyor role, previously held within the Asset Management team, has now transferred to Housing Investment with the intention of increasing our property work programme in 2024, including asset reviews.

The launch of ProVal, financial viability software for social housing providers, has now been implemented. We have been developing several template models to help inform investment decisions. The capability of the software provides far greater opportunity to review different scenarios and uses sensitivity analysis to test options and inform recommendations.

We continue to work with Homes England on strategic sites including the former Sanyo and Survitec sites in Lowestoft and are delighted to have been awarded over £4m in funding via the Brownfield Land Release Fund which will fund decontamination and remediation of these sites in readiness for housing delivery. This was the highest grant award in the UK and work has commenced via a national framework to appoint a specialist remediation contractor. The procurement of a design team to bring forward development proposals for the site will commence in December.

Development Programme Summary – there has been a small increase in properties due to be completed through Section 106, acquisitions, new build and redevelopment in 2023/24 (from 22 to 25). Of these, 22 are affordable rent and 3 are shared ownership Lowestoft. We are currently in the process of selling the last shared ownership unit - part of Phase 1 of the Jubilee Park development in Wrentham. Good progress is also being made on site with our development at Milton Road East in Lowestoft which will look to deliver six of the above affordable homes.

There will be a significant increase in 2024/25 with 111 properties planned for completion through new build and redevelopment. Of these, 60 will be affordable rent, 16 shared ownership and 13 units of temporary accommodation. Within the live development programme, 10 projects have received full planning consent with 2 others having received a positive pre application response. There is currently 1 development awaiting decision.

Capital Programme Summary – of the initial stock condition surveys commissioned (27% of our stock), we have completed 593 since August 2023. The remaining 73% will be carried out by a combination of external companies and internal Stock Condition Surveyors.

<i>Stock Condition Summary – 7 November 2023</i>	
<i>Contract/Project start date</i>	<i>August 2023</i>
<i>Contract/Project end date</i>	<i>March 2024</i>
<i>Target number of surveys to be completed</i>	<i>1104</i>
<i>Number of surveys completed to date</i>	<i>593</i>
<i>Number of surveys still to complete</i>	<i>511</i>
<i>Expected completion date for remaining surveys</i>	<i>March 2024</i>
Commentary	
<p>Access has started to become more prevalent in recent weeks. We have 2 active consultant surveyors on the project and are forecast a further 300 surveys to be completed by the Christmas break - this will give us a total of 893 surveys completed representing 80% of the list surveyed. This is dependent on access. We are currently on 54%.</p>	

The tender for a Specifier Consultant closed on 9 November and the tender evaluation took place on 14 November. This appointment will allow faster delivery of capital work programmes.

After the success of the iOpt sensor trial, we are receiving valuable data as we move into the Winter months. We have commenced work to roll out a wider programme of sensor installation and are currently prioritising where sensors will add most value to our housing data and have assessed other monitoring systems on the market. iOpt, Switchee and AICO have been invited with AICO being the preferred system for roll out at this time.

Property Programme Summary – this area is still currently under resourced but notwithstanding this, we have commenced work to develop the necessary processes to review longer term empty or problematic properties. The creation of a Building Asset Review Board is being developed and will be underpinned by the emerging Housing Revenue Account Asset Management Strategy. Property expertise is still required to support this area with the Property team working alongside the Capital Programme Manager and Development Manager to recommend and deliver significant asset regeneration projects. It is anticipated that the delivery of works identified will be carried out by the Development team with some of their focus shifting from new build to the redevelopment of existing assets.

We are currently progressing five acquisitions and recently completed on a property in Leiston. These properties are being purchased via Housing Revenue Account finances and external funding for specific client groups. We continue to review any properties presented to us for purchase including several Newtide disposals.

HOUSING SERVICES (COUNCIL HOUSING)

Work is continuing to resolve the historic overpayments of rent and heating service charges by tenants. A substantial quality assurance exercise has reviewed 12 years of forensic financial data and converted this into files that can be loaded onto our software systems. We are now working with the Anglia Revenues Partnership to correct the Housing Benefit payments for all affected tenants. We have identified 1,019 tenancies not affected by these

historic overpayments and we will be writing individual letters to these tenants to inform them of this.

HOUSING NEEDS

We continue to experience high levels of demand due to external pressures such as the cost-of-living crisis, the increase in private rentals, changes in welfare benefits and the freeze in Local Housing Allowance. We are actively supporting 477 households under Prevention, Relief or Main duties. The total number of applications on the Gateway to Homechoice register is currently 4,570. Since April we have housed 471 households through the register and have received 2,114 new applications over the same period.

We consistently work to improve positive outcomes and achieve homelessness prevention by focusing on early intervention and since April we have been able to prevent or relieve homelessness for 209 households. At the end of October, we had 118 households in temporary accommodation and predictions indicate that there will be a 48% increase in households being placed in temporary accommodation by the end of March 2024.

On 3 November we launched East Suffolk Lettings and attended our first formal event alongside colleagues from our Safe Suffolk Renters team and other Suffolk local authorities at the University of Suffolk, Ipswich. This provided a fantastic platform for engagement with private sector landlords and organisations that are delivering similar services county wide. We are confident that this project will benefit us as we continue to provide clients with housing assistance.

We have also been successful in gaining further funding from the Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities (DLUHC), under the Prevention and Move On Fund, to support rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping. We received £44,771 in addition to the Rough Sleeping Initiative bid award that we have until March 2025. This funding will provide additional assessment beds and tenancy training provided by the Stone Foundation to ensure those that are ready to move have the right life skills and can manage their tenancy when an offer of accommodation is made.

We were also successful in receiving additional funding in 2023/24 and 2024/25 totalling £36,278 to support our Target Priority Group - a small number of individuals who are the furthest away from ending their rough sleeping. We have created a plan on how this funding will be spent and this has now been approved by DLUHC. There are six in the current Target Priority Group but we do have a total of 12 rough sleepers - 3 of these have been offered a placement.

The Rough Sleeping Initiative Officer from DLUHC visited us on 2 November and we were able to show him a number of interventions offered under the Rough Sleeping Initiative and the feedback was incredibly positive.

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING

Safe Suffolk Renters held their first landlords' conference at the University of Suffolk on 3 November which was attended by over 100 landlords, property agents and other renting representatives. The feedback was positive and one landlord described the event as "very professional and collaborative". There is a short video available [here](#) if Members would like more information. The programme is now moving its focus to an area of West Suffolk for its

second pilot, working on properties that do not comply with minimum energy standards and Houses in Multiple Occupation.

Independent Living East welcomed a new manager after a recent restructure of the Private Sector Housing team and completed £1,012,280 of adaptations in the first 2 quarters of the year - a record achievement doubling the output for the same period last year and helping 225 residents compared to 117 last year. The changes can be attributed to the amended grant policy which provides grants to residents that are not means tested for up to £15k, a review and streamlining of procedures and the greater availability of contractors.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Sarah Whitelock, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism
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COMMUNITIES

21st Century Community Hubs programme – our new 21st Century Community Hubs programme is funded through the Rural England Prosperity Fund. The scheme offers a great opportunity for community ‘hubs’ across the district to think big and make changes to meet the needs of their community in 2023 and beyond. Capital grants of up to £30k are available with only a 20% match funding contribution required (of which 10% can be volunteer time).

Projects eligible for funding include:

- 1) **digital upgrades** eg helping community members to engage with digital devices, community-use internet hubs, internet cafés and/or internet installation, connection and line upgrades for community use;
- 2) **physical improvements** to buildings to enable community food projects - shops, pantries and/or fridges, community-led repair cafes/mend workshops, additional/enhanced space for meetings, health and wellbeing, educational, sports and fitness, arts or cultural activities, skills and employment training, community cafés, co-working spaces and improving building accessibility;
- 3) **net zero projects** including low carbon heating systems, installation of low and zero carbon generating technologies eg solar PV, biomass or micro-wind, improving insulation, replacement windows/doors etc to improve the energy efficiency of buildings and Biomass and ASHP/WSHP heating systems.

It would be great if all Members could help us to promote the scheme within rural East Suffolk but please ensure that potential applicants know that this isn't about ongoing maintenance or replacement costs eg replacing a roof or resurfacing a car park, but about making changes to a building that will enable it to meet a wider range of community needs. This is a great opportunity for the focal points that we all have in our communities - the next funding round opens in December and closes at the end of January 2024 and practical advice and support is available through Community Action Suffolk.

Cultural Volunteering - Cultural Connections is a legacy of our bid with Great Yarmouth Borough Council for City of Culture 2025 and is funded by the post-London Olympics 'Spirit of 2012' fund. The aim is to encourage new volunteering in the Culture, Heritage and Arts sectors by helping to overcome the barriers to getting involved that prevent people from enjoying the benefits of volunteering eg lack of transport, caring responsibilities or personal, social and health challenges. Since June, Cultural Connections has signed up 60 new volunteers, some of whom have already been taking part at events ranging from Folk East to the Saxmundham Community Allotment's first ever Tomato Festival, as well as marshalling Love Felixstowe week and the Tour of Britain cycle race.

If you, or someone you know, would like to get involved with the project, or have an event you'd like to propose, please do contact Matthew Townshend (matthew.townshend@eastsoffolk.gov.uk / 07775 018844). Sign up to join the Cultural Connections family at www.culturalconnectionsvolunteering.org.uk.

Uniform Banks - as the cost-of-living increases, so too does the cost of necessary purchases such as school uniform. We are partnering with local Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector organisations to support the opening or expansion of Uniform Banks in each of the eight Community Partnership areas and have already funded schemes in Lowestoft, Felixstowe, Carlton Colville and Beccles. The Uniform Banks ask for donations of new or clean, good quality, second hand uniform, sportswear and equipment. Families can then access the uniforms, for which there is no/minimal charge. This model means that children whose families are on a low income are able to participate in the life of the school in an equal way to their peers. Uniform Banks also prevent clothing waste. Some partners are expanding into interview clothing and/or prom wear if they have the capacity/there is a need within their community. Uniform Banks engage with families so that they can access further support if required. The second funding round is now live and grants of up to £3k are available.

Faith in Partnership - on 10 October we held our first Faith in Partnership event at East Suffolk House. More than 50 people from faith communities, other VCFSE organisations, local government and health bodies came together to look at how we could build stronger partnerships in order to serve our communities. This is the first step of working even closer with our faith sector partners so watch this space for more updates.

LEISURE

Coastal (Leisure) Strategy - following the adoption of the Leisure Strategy, we commissioned Knight, Kavanagh and Paige Limited (who created the Leisure Strategy), to create a Coastal Strategy for sports and leisure activities in East Suffolk. This will cover water activity, both formal and informal. Whilst this isn't part of the Sport England requirement, the inclusion of our coastline was considered an additional aspect that would be of benefit to the Leisure Strategy. A survey has been developed and will be sent out to clubs and organisations involved in water sports and there will be a public survey to look at informal water activity. This information will then be used to help create a Coastal Strategy for the district and may help clubs and communities with funding applications.

Play Opportunities - following Cabinet's approval of the Play Action Plan in July, the Leisure team are finalising the draft survey that will be circulated to Town and Parish Councils due to receive play improvements in their area in 2023/24. The survey will also be sent out to local communities, schools etc and the feedback will be used to inform the design tenders.

Honour Run – this is an annual event organised in partnership with the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. It took a break in 2022 but the team has been approached to help organise the 2024 event as part of the D-Day 80th anniversary commemorations. Tentative planning is underway for this, but the expectation is that it will take place on Sunday 9 June 2024 at Rock Barracks, Woodbridge with options for a half marathon or 10k/5k fun runs.

Strength and Balance – we are working with providers, including Places Leisure and ActivLives, to develop strength and balance programmes for the over 65s living with frailty. Places Leisure currently delivers three weekly sessions in Leiston, Woodbridge and Felixstowe with plans to expand into other areas and add more sessions. ActivLives is delivering its 'Step by Step' programme across the district. We are also working closely with health partners and the newly appointed Strength and Balance Development Officer at Active Suffolk to create new referral pathways and increase the numbers accessing the programme.

We have asked our leisure operators to look at opportunities to increase their offer across the district, particularly regarding Reformer Pilates which helps older people with their strength and balance. This type of Pilates is particularly good for post-menopausal women because it increases bone and muscle strength with sessions taking place in a more private environment.

Healthy Behaviours/Feel Good Suffolk - Feel Good Suffolk launched on 2 October and so far, East Suffolk has received over 350 referrals for support with weight management, smoking cessation and increased physical activity. Health and Wellbeing Officers, Matt and Amy, are working closely with local authority and health partners across Suffolk to develop these services over the coming months. Clients have been able to access weight management support through Slimming World vouchers and physical activity support delivered by Places Leisure and Everyone Active. We are currently finalising our smoking cessation offer.

TOURISM

Seashore Village – this new tourism development was completed in October and brings to fruition a wider regeneration project on the land between Sea Road and the Promenade in Felixstowe. The main site provides five unique 'pod style' units for hire which are fully accessible. In addition, there are 27 new traditional timber-built huts for sale along with a brand new, fully accessible changing places toilet block. As part of the development, the nearby car park has also been remodelled to provide better access and with parking bays in close proximity to the Village and pods. Our neighbouring activity park opened in time for the Summer holidays and features climbing walls, an outdoor gym, outdoor table tennis, chess tables, an exercise space and public seating. Whilst fully open to the public, there will be a soft launch event in December and a more targeted launch of the new pods in Spring. These developments show that thoughtful development of our assets can support the local visitor economy and also create new facilities for residents.

Landguard Gateway project - following agreement to lease our Landguard Nature Reserve in Felixstowe to the Landguard Trust, they have now developed the Landguard Gateway project proposal. This includes the creation of a new entrance to the Nature Reserve reducing visitor pressure on the existing entrance, the creation of a new wetland habitat/wildlife garden and converting shipping containers into a multi-use indoor classroom for use by the local community, schools and visitors. The project will generate significant biodiversity net gain, create a new visitor asset that links to existing and future visitor developments in the area as well as new community facilities. Cabinet has given the Trust permission to undertake initial survey and design work and we will continue to work closely with them as the project develops.

SZC Tourism Mitigation Programme – we have negotiated a £12m tourism mitigation package to help minimise and mitigate the impacts of the Sizewell C development on the local visitor economy during the construction phase. In anticipation of the Development Consent Order being triggered in January 2024, we are in the process of recruiting a Sizewell C Tourism Programme Manager who will develop, manage and deliver an extensive programme of activity to address the impacts on the visitor economy of this development. This programme will be developed with local partner organisations including Suffolk County Council, the Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation, Suffolk Coasts and Heaths, Visit Suffolk and Sizewell C. The Programme Manager will also chair the Tourism Working Group which forms part of the wider governance structure for Sizewell C. This Group will support the development of annual implementation plans which will cover areas such as tourism promotion, visitor experience development, tourism asset development, tourism business support and research/monitoring. The Group will commence early in the new year with the first implementation plan being developed within 3 months of this first meeting.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Jan Candy, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health
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LICENSING SERVICES

We have finalised the Statement of Licensing Policy which was approved by the Licensing Committee and is now being recommended to Full Council for adoption.

Since 1 September 2023 there have been 12 licensing hearings dealing matters relating to drivers, film classification and allegations of serious crime and disorder at a premises. In addition, we have successfully defended an appeal to the Magistrates' Court against a Sub-Committee decision to revoke a driver's licence. The driver has since appealed to the Crown Court.

Taxi and Private Hire licensing was reviewed by Scrutiny Committee at its September meeting and the Licensing Committee has since considered their recommendations. As a result, a request for resources will be made for an additional Licensing Enforcement Officer and the team will consider ways to alleviate the financial burden for drivers applying for a licence including grants, loan pay back schemes, staggered payments.

The team will also be reviewing our Street Trading Policy with a view to alignment across the whole district with selected prohibited streets where no street trading can take place.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Wellness on Wheels – our Community Help Hub Officers have been working in partnership with the NHS Wellness on Wheels bus in Lowestoft. The bus brings health care services to the community, offering residents an opportunity to engage with NHS services and partners such as social prescribers, the Terrence Higgins Trust, Headway, the Big C cancer charity, the National Literacy Trust, Northumbrian Water, the Department for Work and Pensions, Access Community Trust and many more. The last two ‘Grab a Jab’ sessions for 2023 will be held on 27 November and 12 December. Covid vaccination eligibility can be accessed below:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccination/getting-a-covid-19-vaccine/>

Wellbeing Hubs – the Live Well Hub in Leiston is now open following a launch event held on 20 October. Around 25 organisations attended to showcase what they offer locally, with lots of interest to start delivering from the hub in the future. Work has commenced to establish a Wellbeing Hub for Felixstowe with funding already in place via Suffolk County Council Public Health.

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Felixstowe Impact Day – our Communities and Environmental Protection Officers were joined by their counterparts from Suffolk Constabulary, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service and Trading Standards for the Impact Day on 17 October. This was organised by the East Suffolk Community Safety Partnership and funded through 2022/23 Enabling Communities Budgets. The event saw partner agencies conduct a series of checks and inspections aimed at strengthening community safety through collective activity. Trading Standards and Licensing Officers carried out licence compliance checks and tax compliance checks on a number of premises, while the Police provided a visible presence on foot patrol and carried out traffic speed and vehicle checks. Environment Protection Officers looked out for abandoned vehicles and fly tipping as well as conducting health spot-checks on food venues, while the Fire Service provided support with residential safety checks and Youth Workers engaged with local residents on the dangers of child criminal exploitation.

The impact event saw three fly tipping sites cleared (with evidence found at two of the sites), 38 wheelie bins tagged with guidance about proper usage, one abandoned vehicle, two venues inspected and subject to fire safety enforcement, two licensed premises found to have out-of-date licences, one unlicensed premises (found selling alcohol, out-of-date products and with a lack of staff training) closed down, speed checks conducted at five sites, five paving/road surface issues reported, one unroadworthy vehicle reported and two taxi firms checked and found to be compliant with child criminal exploitation guidance. Further Impact Days will be held in other locations in the district in the Spring.

Training – a new round of training on both Criminal Exploitation and Preventing Violent Extremism has been arranged for the coming months – if you would like to find out more and book a place please contact joss.mullett@eastsuffolk.gov.uk.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

We are supporting managers to follow the annual health and safety cycle which covers a different topic each month. The focus in October has been on work related stress with some promotional work for International Stress Awareness Day on 1 November. The Council has a legal duty to reduce work related stress and managers are key to this in that they need to consider the six areas that can contribute to work related stress ie demands, support, control, change, role and relationships. All Officers are expected to complete answer a series of questions that will, when the results are collated and anonymised by ICT, provide the manager with an overview of how well they are applying the management standards.

FOOD AND SAFETY

Our half-year return was submitted to the Food Standards Agency on the number of inspections carried out. A temporary Food and Safety Officer has been appointed to help reduce the back log of inspections created by a vacancy.

A court order for a tuberculosis (TB) case was extended for 28 days with the patient in hospital and receiving treatment. A further TB case has been identified that may need our involvement. Due to a national increase in cryptosporidium, our officers had to make contact with people to ask them to take part in a national online questionnaire. Two outbreaks of norovirus have been investigated.

We are continuing to receive gas and electrical inspection certificates from catering businesses. One business was visited by a Food and Safety Officer accompanied by a member of the Gas Safe National Investigations Team. Fault was found with a recently installed cooker.

SUFFOLK COASTAL PORT HEALTH

The most significant issues on the horizon remain the Border Target Operating Model and the funding challenges faced by the Port Health Authorities in the UK. Uncertainty still exists around funding for the service, charging models and potential trade volumes which questions the feasibility of having a functioning Border Target Operating Model in place by April 2024. This message seems to be consistent across other Port Health Authorities in the UK. We continue to liaise with the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs regarding these concerns.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Paul Ashton, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Corporate Services – Digital, Customer Services, HR and Assets
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CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

To increase our accessibility to residents and other customers who need in-person support, we've increased our Customer Experience opening times and locations across the district:

- First, our Marina reception in Lowestoft town centre is open on an additional day each week. The reception is now open to the public for both walk-in and pre-booked appointments between 9am and 1pm on Wednesdays. This is in addition to opening between 10am and 4pm every Tuesday and Thursday.

- Second, we are increasing onsite support at East Suffolk House in Melton by basing Customer Service Advisors there each weekday to assist visitors. While East Suffolk House is not advertised as a public-facing location, people are gravitating there to seek assistance given that it is one of our flagship buildings.

We'll analyse the impact of these additional days on an ongoing basis to see if the increased offer is fulfilling customer need and to inform future front-facing proposals.

During October we provided direct support to the relief effort in the wake of Storm Babet. We provided a face-to-face service over two days from Framlingham Town Council's offices alongside colleagues from the Housing Needs and Communities teams. We worked with the Digital team to put in place a specific 'flood issues' eform, feeding key requests for support into other teams. Customer Experience has handled 149 enquiries via phone, email and face-to-face in response to both Storm Babet and Storm Ciarán.

In November, we will engage in a process to review how we currently interact with our customers. This is a preamble to a wider plan to design and develop our future Customer Experience Strategy.

Finally, we've worked with our Digital and Facilities teams to deliver a new collaborative space at the Marina at zero cost. Through the simple reorganisation of space, we now have a useful facility for meetings, workshops, coproduction, service design and more.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The pay award for staff has finally been reached between the National Employers and the National Joint Council (NJC) Trade Union on rates of pay, which is applicable from 1 April 2023. This will see a rise of £1,925 for all staff up to and including salary scale point 43. Those above that scale will receive a salary increase of 3.88%. We are working to implement this pay award in time for the November pay run. On base salaries this task is straightforward but less so for East Suffolk Services staff due because their salaries are not assimilated with the NJC pay spine. This requires manual updates to records and we are working hard to achieve this within a short timescale.

The focus group sessions on the People Strategy are now complete and a new Strategy is being drafted based on two key themes, People and Culture. Several priorities will sit under each of these themes. The People Strategy will be presented at January's Cabinet.

Three new policies have also recently been approved: the Fertility Treatment Policy, Domestic Abuse Policy and Suicide Prevention Guidance. In addition, the Smoking Policy has also been updated to include vaping.

DIGITAL AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Our focus over the last quarter has been to review our Digital Work Plan to ensure it meets the needs and aspirations of all services across the authority. This is always an evolving plan to ensure we enable the authority to work efficiently, keep abreast of changes in technology and continue to move forward in areas of improvement and transformation.

The next major project to come to fruition over the coming months will be the migration and upgrade of our document management systems that support numerous statutory services such as Planning, Building Control and Environmental Health. This will result in easier ways in which customers can navigate associated documents online as well as enabling better remote working capabilities for officers out in the field.

We will also be focussing on implementing appropriate governance and monitoring of the new strategic plan, including Key Performance Indicator development over the coming months.

The digital service is measured by several Key Performance Indicators, predominantly to understand satisfaction with online services and performance of our digital environments. We remain a high performing service with an average rating in quarter 2 of 4.35 out of 5 for satisfaction with online services and 79% of incidents reported to our service desk resolved within the first working day of reporting.

Work has commenced on a self-assessment of our cyber security resilience using a framework from the National Cyber Security Centre. We aim to bring in the Local Government Association in the new year to further strengthen our position.

ASSETS

Developments, Acquisitions and Disposals

Following Cabinet's approval for the purchase of a retail site on Hamilton Road in Lowestoft, this acquisition is ready to complete in the coming days. The site provides accommodation in the Power Park, with future redevelopment potential to support the offshore energy sector.

Planning consent has been achieved for the development of the Nexus site in Lowestoft and demolition is due to commence before the end of November 2023.

The redevelopment of public conveniences at Fort Green in Aldeburgh is progressing with topographic surveys having been completed and a redesign by the appointed architects assessed internally.

The proposed Levelling Up Fund development at Jubilee Parade, Lowestoft (south beach) to add a terrace, new changing places/toilets, café and other retail units is progressing well. A planning application will be submitted in two parts for temporary works with demolition and main development.

Works have now been completed on the installation of a new pontoon in Oulton Broad to replace the former 'Colman's Jetty' that was in a poor state of repair. The pontoon increases the capacity of Oulton Broad for yachts and dinghies and will be managed by our Harbourmaster. We are awaiting installation dates for the rebuilding of the footbridge over the Landspring Drain.

Uniform, the lease management system, is fully up to date and the enterprise module has recently gone live which means that our leased assets and lease events can now be monitored and managed more effectively.

A significant number of landlord and tenant events (rent reviews and lease arrangements) have been identified as being outstanding as a result of the work to implement the Uniform system. The focus for the team is to progress outstanding lease renewals and rent reviews within the next 12 months. To assist in achieving this, a portion of this work has been outsourced. Bringing this work up to date will ensure that we are acting as a diligent landlord.

A new lease to Suffolk County Council has been completed for use of the Annex building on the Riduna Park site. Our move to hybrid working means that less office space is required and

since the Annex had been empty for some time, the lease to Suffolk County Council will bring in some additional rental income and reduce our operational costs.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Toby Hammond, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development and Transport
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Flooding response

In addition to the flooding impact of Storm Babet on residential properties in the district, 36 business premises were also affected. The largest concentration by far was in Framlingham although businesses in Southwold and Wickham Market were also impacted. In response, our team contacted all affected businesses to understand the impact of the flooding, to provide immediate support and to collate information in advance of flood recovery funding being awarded by Government. We are also working closely with Town Councils and business associations/groups, such as the Framlingham Technology Centre and the Framlingham Farmers collective.

Key issues identified through our contact with affected businesses include:

- businesses having inadequate/no insurance or high excess/premiums on top of having to pay for repairs
- extensive loss of stock
- the impact of lost trade
- concerns over future flooding risk

National support for flood affected businesses will include a 3-month business rates 'holiday' up to £2,500 for small and medium sized enterprises and up to £5k to assist with adaptations to avoid/alleviate future flood damage.

Space Enterprise Lab

We are working closely with partners to establish the region's first Space Enterprise Lab (SEL). This is located at BT's Adastral Park in Martlesham and forms part of the national Satellite Applications Catapult. The SEL provides physical office space to support businesses operating in the space sector which, across the UK, is worth over £16bn per annum and employs over 45,000. The key areas of activity the SEL will focus on include satellite communications/applications, broadcast technology and optics/photonics.

As one of only three regions not to have such a facility, the East of England was not capitalising on the opportunities this sector presents. Locating the SEL within the district puts us at the heart of this expanding sector and aligns strongly with BT's existing satellite application activities as well as strengthening links with the district's other innovation centres at ORBIS (renewable energy) and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (marine science).

The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was successful in securing external funding to recruit a Space Cluster Manager who will manage the new facility which will also provide digital conferencing, virtual demonstrations, access to industry experts and events/exhibition space.

BT has agreed to provide rent free accommodation for the first two years and we, along with Suffolk County Council and the LEP, are providing £30k to fit out the new office space and supply IT equipment. As a result of our funding and proactive support for the project, we will form part of the SEL governance structure and maintain our strong links with innovation at Adastral Park.

Place Partnership Project

We are about to agree a lease on the former Tesco building on London Road North in Lowestoft to pilot a cultural activity programme ahead of the opening of the Towns Fund Cultural Quarter initiative in 2026. The First Light Festival Community Interest Company has been commissioned to lead a consortium of local and regional cultural and creative organisations to develop a pilot programme which would operate out of the former Tesco building for up to 2 years. This pilot activity will provide an opportunity to test what programming will appeal to audiences and will be invaluable in ensuring the Cultural Quarter is as successful as possible.

An expression of interest to Arts Council England's Place Partnership fund has been made to fund the pilot programme. The Arts Council has indicated that we could bid for up to £700k. Feedback on the expression of interest will be received shortly and if positive, a full application will be made by the end of 2023 with a decision by March 2024. If successful, the pilot programme would begin in April 2024.

Sizewell C Economic Development Programme/recruitment

Through the Sizewell C Deed of Obligation, we secured £5.2m to support local businesses who may be negatively impacted by the development and to ensure they are well placed to take advantage of any supply chain opportunities. One key impact identified was the potential for displacement ie employees in local businesses taking roles as part of the Sizewell C development and thereby creating recruitment issues in an already tight labour market. Conversely, there are also opportunities for such businesses to benefit from being part of the Sizewell C supply chain. A programme will be developed to address both the local business impact and opportunities which will identify how the £5.2m will be allocated in support of this. This work will supplement existing business support and skills development activity being delivered locally by the team and more widely through the County Council and Suffolk Chamber of Commerce.

In anticipation of the Development Consent Order being triggered in January 2024, a Sizewell C Economic Programme Manager will be recruited shortly to lead this work and develop the programme. This role will also represent us on the Sizewell C working groups for local supply chain development and skills, employment and education. There will also be a close working relationship with the soon to be appointed Sizewell C Tourism Programme Manager due to strong crossover in the areas of business support and skills development.

North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone completion

The North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone (HAZ), which has provided support, training and grant funding to bring historic buildings back into use in the town's medieval high street, successfully concluded in October following a 5-year delivery period. The programme delivered better research into the historical significance of the area and improvements to 15 buildings via £500k of public and private investment. High profile works included the restoration of Mariner's Arch and Crown Score.

The foundation for the programme was created through the Scores and Triangle Market master planning work to increase footfall and implement improvements to pedestrian access

and the delivery of quality open spaces and cultural events in the newly opened Ness Park. The HAZ supported retail and leisure businesses within the town centre boundary, including the reintroduction of market events in Triangle Market and ‘shop local’ campaigns. In addition, an array of cultural activities have been delivered since the HAZ’s inception in 2018, which promoted local businesses and had strong community engagement reaching 10,000 people.

We also helped secure £3.5m of external funding to progress the restoration and redevelopment of the former Lowestoft Town Hall, with the aim of bringing the building back into use in early 2026. This is the flagship heritage project in the HAZ and with an allocation of £2m from the Lowestoft Towns Fund and our contribution of £900k, support funding is now in place to progress.

Parking Services

We are supporting our market towns with the provision of free parking sessions on Remembrance Sunday and a further two sessions on the lead up to Christmas. The first session (on a date of their choice) will support their Christmas lights switch on event and the second will be on Saturday 16 December.

We are also looking at plans for full resurfacing works at Chapel Lane car park in Wickham Market which will include the provision of larger parking bays and the team is also working with local market traders where there are problems with limited parking for larger vehicles/parking for trader vehicles closer to market locations. We have also supported mobile ‘pop-up’ dentists to enable residents to access this service.

Our work with Town and Parish Councils includes identifying areas that require a change in parking policy eg the introduction of new resident parking schemes, or changes to on street parking. We are in the process of engaging with Beccles and Bungay Town Councils to better understand the issues that the current parking provision presents in those towns. Proposals have already been drafted for changes in Felixstowe and Southwold and through our engagement with the Town Councils there, we hope to finalise what we want to take forward into a new Traffic Regulation Order.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Tom Daly, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Energy and Climate Change
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ENERGY

Following the Motion to Full Council on 27 September, a letter was sent to the Rt Hon Claire Coutinho, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, regarding Sizewell C and the cumulative impacts of uncoordinated Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) on the Suffolk coast. The letter included the following specific requests, and we await a response:

1. A full cost benefit analysis of the options for connecting all the currently proposed and consented offshore wind, multi-purpose interconnectors and reinforcement projects to users in the UK, with prioritisation being given to offshore solutions connecting the power directly to areas where the demand is needed and the utilisation of brownfield sites.

2. Assistance to ensure that the consenting process related to the NSIPs proposed within East Suffolk is coordinated.
3. A commitment to mandatory community benefits for communities directly impacted by hosting energy infrastructure.

Engagement with civil servants within various departments of Government in relation to NSIPs continues including a recent meeting with a specific focus on skills.

Sizewell C - engagement with Sizewell C Limited on the project continues. A number of discharge of requirement applications have been submitted which are currently being considered. In addition, we are reviewing discharge of requirement consultations from Suffolk County Council and planning applications for works outside, but associated with, the consented development.

The website has been updated to provide significantly more information on the Sizewell C project; this is the main location for information - [Sizewell C Nuclear Power Station » East Suffolk Council](#).

LionLink - National Grid Ventures held a further non-statutory consultation on their LionLink multi-purpose interconnector project which closed on 3 November 2023. The consultation focused on the changes made since the last consultation in 2022. We provided a response to the proposals maintaining an objection to the project - [ESC-response-to-Lionlink-supplementary-non-statutory-consultation-Sept-Nov-2023.pdf \(eastsuffolk.gov.uk\)](#). During the consultation period, a meeting was held to listen to the views of Town and Parish Councils affected by the proposed scheme changes and their comments were taken into consideration within our response.

Sea Link - National Grid Electricity Transmission is currently holding its statutory consultation on the Sea Link project which comprises grid reinforcement works. The consultation closes to electronic submissions on 18 December. Officers are currently reviewing the published materials and we will be providing a formal response shortly. National Grid provided a briefing to Cabinet Members on 6 November and it is anticipated that a paper will be presented to Cabinet in relation to this project shortly.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Kay Yule, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management
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PLANNING POLICY AND DELIVERY

Public consultation on the Custom and Self Build Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) took place during between 6 September and 18 October - responses are currently being considered. Consultation on the Healthy Environments SPD and on the Rural Development SPD will take place between November and January and will be available to view on our planning policy consultations page once the consultations begin. Early work is also underway on a review of the existing SPD for the Kirkley Waterfront and Sustainable Urban

Neighbourhood site. These SPDs are important documents, providing additional guidance to support the implementation of the Local Plan policies.

We are delighted that the East Suffolk Cycling and Walking Strategy has been shortlisted in the national Royal Town Planning Institute Awards, in the category of Excellence in Digital Planning Practice.

Communities are continuing to prepare Neighbourhood Plans, setting out planning policies for their local areas. The Wickham Market Neighbourhood Plan is the latest to have passed a successful referendum and is being considered at Full Council on 22 November. This will be the 23rd 'made' Neighbourhood Plan for East Suffolk, with many more under preparation.

We are looking forward to our upcoming event for Town and Parish Councils on Neighbourhood Planning on 23 November.

The review of Conservation Area Appraisals is also continuing with the new Aldeburgh Park Conservation Area and extensions to the existing Aldeburgh Conservation Area having been approved by the Strategic Planning Committee in October. A public consultation on the Walberswick Conservation Area is currently under way (16 October - 27 November), proposing to bring the Walberswick Quay area into the Walberswick Conservation Area. Reviews of the Article 4 directions in Conservation Areas in the former Waveney area are also underway, along with a pilot project in the former Suffolk Coastal area.

Judging has been taking place for this year's Quality of Place Awards and we are looking forward to the awards ceremony where the winners will be announced later in the year.

BUILDING CONTROL

The Building Safety Regulator has confirmed that the April 2024 deadline for Building Inspectors to become individually validated for competence will not be extended. All of our Building Control Officers have completed applications to the Building Safety Regulator scheme and are booked to sit professional competence validations on 6 December or are preparing to sit professional examinations with the Chartered Association of Building Engineers. This will be the biggest change in the profession's history with all Building Inspectors being known as Registered Building Approvers in line with the new competence regime.

COASTAL PARTNERSHIP EAST

The Board for Coastal Partnership East met in September and received quarterly updates on the work of the team and how this is delivering against the Business Plan. The meeting reflected on Storm Agnes in August which impacted residents and infrastructure in Hemsby, Pakefield and Thorpeness. It was an unprecedented storm of this nature in the Summer.

We have been dealing with further storm events (Babet and Ciarán) and along with Building Control colleagues, addressing the need for demolition of at risk properties in Pakefield.

We led a very successful Anglian Regional Flood and Coast Committee conference at Wherstead park on 12 October with 230 delegates attending in person and others joining virtually. The event was a great opportunity to showcase work from across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex and John Curtin (the Environment Agency's Executive Director of Operations) gave

the keynote speech remarking on the complex and challenging impact of climate change and sea level rise and highlighting the pace of change and our ability to react. Karen Thomas presented the local challenges we face and how we are looking to both traditional and adaptation approaches. Several members of the team received awards for their role in coastal work and it was great to see their efforts recognised. Kya Plowman won the award for 'Rising Star' so congratulations to her!

The first Resilient Coast Project Board met at the start of October and was a milestone at the start of our £9.1m project to support coastal adaptation and resilience with Great Yarmouth Borough Council.

Finally, we held our Lowestoft tidal walls opening ceremony on 20 October and submitted our Transport and Works Act Order for the Lowestoft Tidal barrier to the Secretary of State. We await news of funding for the barrier in the Autumn Statement.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Vince Langdon-Morris, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources and Value for Money
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FINANCIAL SERVICES

We are now in one of our busiest times of the year, working with service areas to review and update revenue and capital budgets for the next financial year and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). A report on the draft MTFS was presented to Cabinet on 7 November, with subsequent MTFS and budget reports to follow in January and February.

Jenson Hammond has recently joined the team as an Apprentice. Jenson previously worked in private accountancy practice and is continuing his accountancy studies with us. The team has been a fantastic support to Lorraine Rogers whilst she acted up into the Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer role over the last 8 months and this has also provided development opportunities for other members of the team with Marie McKissock, Danielle Patterson and Georgina Peck taking on additional responsibilities.

Storm Babet funding support – we, along with other teams across the authority, are working with Suffolk County Council and across the district to rapidly establish a system to distribute flood relief funds to affected residents and businesses, as promised by Government. Our experience during Covid to provide funding support to businesses at pace will allow us to quickly modify and use these systems effectively again whilst ensuring that the required levels of compliance are in place.

PROCUREMENT

The Procurement Act 2023 received Royal Assent in October and work has begun on identifying processes which will need to change to reflect the new regulations which will come into force in October 2024. In addition, we are updating the procurement guidance to ensure compliance with the Contract Procedure Rules and Public Contract Regulations 2015.

We delivered 'Introduction to Procurement' training to 55 Officers over the Summer and further training has been offered on contract management and Social Value which has been well attended by Officers. We are also working with colleagues from the Digital and

Programme Management service looking at improvements in analysing spend to better inform procurement decisions.

As our new strategic plan develops, we will need to revise the current Procurement Strategy to align with the objectives set out in “Our Direction 2028”. Members and Officers will take part in a workshop in January to help identify and direct procurement priorities for the Council.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment
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The Environmental Protection team continue to progress the application for the small waste incinerator plant at VC Cooke, Beccles. The public consultation and drop-in sessions generated over 200 responses. A summary of these and our response in relation to the permitted process criteria will be placed on the website. A list of Frequently Asked Questions has also been added to the website.

Another successful year for Suffolk Solar Together – we co-fund the Suffolk Solar Together Scheme as part of our membership of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership. The scheme has been operating since 2018 to help private homeowners and businesses install solar PV, batteries and electric vehicle chargers. Last year alone, 5,711 solar panels were installed across the county, with 1,803 of those installed in East Suffolk. This year 1,184 people in the district have registered their interest in solar PV installations to be delivered in 2024 – the highest number to date.

Climate Change & Sustainability Team recruitment completed - the team has now doubled in size, with officers Paul Mackie and Daniel Wareing joined by apprentice Jamie Bretton in September and Suffolk Graduate apprentice Amy Duran in October.

Environment Task Group (ETG) - the ETG held its third meeting in October where it reviewed its priority focus areas and discussed opportunities to support our property retrofitting work with Officers from Suffolk’s Warmer Homes Healthy People and our Housing teams.

Visit to Wild Aldhurst - as part of their ongoing programme of opportunities to visit and learn about local sites of environmental interest, the Greenprint Forum visited Wild Aldhurst on 23 October and received a guided tour of this habitat restoration scheme on a former arable farm of 67 hectares, 2 km inland of the Sizewell power stations. Forum members saw and heard how the impact of Sizewell C on local biodiversity is being mitigated. A short report summarising the visit has been produced [Report-Wild-Aldhurst-231023.pdf \(eastsoffolk.gov.uk\)](#).

Community Litter Picking

Our Strategic Waste and Contract Management team has taken over the co-ordination of Community Litter Pick applications. Since 1 August a total of 30 groups have registered with

us and have received equipment (if required), including hoops, sticks and bags. Groups organise a collection point for the bags so that East Suffolk Services can then dispose of the contents. 632 people have attended organised litter picks and information on the amount of waste collected takes time to analyse, but one group collected 19 bags worth!

Wildflower areas

There are a number of projects taking place across the district by local groups/Town and Parish Councils to use land maintained by us as areas for wildflowers. These groups are working with us to identify sites for them to maintain and so they are not included in the cutting rounds. We will share the results with you in due course.

Grass Cutting

The weather during 2023 has had an impact in terms grass growth across the district. This saw the normal May flourish of growth continue vigorously throughout the Summer meaning that cutting had to be more infrequent with rounds taking longer to complete. We are working with East Suffolk Services to review schedules for the future and will look to provide more information to the public in order to manage expectations.

Litter and Fido Bin Policy

We have created our first ever policy to determine the process and rationale for siting litter and fido bins in public places. This is going through a period of stakeholder consultation before being adopted.

Treescape Funding

We have been successful in a joint funding bid with Suffolk County Council and other Suffolk local authorities for the Woods Meadow Country Park in Oulton. This will see the planting of 30 fruit trees for a community orchard and 300 whips to create more hedgerows and wildlife areas. Formal notification is still being awaited, but the planting is expected to take place in early 2024.

Fly Tipping

We are working in partnership with Environmental Protection and East Suffolk Services to review the process for reporting and clearing fly tipping on our land and there is a Member Briefing on 4 December to provide information on fly tipping clearance as a service.

Street Cleansing Pilots and Street Cleansing Working Group

We are running two pilots in Felixstowe and Lowestoft in readiness for the delivery of a new specification for Street Cleansing by East Suffolk Services. This is a challenging specification and the decision was made to concentrate on delivering this in two areas within the district to determine the resources and strategies required to meet expected standards.

Early successes have seen the use of a new hot pressure washer to deep clean a toilet block and play equipment, as well as a seafront shelter in Felixstowe and the deployment of more staff in Lowestoft town centre to litter pick.

Following a Motion to Full Council in September, a cross party Member working group has been set up, chaired by Paul Ashton, to look at the cleanliness of the district. Thank you to those Members who have responded to the questionnaire sent out in October. Updates in relation to this group will follow.

Simpler Recycling

Government has now published its plans for mandatory recycling services across England. The funding of these services will come from Government and through Extended Producer Responsibility. The Suffolk Waste Partnership now has some further certainty over how collections to recycling will change, but there is still further consultation taking place before any implementation takes place.

Storm Babet

East Suffolk Services provided householders with invaluable support during the recent flooding, particularly in Framlingham where around 40 tonnes of flood damaged household items were collected and taken for disposal.

WEEE Collection funding

Our application to Material Focus, a producer compliance scheme, was successful and we have been awarded £60k to introduce a kerbside collection of small electrical appliances. This service will be introduced in due course, once the infrastructure and arrangements have been finalised.

Appendices

Appendices:
None

Background reference papers:
None