



FULL COUNCIL

Wednesday, 27 March 2024

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' Report to Council

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

On 9 February, the Council hosted a Model District Youth Council day where over 50 young people from local schools attended Riverside to play the roles of Councillors for a day. The event was a huge success and the young people moved a Motion to create a Youth Council in East Suffolk.

We continue to support Committees, Community Partnerships and other meetings, along with providing support to Members and officers on a day-to-day basis.

We are sad to announce that Matt Makin, Democratic Services Officer, will be leaving us at the end of May to join Peterborough City Council as a Senior Democratic Services Officer. Matt is going to be greatly missed and we wish him all the very best for the future.

LEGAL SERVICES

Our new Litigation Lawyer, Mandi Wilson, started with us in February and has been working with Housing, the Anti-Social Behaviour team and other departments, progressing various litigation matters.

We participated in the Corporate Services marketplace event at East Suffolk House on 24 January 2024 and enjoyed discussing a variety of legal issues with Members and officers. There were several entertaining discussions about the byelaws which exist, both within East Suffolk and around the country. Members of the team also assisted with the Model District Council event for local schoolchildren on 9 February 2024.

The lease renewal for 70 Shed at Port Health, Felixstowe is nearing completion and there has been ongoing property work on the Southwold Enterprise Hub and Zak's Café in Lowestoft. We have also been assisting Planning with various issues arising on the Sizewell C project as well as neighbourhood planning and Local Plan matters.

We have assisted Port Health with several agreements, including those with Belfast City Council and Tendering District Council and we also supported the Licensing team with a summary review hearing in relation to the Skye Lounge in Felixstowe.

Current contracts being negotiated include the National Parking Platform which will unify all our car parks onto one single platform, sponsorship for Art Trails in East Suffolk and sponsorship for Space East. We have also been providing advice on contracts for Felixstowe Socio-Economic Analysis and Land Use Strategy, advice on Enterprise Zone arrangements post Local Enterprise Partnership changes, an agreement with Lowestoft Town Council to provide project management services for the Marina Theatre refurbishment project and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund agreement.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor David Beavan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing
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HOUSING NEEDS

We continue to deliver housing advice and assistance to clients that are homeless or threatened with homelessness, or seeking social housing through the Gateway to Homechoice Register.

We continue to experience a high number of homelessness presentations and are currently working with 509 households under the 'Prevention' or 'Relief' duty.

The number of households in temporary accommodation has risen over the last quarter and we currently have 132 households in temporary accommodation and 24 placed under the Rough Sleeping Initiative. Of those currently under a statutory placement, 85 households are families with dependent children and 47 are single households.

Since April 2023 we have been able to prevent 513 households from becoming homeless and an additional 517 where homelessness has been relieved. This is an average of 103 cases per month with a positive outcome.

Rough sleeping figures continue to fluctuate but are still in single digits. We currently have 7 rough sleepers in East Suffolk, an increase of 2 since January. However, these are likely to be different people as some are accommodated and new ones are verified.

In January 2024 the Gateway to Homechoice team received 360 new applications. We currently have 4,559 active applications on the Register.

We have been successful in securing a £25k one-off top up of additional funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities under the Rough Sleeping Winter Pressures initiative. This funding will have to be spent in year and will focus on assisting with the following:

- Costs against Nightly Let for those placed off the street, single homelessness.
- Support for those in temporary accommodation that have been discharged from hospital or prison.
- Community based interventions by the outreach team, clothing, home set up, furniture etc.
- Rent in advance to allow those in the Rough Sleeper Initiative/Safe to Stay Hub beds to move on.

The funding focuses on the provision of 'off the street' accommodation and resources, private rented sector access and step-down provision for applicants leaving hospital and at risk of rough sleeping.

HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

We are busy working on a new digital mobile working solution and how processes can be adapted and streamlined. The project is moving at pace with implementation expected in early June 2024. The Compliance team is also testing a new IT system to record property assets which are currently recorded on spreadsheets.

We are in the final stages of fire stopping works at one of our schemes and will shortly be going out to tender for the remaining fire alarm systems that need replacing.

The Caretaking team is now fully resourced and over the next 3 months will undertake a programme of scheduled visits to inspect the communal areas of our general needs blocks. An Electrical Contracts Manager has also recently been recruited to further support this team.

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING

Safe Suffolk Renters, the Government pathfinder programme led by us on behalf of all the Suffolk councils to tackle poor housing conditions in the private rented sector, launched its latest promotional campaign via social media, TV (ITVX and Sky) and local radio. The purpose is to raise awareness of the resources available through the Safe Suffolk Renters programme and separate adverts are targeted towards landlords and tenants. This is part of the 'empower and educate' phase of the programme.

The website [Homepage - Safe Suffolk Renters](#) has been developed into a more comprehensive resource and more work will follow.

We also organised a second conference, aimed primarily at landlords, which focussed on Damp and Mould. This topic was chosen in the aftermath of the death of Awaab Ishaak and the changes all those involved in housing need to make to try and prevent such a tragic incident from reoccurring. The conference looked at causes of dampness in the home and solutions and was attended by over 100 delegates.

We have also been awarded additional funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to build and strengthen partnerships with health across Suffolk. We are using data on housing conditions and cross matching it with population health data to help those living in the worst housing conditions who suffer with acute health problems. Conversations and pilot projects are being set up with the potential for significant savings across the whole system. There are many hurdles to overcome but the time seems right to tackle these and the funding received will facilitate this. More information can be found on the website [Homepage - Safe Suffolk Renters](#).

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COMMUNITIES AND LEISURE

At the Community Partnership Board meeting on 7 March, the Board approved four projects that originated from one or more of the eight Community Partnerships. These ranged from an E-bike loan scheme in two of our most rural Community Partnership areas, to mental health training with Suffolk Mind, expansion of the Lowestoft and Northern Parishes 'Box Up' leisure equipment loan pilot and training on online security through a new local social enterprise. The focus of the workshop session at the meeting was on how culture can help tackle inequalities within and between communities.

The third and final training session for Community Partnership Chairs, Vice Chairs and Communities Officers (run by Oliver and Company) was held on 13 March in Yoxford.

Lowestoft Rising, the multi-agency strategic partnership comprising of East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Police/Police and Crime Commissioner, Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Card Board and voluntary/community sector representatives, comes to an end on 31 March. After more than 10 years of activity in Lowestoft to make it a 'Better place to Grow up, Live, Work, Visit and Invest', the partnership will end and the Change Manager will retire. The Lowestoft Place Board, Waveney Health & Wellbeing Partnership Board and the Lowestoft and Northern Villages Community Partnership are now all in place and will provide the ongoing drive to deliver the aims of Lowestoft Rising.

39 Holiday Activity and Food programmes have been funded for the Easter holiday. These programmes will provide just over 3,600 places for Free School Meals families – this is up from just over 3,100 places last Easter. Lowestoft has most programmes (16) followed by Beccles (6), Woodbridge (5) and Felixstowe, Saxmundham and Kesgrave (3 each). The programmes include a mix of provision including sport, filmmaking, cooking and STEM. We are offering an activity book (similar to what we did at Christmas) with a competition. Bookings went live on 4 March with programmes beginning on 2 April 2024.

The play consultation for Beccles, Felixstowe, Framlingham, Kesgrave and Wrentham closed on 1 March and we had over 2,000 responses. The next steps are to create reports for each area and share the findings with the relevant Town/Parish Councils to enable them to submit applications for any additional funding from the Neighbourhood and Local Community Infrastructure Levy. Once funding has been secured, we can then go out to tender to get designs for each of the play areas.

Along with Cllr Reeves, officers from the Communities team have been working with HMP Warren Hill, SSAFA (the Armed Forces Charity) and the Royal British Legion to support 22 veterans from HM forces who are serving long custodial sentences. Prisoners have so far sought information regarding housing availability on release from custody, benefits, food banks and other sources of assistance. We have provided an information folder outlining the assistance they can expect from councils, the Government and military charities, with

contact details. We have also provided cost of living support to families living at Rock Barracks.

Having pulled together £7k from a range of sources (including Ease the Squeeze and Councillor Enabling Communities Budgets), the Lowestoft and Northern Parishes Community Partnership is planning to continue Warm Welcomes from April until the end of September at the Seagull Theatre, Gunton Community Hall, St Andrews Church Hall, Over 60s Club and ReUtilise.

TOURISM

The Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation held its annual conference on 7 March which was attended by over 120 delegates representing East Suffolk's visitor economy businesses and stakeholders. The event was co-sponsored by us and Sizewell C. An update was provided on the Sizewell C Tourism Mitigation Fund which is designed to minimise the impacts of the development on our visitor economy. We also provided an update on the other nationally significant energy infrastructure projects which are either in development or proposed along our coast as well as a summary of our recent and planned investment in the district's tourism economy. This included our district-wide investments in locally, regionally and nationally significant events, place branding and the capital investment programme in our two largest resorts of Felixstowe and Lowestoft.

Other sessions focussed on how local tourism businesses can make the best use of data analytics and search engine optimisation to better understand their existing and potential customer behaviours. There was also a promotion of Wolf Way, a new Suffolk-wide cycle route which takes in most of the Suffolk coast.

It is worth noting that Cabinet approved a further 3 year funding package for the DMO of £182k. This comes at a crucial time when the DMO will be a key partner in mitigating the impacts of the Sizewell C development on the district's visitor economy.

The Sizewell C Tourism Working Group was established at the beginning of 2024 once the Development Consent Order was triggered. Ahead of the development of the first annual implementation plan, which will set out how tourism mitigation funds will be spent, several proposals are coming forward to the second Working Group meeting. These include:

- Funding for the T-Stats platform which we have been piloting for the past 12 months. T-Stats is an online database that can track accommodation, occupancy, visits to attractions, footfall, car parking, passenger, transport, digital marketing performance, as well as the impact of events and the weather.
- Funding longitudinal visitor perception surveys to understand the impact the development is having on visitor perceptions during the course of the construction stage.
- A significant destination marketing campaign proposed by the DMO to grow the district's £680m tourism economy to mitigate potential losses which may occur during the construction phase.

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LICENSING SERVICES

Since 24 January 2024, one Licensing hearing has been held which considered a review of a premises in Felixstowe which had had its licence revoked due to an allegation that it had been associated with serious crime or disorder.

We await the date for a driver's further appeal to the Crown Court. This followed our successful defence in the Magistrates' Court. Given that this matter is still under appeal, no further public comment can be made but we will be kept informed as to the outcome.

Following the Scrutiny of taxi licensing and the subsequent creation of a second Licensing Enforcement Officer post, a candidate has been appointed to the role. It is anticipated that they will commence work with us in June 2024.

We are in the process of consulting on a proposed new Street Trading Policy and, in particular, which streets, if any, should be prohibited streets.

We were also part of the successful Corporate Services marketplace event at East Suffolk House on 24 January 2024 and thank you all for your support.

HEALTH

Development of Feel Good Suffolk (FGS) is ongoing, with recruitment taking place to ensure we have the resource to meet the high demand we are seeing in the East. We've recently recruited an additional FGS Advisor and an Area Coordinator role which will be shared across East Suffolk, Babergh and Mid Suffolk to coordinate and support our operational teams. We are also currently advertising for an FGS Development Officer which will support the ongoing development and delivery of FGS services in East Suffolk. Following a soft launch in October, preparations for a full launch are taking place ahead of April, when our Healthy Weight groups will become available and promotion of our services will increase.

The most recent Waveney Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board focussed on an innovative idea to bring together the various 'friendly' community initiatives (dementia, age, young people, mental health, compassionate) into one East Suffolk 'inclusive communities' framework. The idea was well received by the Partnership who spent some time working on key themes and structures which the Communities team will now develop further, ideally working with a local university.

Lowestoft Communities Officers, working with Lowestoft Rising and the Waveney Voluntary and Statutory Partnership, have received funding for 3 x free Mental Health First Aid courses for those working in the public and voluntary/community sector. The 2 day courses will be run by nationally accredited Mental Health First Aid trainers but delivered in Lowestoft at the Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve. With two courses taking place in March and a third potential course in May (to tie in with Mental Health Awareness Week), we should have

trained 48 people in the voluntary/community sector. In addition, a bespoke version of the course will be run in July for 16 teaching staff across Lowestoft.

The funding will also allow Waveney to have its own Befriending Scheme, run by Communities Together East Anglia, to help provide telephone and face to face support to those who are most isolated in the community. Trained staff and volunteers will take referrals from across Waveney and match them up with suitable support. The longer term aim being to connect those people with existing venues like Warm Welcomes to help them build a more social interaction.

I was pleased to be part of the annual workshop to refresh the Felixstowe Peninsular Community Partnership priorities earlier this month. More than 50 people attended the session at the Trimley Sports and Social Club and fully participated in agreeing a new set of priorities. This was followed by a Health and Wellbeing Fair in Harvest House in Felixstowe, organised by the Community Partnership, on 14 March, which brought together a wide range of groups who can support residents with their mental and physical health and wellbeing.

The Be Well Bus is a mobile one-stop shop for health and wellbeing support in the Ipswich and East Suffolk Alliance area. All residents are encouraged to visit the Bus (no appointment needed) as it travels around towns and villages at prearranged dates and times. On board you will find a knowledgeable team made up of people from lots of different health, care and community organisations, including Social Prescribers. Depending on people's needs, the staff on the bus will either offer help and advice there and then or signpost to an organisation best placed to help. For more information visit the Be Well Bus timetable [Be Well Bus timetable announced for Ipswich and east Suffolk - NHS Suffolk and North East Essex ICB](#).

Councillors are welcome to position themselves on the bus as an opportunity to speak with residents about local issues, something which has already been happening in some areas.

CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY TEAM

The Corporate Health and Safety Team has been focused on the Annual Cycle tasks each month. February was risk assessment month. Each manager was asked to review their team's risk assessments in relation to the activities that staff undertake but also to consider risks that arise as a result of their activities. For example the Asset Management Team need to think about any risks that members of the public might be exposed to when using ESC buildings and land as well as the risks that the team members might be exposed to. January was the month when all staff should have submitted Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments. Just under half the ESC workforce submitted DSE assessments and from that a number of issues have arisen that need further investigation by the Corporate Health and Safety Team before they advise managers on any actions that might be necessary to ensure that the employee's health is not adversely affected as a result of their working environment.

FOOD AND SAFETY TEAM

We have had recent involvement with a number of workplace health and safety issues. Two businesses were issued with notices prohibiting activities where there was a risk of serious

personal injury. These related to a risk of a fall from height and a risk associated with a gas appliance. Both these risks are now being controlled. We have also been involved in the investigation and control of a chlorine gas leak at a swimming pool in a hotel leisure complex.

In February, we hosted a food sampling training session at East Suffolk House provided by the UK Health Security Agency Laboratory. Food Enforcement Officers from across Suffolk attended and it was very well received.

We have contributed to a national survey investigating the microbiological quality of cooked ready-to-eat sliced meat from retail premises. We have submitted 45 samples to the UK Health Security Agency Laboratory. The survey ends on 31 March 2024. The Agency will collate the results and prepare a national report.

We are working very hard to complete food safety inspections. The annual return to the Food Standards Agency detailing inspections completed within 2023/24 will be submitted by 26 April 2024. The details of this return will be included in the Food and Health & Safety Service Plan 2024/25.

SUFFOLK COASTAL PORT HEALTH (SCPHA)

On 7 March, twenty new high-risk products of Non-Animal Origin were added to the list of products requiring specific documentation and health checks when imported into the UK. This includes rice from India and enoki mushrooms from South Korea. We are actively collaborating with various agents who import these products to devise safe sampling methods. The rice is a particular challenge because it is typically imported into the UK in bulk lined containers posing significant safety risks to us when opening container doors.

The next significant date is 30 April, marking the go-live date for the Border Target Operating Model. A concerted effort is underway to recruit personnel for positions at Harwich Port. Some of these recruits will likely transition from roles in the African Swine Fever project team, which concludes at the end of March.

Currently, we have five staff members on secondment to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs providing crucial training, advice and support. This arrangement is immensely beneficial as it enables the transfer of accurate knowledge and best practice while ensuring that Port Health concerns and requirements remain a top priority in decision-making processes.

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

Strategic Recruitment Partner - following on from a Cabinet decision in December to go out to tender for a Strategic Recruitment Partner to support our recruitment needs, this procurement is now live until 12 April. This Partner will provide strategic and operational support in the appointment of both permanent and temporary roles across a variety of services and levels to meet our staffing needs for up to five years.

Managing performance – we manage performance (which includes the annual setting of objectives) using the My Conversation process. This process has been updated following feedback from an all-staff survey and workshop with a cross sectional representation of staff. As our service planning process is completed, objective setting for all staff will commence from April onwards with Human Resources aiming to ensure a 100% completion rate for all employees is achieved.

DIGITAL, PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

Marina Centre move

In order to help facilitate the Lowestoft Cultural Quarter project, we will be vacating the Marina Customer Contact Centre in the Lowestoft town centre in September to allow for partial demolition of the existing building. A large amount of work has been undertaken over the last few months to identify suitable alternative accommodation for a front-facing customer services presence in the town centre in order to continue providing essential face to face services in that location, in particular for those who may be more vulnerable or unable to use other channels. We are looking to take a report to Cabinet in April/May on this issue.

Customer Service Principles

In the January report, we told you about our Demand Listening exercise. Further work has been undertaken in developing our new set of Customer Service Principles including consulting with Cabinet, the Corporate Leadership Team and other stakeholders to delve into the question ‘What is important to the customer?’

A Strategy, including these developed Principles, will be taken to Cabinet in the coming months.

Service Planning

A new round of service planning for 2024/25 has been kicked off across all service areas, feeding into the objectives of Our Direction. A robust framework has been established to govern the new Strategic Plan, which includes the development of new Key Performance Indicator dashboards and Action Plans.

Cyber Security

We have completed our self-assessment exercise against the National Cyber Security Centre Framework. During February the Local Government Association was on site undertaking a type of peer review to specifically look at our Cyber Security based on the self-assessment framework. Members and officers were interviewed as part of this process and we are currently awaiting our final report which will be shared in due course.

At the end of February, we teamed up with the Fraud team to deliver a Cyber Fraud and Cyber Security Member development session. We talked about the measures in place to protect us as against cyber-crime but also the dangers we still face and how everyone can play their part in recognising threats. We were joined by Suffolk and Norfolk Police to talk about the dangers of Cyber Fraud in our personal lives too. The recording of this interesting and informative session and the accompanying slides can be found on the Member Development Teams channel.

General update

In January, Customer Services was brought into the Digital and Programme Management service area and we are pleased to report that good working relationships have been established across the teams and joined up work on customer service delivery through all channels (face to face, telephone and online) is a key factor in this being a successful move. Digital service delivery remains consistently above target, with around 81% of Service Desk calls resolved within the first day and 93% within a week. Satisfaction with online services remains consistent also, with a rating of 4.33 out of 5 stars (from 936 respondents in January). We will be doing further work in the coming year on understanding customer satisfaction on a wider scale.

ASSETS

Developments, Acquisitions and Disposals

The Nexus breaking ground ceremony took place on 1 February and the foundations are now complete and works are progressing to programme.

Enabling works have also been completed at Jubilee Terrace, Lowestoft and the site was handed over to the Economic Development team earlier this month so that demolition can begin.

Building Services

The repair and refurbishment work to the footbridge of the Ravine in Lowestoft has been completed and both the bridge and road below are fully open. This has been a difficult and complex piece of work due to the age, construction and heritage listing of the bridge.

The restoration of the Aldeburgh Jubilee Shelter is now complete and safety repairs and installation of a new path are also complete at Cavendish Park, Felixstowe.

Repairs to the timber bridge in the public open space on Euston Avenue in Rushmere St Andrew are now complete.

Rent reviews and lease agreements

We continue to make significant progress with completing outstanding rent reviews and lease renewals. Since 1 October 2023, 78 lease events have been completed resulting in an annual rental increase of in excess over £130k.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Toby Hammond, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development and Transport
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Skills and Employment Programme

We are pooling part of our UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation (£136k out of a total programme budget of £473k) with the other Suffolk district and borough councils to deliver a county-wide Skills and Employment programme. Suffolk County Council, as the strategic lead for skills in the county, have been commissioned to appoint a provider to deliver two strands of skills and employment support to adults and young people.

Youth support will focus on those that are hardest to reach across the county and help them move successfully into the labour market. The service will provide intensive and flexible 1:1 support for young people aged 16-24 who are facing multiple and/or significant barriers. Focussing primarily on those who are not in employment, education or training, the service will support individuals to address barriers, develop 'soft' skills, 'hard' skills and gain basic qualifications. 'Personal development leads' will support the customer through an individual journey of development appropriate to their needs by utilising existing or new personal support, skills programmes and other activities.

We would like to see a multi-stranded approach to adult support which can work with individuals aged 18 or over who may be economically inactive or employed. The activity should include an initial assessment and a formal plan of action, which will signpost to other existing provision and include appropriate interventions/activities funded directly by this project.

The County Council will be the contract holder and together with the districts and borough will act as a consortium for service development, monitoring and reporting. It is expected that the supplier will have knowledge of existing providers and signpost to other funded services as relevant to ensure best use of funding and to reduce duplication.

Leiston Masterplan Progress

We are working closely with Leiston Town Council, the Leiston Community Land Trust and Place Board partners to progress the Leiston Masterplan. The proposed Market Square site will now be subject to a detailed design, feasibility and viability assessment. This will focus on our assets on Sizewell Road and our land ownership to the rear of these buildings and will test the viability of a mixed-use scheme incorporating residential, commercial and community building within a new focal point for the town centre.

Sizewell C are providing funding of £250k to progress the design, feasibility and viability work which is expected to be commissioned this Spring and completed by the end of 2024.

The proposed Market Square development, alongside other significant town centre enhancements such as the transport and traffic scheme, is supported by the Town Council (within their existing and emerging Neighbourhood Plans) and Community Land Trust.

Lowestoft Towns Fund ‘meet the buyer’ event

We hosted a ‘meet the buyer’ event at East Point Pavilion on 5 March. This provided an opportunity for potential local suppliers to understand more about the £67m Towns Fund regeneration programme and the construction contracts which will be let in the coming months. Presentations were provided by both the Regeneration and Procurement teams to around 80 local suppliers with the aim of ensuring as much contract spend as possible can be retained within the local area.

Formation of the Suffolk Business Board

With the closure of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership at the end of March and the integration of their functions into Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils, Suffolk County Council is recruiting business leaders to sit on the new Suffolk Business Board. The priority of the new Suffolk economy structure is to develop a new county-wide economic strategy and programme. The Business Board will represent the local business community in steering the development of the new strategy. Candidates for the Board are being sought who represent the diversity of the Suffolk economy, can demonstrate sector expertise, experience of leadership, credibility to champion the county and region and have the ability to convene and represent a collective view.

With the largest economy in the county, including economic assets of national and international significance alongside a resilient and diverse Small and Medium Enterprise base, it is important that East Suffolk is appropriately represented on this Board. Officers are making contact with business leaders in the district to ensure they are aware of this opportunity and encouraging them to apply to become a member of the Board. The Board will be very influential in the delivery of key economic programmes such as business support and skills development.

PARKING SERVICES

Parking Review

Felixstowe – we met with Felixstowe Town Council at the end of February and presented options for changes in parking regulations based on the feedback that we gathered in previous sessions. The next step is to summarise some options for the Town Council to agree, before going out to public consultation.

Beccles – the next meeting with Beccles Town Council is taking place in April where we will present options. The next steps will be as set out above for Felixstowe.

Bungay – we are currently reviewing our data on parking issues in Bungay and will be setting up a date to meet with the Town Council again in the coming weeks to discuss.

Framlingham – we are confirming with the County Council’s transport team regarding the works that has been mapped out for the town.

Once we have agreed the proposals for the above locations, we will focus on other towns with Halesworth next in line.

With the changes to Lowestoft town centre, we also want to focus on a review of Lowestoft town centre parking and signage.

National Parking Platform

We are working closely with Data Protection, Procurement, ICT and Legal Services to move forward with the National Parking Platform. This scheme will allow customers to use any payment platform (not just RingGo) when parking in our car parks. We are aiming to join the pilot in April. Four cashless parking providers have expressed an interest with a fifth provider joining soon.

Resurfacing

Chapel Lane in Wickham Market was resurfaced on 18 March 2024. We are obtaining quotes to resurface Angel Lane North in Halesworth.

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ENERGY

Sizewell C update

Sizewell C Co commenced the Sizewell C Development Consent Order (DCO) on 15 January 2024, one of the first formal steps on the road to delivering the new 3.2GW nuclear power station. The project was granted development consent in July 2022 and whilst some preparatory works have been taking place, formal commencement of the DCO only recently occurred. A large number of obligations in the DCO and associated Deed of Obligation had to be satisfied before commencement could be undertaken. Several governance groups also had to be established. Officers have been working with Sizewell C and other stakeholders ensuring that all the commitments are being met.

LionLink update

The promoters of the project, National Grid Ventures (NGV), have submitted their Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report, which will establish the scope of the environmental assessments and content of the Environmental Statement to be undertaken and submitted with the application for development consent in the future. The Scoping Request comprising the Scoping Report is submitted by NGV to the Planning Inspectorate who must provide a Scoping Opinion within 42 days of receiving the request. We have been consulted on this document and officers are now reviewing the reports and a response to the consultation is being drafted.

National Grid Electricity System Operator (NGESO) East Anglia Study

The Offshore Coordination Support Scheme (OCSS) run by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero awarded funding to the promoters of Sea Link, a National Grid reinforcement project, and Five Estuaries and North Falls (two offshore wind projects), to enable them to work together and explore the potential for coordination as part of the Offshore Transmission Network Review Early Opportunities workstream. The East Anglia

Study assesses the different ways to transfer electricity once it has landed from specific offshore windfarms and interconnectors off the coast of East Anglia to where it is needed. A letter was written to the Government raising concerns in relation to the implications of the funding awarded as part of the OCSS and to request greater transparency of the decision-making associated with outputs. We have engaged with this study and the final report was published on 12 March 2024. We are reviewing this report.

Other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

We continue to engage with the promoters of the projects affecting our district. It is anticipated that RWE will submit their development consent application for the Five Estuaries Offshore Windfarm shortly.

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

Development Management

Following a consultation between December 2023 and February 2024, we have progressed a new draft Local Validation List document which is recommended to be adopted by the Strategic Planning Committee on 8 April. The Local Validation List is a key tool in ensuring that planning applications are accompanied by the correct detail, information, surveys, plans and assessments to properly inform good decision-making. The Local Validation List has to meet five key principles - Necessity, Precision, Proportionality, Fitness for Purpose and Assistance. Once adopted, the Local Validation List will be launched in a more interactive web-based form, in line with other recent digital advances in the service.

Policy and Specialist Services

On 6 March we began a consultation on the preparation of a Planning Position Statement for the Kirkley Waterfront site in Lowestoft, seeking views on what this document should contain. This large site, much of which is vacant, is identified for redevelopment in the Waveney Local Plan and the preparation of the Planning Position Statement will help to bring development forward. The consultation ends on 3 April.

On 5 March Cabinet approved the five year statutory review of the Waveney Local Plan, concluding that this remains effective and that an update is not necessary at this time. Alongside this, Cabinet also approved a new Local Development Scheme for East Suffolk, providing up to date information on the planning policy documents being prepared and setting out an indicative timetable for the future preparation of an East Suffolk Local Plan. This will be kept under review, pending the national reforms to plan-making which we are anticipating coming in from Autumn 2024.

Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain came into force on 12 February 2024 for major development planning applications, with smaller developments to follow from 2 April (some categories of development will be exempt).

The 2024 Quality of Place Awards will be opening for nominations on 2 April, inviting submissions of projects that celebrate high quality design in the district. We look forward to receiving this year's entries.

A series of Member training sessions provided by our Specialist Services team are underway in March and April, open to all Members and covering arboriculture, heritage, landscape, ecology and design and placemaking.

COASTAL MANAGEMENT

Lowestoft Flood Protection

No funding was allocated to the Lowestoft Tidal Barrier project in the Spring Statement on 6 March and so we informed the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of our intention to withdraw the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) application on 12 March with a view to formally withdrawing the TWAO on 28 March. If no funding is pledged before 28 March, the project will continue its full closure process. If funding is pledged after this date, it will not be viable to re-start the project due to the increased costs of pausing, the need to submit a new TWAO application and programme delays leading to an inability to access the navigation channel for construction. We met with Peter Aldous MP on 8 March to share the TWAO withdrawal timeline with him. The Environment Agency has been informed of the project's current status and timeline and Peter Aldous MP has also informed the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of this.

Incident response

Coastal Partnership East has an out of hours incident reporting system in place (a SITREP report) and each morning a weather check is carried out that indicates whether we need to shut flood gates or put the Lowestoft Flood defences up. This mechanism is funded solely by the Council and we are in discussions with other councils regarding a contribution towards this system.

We have closed the Felixstowe flood gates on a number of occasions over the past few months. February and March have seen less extreme weather systems and storms compared to the previous three months. There are high astronomical tides from 8 - 12 April when the Suffolk coast will likely experience changes in beach levels, cliff erosion and movement in various locations.

On 8 March we submitted our review and technical advice to the draft outputs of the National Coast and Erosion Risk Mapping 2 project. This Environment Agency led national project is due to be launched in the Summer/Autumn months and will be housed on the same gov.uk website as the new Shoreline Management Plan Explorer.

Resilient Coasts

Work has begun on baselining communities' readiness to adapt across the Resilient Coasts pilot locations. We have worked with Hello Lamp Post and will place QR codes at each pilot location (Corton and Gunton, Lowestoft, Pakefield, Southwold and Thorpeness) where members of the public can interact with the AI based engagement tool to find out more about the coast and adaptation.

Resilient Coasts is also one of the major sponsors of the Suffolk Youth Climate Conference taking place in July and we will be hosting a stand and holding a workshop at the event. The Regional Flood and Coastal Committee will also be joining the team with a stand and a workshop.

Capital bid success

We submitted capital bids for a range of works last year for the 2024/25 financial year. Three projects gained funding.

Southwold North Wall toe works – Phase 2 – £2m

This project will look to install a new line of steel sheet toe piles in front of the existing toe piles. The existing piles have become exposed due to the reducing beach levels and the constant abrasion by the beach material has worn holes in them. As a result, material is being washed out from under the wall and, in turn, the promenade above causing large voids. Without these works, the sea wall and promenade would become unstable and have to be closed to the public and also to the seasonal beach huts that sit on the prom during the summer season. Planning work is underway with all works to be completed before the end of the 24/25 financial year.

North Denes health and safety surfacing works – £200k

This project looks to address the ongoing trip hazards along the entire length of the 1.5km North Denes promenade. The promenade surface is made up of large concrete slabs and each has expansion joints that, as a result of the now regular wave overtopping, loses material. This leaves longitudinal and crossways open channels that are a significant trip hazard to the promenade users. Over the years various materials have been used to patch but this is only a short-term fix. A product that was used over 12 years ago and is still holding fast today has been revisited and by working with the manufacturer, we have planned these works to be a “fit and forget” solution for the next 10 to 15 years plus. Once complete, this will be a significant cost saving for the Council.

Standalone aids to navigation markers – £300k

We have a large number of navigation markers marking the ends of timber and rock groynes. These markers are administered by Trinity House and are a legal requirement to warn maritime users of the underwater hazards. Typically the markers are fixed directly to the timber groynes but as they reach the end of their design life, they are unable to support the navigation markers and so fall into the sea. Recovery and reinstatement has significant challenges and in more and more cases we are unable to refix the markers. As a result, we run the risk of having enforcement action taken against us. This project will install standalone steel piles with a new navigation marker on top. The piles will stand independently to the groyne and will have a 25-plus year design life. As such, we will save maintenance costs. We have worked closely with Trinity House and have also been able to rationalise the marker field from Corton to Ness Point, further reducing the future number of navigational assets required. Once the new markers are in place, all existing markers will be removed and disposed of.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Vince Langdon-Morris, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Resources and Value for Money
Contact Details:	vince.langdon-morris@eastsoffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07823 795299

Storm Babet funding support

Government funded schemes to support residents and businesses closed on 25 January 2024. Finance, along with other teams across the Council, worked with the Anglia Revenues Partnership and Suffolk County Council to distribute flood relief funds to affected residents and businesses as quickly as possible and in accordance with Government criteria. We administered the payment of:

- 264 Community Recovery Grants applications from residents totalling £132k. A total of £181,805.82 of Council Tax Discount was also applied to approved applications as per the scheme guidance.
- 34 Business Recovery Grants of £2,500, totalling £85k.

Year End and External Audit

Following the setting of the 2024/25 Budget, we are now moving into year-end and preparations for this have now started. April and May is an intense period as we prepare the draft Statement of Accounts for 2023/24 which has a statutory deadline for publication on our website of 31 May 2024. Despite the backlog in external audit nationally, the statutory deadline for local authorities to publish the draft accounts remains unchanged.

The backlog in the publication of audited accounts of local bodies in England has grown to an unacceptable level. The number of outstanding opinions peaked on 30 September 2023 at 918. As at 31 December 2023, the backlog of outstanding audit opinions stood at 771. Proposals have been put forward to address the national backlog which consists of three phases:

- Phase 1: Reset involving clearing the backlog of historical audit opinions up to and including the financial year 2022/23 by 30 September 2024.
- Phase 2: Recovery from Phase 1 in a way that does not cause a recurrence of the backlog by using backstop dates to allow assurance to be rebuilt over multiple audit cycles.
- Phase 3: Reform involving addressing systemic challenges in the local audit system and embedding timely financial reporting and audit.

We have responded to a consultation on these proposals.

Our External Auditors, Ernest and Young, provided an update to the Audit & Governance Committee on 11 March. This covered an update on their Value for Money work for 2021/22 and 2022/23, their approach to the audit for these years in light of the above proposals and to discuss their audit plan for 2023/24.

Marketplace Event - 21 February

The Finance team, along with the Anglia Revenues Partnership and Internal Audit, had stands at the marketplace event and showed great creativity in presenting their

services. There was a fantastic atmosphere in the atrium at Riverside with plenty of interactive activities. The event was well attended and enjoyed by all and provided a great opportunity for these services to showcase what they do.

Procurement

Work has begun on rewriting our Procurement Strategy with the aim of aligning the new Strategy with Our Direction 2028. In January, a well-attended and informative workshop for Members and officers was held to help define the priorities for procurement. The feedback given by those who attended was incredibly valuable and the Procurement Manager is now in the process of scoping out the new Procurement Strategy which will be brought back to Members for approval in due course.

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Rachel Smith-Lyte, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment
Contact Details:	rachel.smith-lyte@eastsoffolk.gov.uk Tel: 07825 421137

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

We arranged face-to-face training on Anti-Social Behaviour for all those involved in the subject across the Council including Housing, Communities, Legal and other teams. This will lead to a better understanding of the subject and improve joint working.

We are working with ICT on a scheme to help identify fly tipping hot spots in each ward using mapping systems on SharePoint that are available to all Members.

Work is taking place with the Communications team to provide more and better information on dog control and signage across the district in an aim to be more dog friendly.

Implementation of the new Idox system started on 11 March and over the next few weeks the process will be finalised.

We are working with and advising the Planning and Regeneration teams in respect of the Battery Green proposals in Lowestoft including noise impacts and the Kirkley Waterfront scheme including contaminated land, air quality and noise.

The Gull Wing bridge is coming towards the end of its build and we have advised on noise and dust throughout its construction and very few complaints have been received. The final push requires extended working hours into Sunday daytimes.

We are providing a more active response to bonfire complaints, continuing to use a graduated enforcement approach and encouraging multi-agency working where appropriate. Recently we investigated complaints of a bonfire in Hollesley, identifying that a company had not obtained an exemption from the Environment Agency to burn wood. We arranged for this to be investigated resulting in a solution to the problem.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Greenprint Forum held a successful 'Nourishing Local & Sustainable Food' event on 28 February. We served sustainable food in a community venue and showcased local community groups. The event was near capacity with a number of landowners and farmers in attendance, which resulted in 'fruitful' discussions and new connections being made.

We are currently updating and expanding our Climate Action Framework, now titled the Environmental Impact Plan, to acknowledge that this will be the key document that summarises publicly how we are delivering on the Environment Impact element of 'Our Direction 2028' and our wider climate and sustainability work. The plan is to submit the document to Full Council in July. It is currently twice the size of the previous version!

We have recently met a number of Town Council representatives on climate change. There are opportunities for further support and collaboration where resource allow. We are looking at ways to build more peer-to-peer and Local Government Association support plus assisting Town Councils to identify the areas where they can make the greatest tangible difference. A key next step is convening a workshop for Town Council Clerks and colleagues to discuss the challenges and opportunities and move forward from there.

WEEE consultation

The Government is consulting on extended producer responsibility measures to improve the collection of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) for reuse, repair and recycling. They are looking for ideas on how WEEE can be prevented from entering the residual waste stream to stop precious metals being lost and to reduce fires caused by exploding batteries. The consultation asked for feedback on how distribution hubs and freight fulfilment houses should be held responsible for the electricals they place on the market, as well as traditional routes to market such as shops and online retailers. Work continues on the implementation plan for the kerbside collection of small electrical items in East Suffolk.

Food Savvy

We have supported the Saxmundham Community Fridge with Food Savvy giveaways to help residents reduce food waste. Volunteers from the Fridge have undertaken Food Savvy training so they can give advice on reducing food waste in the home at the same time as reducing food waste from the commercial sector by redistributing it. We also attended the Greenprint Forum on Food and Farming with Food Savvy messaging, giveaways and recipe cards and supported a whole school assembly and class activities at Coldfair Green Primary school in Knodishall. Around 150 children engaged with food waste reduction messaging and activities.

Waste and recycling education

We supported three tours of the Energy From Waste plant in Great Blakenham with approximately 60 children from Kesgrave Heath Primary School. The tours included talks on what to recycle at Suffolk's recycling centres and what happens to waste that is collected from our homes. The tours allowed the children to see what happens to residual waste collected from their homes and they were even allowed to move the crane arms used for mixing waste before it was loaded into the plant for incineration.

We have also supported residents in a supported living scheme in Lowestoft to improve recycling and reduce food waste.

Fly tipping process

We are working closely with East Suffolk Services Limited to streamline the current process of reporting and clearing fly tips. This includes bringing fly tips on housing land into the main reporting channel and the capture of data on clearance.

Street cleansing pilot

The pilot, which ran from November to February in Lowestoft and Felixstowe has now ended. A full review is being carried out and an action plan for the service is now being developed. Initial feedback from stakeholders has been positive on the cleanliness of the areas within the pilot zones. The previous service has now resumed prior to agreement on the specification for Street Cleansing going forward.

Community litter picks

Bookings for community litter picks continue to climb and during March, groups have joined in with the national Spring Clean campaign. We currently have 200 litter sticks and 100 hoops to loan out and these are being used to full effect. Positively, there may be additional funding for new equipment, to include gloves and high vis jackets, some on longer term loan.

Litter and Fido Bin Policy

The consultation on the Policy ended in January and, overall, there was a positive response. The Policy is now being taken forward and will be published and communicated. This covers the types of bin we will provide, our stance on BBQs and how the collection of third-party bins on land that is not our responsibility will be managed.

Appendices

Appendices:
None

Background reference papers:
None