



## FULL COUNCIL

Wednesday, 24 January 2024

<b>Subject</b>	Cabinet Members' Report and Outside Bodies Representatives' Report to Council
<b>Report by</b>	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 <b>NOT</b> in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	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

<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Caroline Topping, Leader of the Council
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### DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

We are pleased to announce that once again we have been accredited with the coveted 'gold standard' Councillor Development Charter Plus Award because of our commitment to Member development and excellent support to Councillors. The accreditation process required significant preparation and thanks is noted to Sarah Davis and Nicola Wotton for their work on the submission.

Planning is currently underway for the upcoming Model District Council on 9 February 2024, where we will be hosting 53 young people from a range of schools across the district. The day will include a mock Full Council meeting and a Question Time session with group leaders.

We will also be showcasing Democratic Services at the East Suffolk House marketplace on 24 January 2024.

### LEGAL SERVICES

Our Trainee Solicitor, Jemima Shaw, qualifies this month having completed her 2 year training contract with us under the stewardship of Jo Hooley and Martin Clarke. We are pleased to be retaining Jemima's services in a Lawyer role. Our Apprentice and Case Worker are both undertaking a Paralegal CILEX apprenticeship which will last for 2 years. We have also appointed a new Litigation Lawyer who will be starting with us in February.

We have completed various matters in recent months including:

For Housing Services:

- Purchase of 208 Denmark Road, Lowestoft
- Buy back of Plot 4 at Darsham
- Transfer of land at St James Lane, South Elmham
- Sale of Plot 4 Chapel Road, Wrentham under shared ownership lease

For Asset Management:

- The transfer back from the Administrators of the Wilko store in Lowestoft
- Leases of huts 4 and 6 Seashore Village, Felixstowe

For Port Health:

- Completed the lease of Dunlin House at Felixstowe Dock

On 1 November 2023, we successfully defended an appeal against our decision to revoke a taxi driver's licence:

[Council right to revoke driver's licence following pattern of dangerous driving | Cornerstone Barristers](#)

We also successfully prosecuted a breach of an enforcement notice:  
[Property owner fined for breaching enforcement notice » East Suffolk Council](#)

Advice and governance support has been provided on Swap to Stop smoking cessation/diversion to vaping, sponsored by Government via Public Health England using a new procurement model whereby Public Health England meet the cost of call-offs made by us (and other districts and boroughs in the county) from a framework agreement.

In relation to Coastal Protection East (CPE), we have completed the following:

- Secondment Agreement to bring a Balfour Beatty employee over to CPE to use and further develop specialist expertise.
- CPE sediment study by Moffatt & Nichol who hold specialist expertise in this new area of identifying sediment movement.
- International Coalition for Sustainable Infrastructure – researching and presenting materials to round table meetings of multiple stakeholders to develop impactful outputs/reports, enable knowledge exchange within the global community, organise/host webinars to attract an international audience and disseminate project outputs.
- A Memorandum of Understanding with the London School of Economics to appoint them to create a baseline for data CPE will collect, produced by ‘the Zurich Tool’, created at the Zurich Hub at the London School of Economics.
- Icarus Collective Ltd – public engagement specialists appointed to collect data to create the baseline above.

We will also be participating in the Corporate Services marketplace at East Suffolk House on 24 January 2024.

<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor David Beavan, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing
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## HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

We continue to manage the compliance works to bring our final scheme to a close with the current sub-contractor. This will then leave approximately 10 retired living schemes that require extensive fire safety upgrade works to be carried out. The General Needs blocks are also having works carried out as advised by the Fire Risk Assessments we have completed.

We have also been working very hard to reduce the number of empty properties and are hoping to maintain this through the year with a focus on team performance managing the empty property repair process.

It is anticipated that we will be implementing a mobile scheduling solution early in the new financial year. Support from the entire team is required ensure the successful implementation

of this technology. The system will allow more effective management of the team and repairs service and support the production of better management information to further drive improvement. Residents will also benefit from this introduction. Our current system only allows for some appointments to be made with a reliance on officers making follow up calls to secure appointments. The new system will enable immediately confirmed appointments for each repair that we carry out.

## **HOUSING INVESTMENT**

Stock Condition Surveys are continuing and we are set to complete stage 1 ahead of programme (1 April 2024). The second phase will be delivered with the assistance of an external contractor.

To enable us to undertake Stock Condition Surveys we have built, loaded and tested a tablet based recording data system and initial feedback has been very good so we are ready to release this to the teams.

We have been meeting with major energy suppliers with regard to Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding and will look to formalise an agreement shortly. One of the initiatives we are looking to onboard is the provision of innovative photovoltaic (PV) panels to our housing stock. These new panels are less affected by shading and generate more usable energy for homes. By using this technology we can increase the number of homes that would attract ECO funding - normal guidelines state that homes must be Energy Performance Certificate E or below but with the use of innovative technology, the minimum requirement is Energy Performance Certificate D or below. This system of PV utilises smart technology to achieve a greater solar gain but if the chip fails, the PV panels simply revert to being standard PV. Quite simply, we are seeking to boost the property numbers and funding and mitigate the risk.

We have engaged a specialist retrofit designer to assist us in specifying works to homes in Beccles. These homes have been highlighted as in need of energy measures and have been monitored for a period of time. This will enable us to see the improvements made in directly comparable data sets, before and after.

We have also been leading on legislative updates regarding the Construction Design and Management Act, which is a Health Safety and Welfare duty for all construction activities. Phase 1 was internal refresher presentations and phase 2 has seen the first session of training delivered by our partnered Construction, Design and Management Advisor. To marry with phase 2, a full set of supporting documents, processes and policy have been developed and this will be presented shortly for sign off.

Essex and Suffolk Water has started on a project of replacing lead mains to a limited number of our homes in Lowestoft. This is a fully funded activity that we have been able to secure. There will be a second round of funding in the next financial year and we have already started work to increase the number of homes for which this fully funded work could apply.

## **HOUSING NEEDS**

We continue to experience high levels of demand. We are currently actively working with 488 households under the Prevention, Relief or Main duties. The total number of active applications on the Gateway to Homechoice register is currently 4,536, although we expect this to increase in the first quarter of 2024. Since April 2023, we have housed 629 households through the register and have received 2,583 new applications over the same period.

Since April 2023, we have been able to prevent or relieve homelessness for 294 households achieving successful outcomes by providing early intervention or finding alternative accommodation. At the end of November 2023, we had 107 households in temporary accommodation (TA) with 62% of these households being families. Predictions indicate that there will be a 48% increase in households being placed in TA by the end of March 2024.

We continue to trigger the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) during the winter months as temperatures reduce, to ensure we can offer accommodation to those verified as rough sleepers or at risk of rough sleeping. SWEP is activated when the Met Office forecasts a temperature of below zero Celsius for a minimum of three nights. Local weather conditions, such as wind chill, snow and heavy rainfall, will also be considered. All people who are sleeping rough are to be provided with a bed for the night, even those who are not owed a statutory duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and those who have no recourse to public funds. We continue to work closely with key partners to support all rough sleepers and are in close contact with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to notify them when SWEP is triggered.

We expect the first quarter of 2024 to be a busy one as this is when we notice an increase in cases applying through the Gateway to Homechoice register, relationship breakdowns and domestic abuse. We have the resources and expertise within the team to offer the required advice.

## **PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING**

Our Stepping Home service won the Ipswich and East Alliance Award for Collaboration. This service supports vulnerable patients through complex housing, environmental and social crises that would otherwise lead to delayed transfer of care or increased risk of hospital admission. The complexity of the cases requires the service coordinator to build partnerships with wide ranging partners and stakeholders to resolve each unique scenario and ensure the best patient experience and long term resolution. A typical scenario might involve an initial referral from a fire or ambulance crew for a cold, damp, hoarded home with unsafe and insanitary conditions. The solution involves completing a home and personal assessment and then liaison with community health and hospital staff, benefit agencies, the patient and their family, builders, contractors, handypeople, cleaners and de-clutter agencies to make the home safe. Time and again the solution is a smooth transition for the patient to a safer, sustainable home with many patients accessing the Stepping Home hub temporarily to alleviate pressures in the hospital. Stepping Home is an excellent example of how health and social care, housing and the community networks are working together to improve patient outcomes and reduce

system pressures. This service is invaluable in its holistic approach; one service for a whole bespoke solution:

[The Ipswich and East Suffolk Alliance Awards Evening - NHS Suffolk and North East Essex ICB](#)

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## COMMUNITIES AND LEISURE

The **Community Help Hub**, which includes both Community Help Officers and Financial Inclusion Officers, has now received 1,359 referrals in total (as of 5 January 2024). The Community Help Officers triage all referrals, providing practical support including accessing food, cooking equipment or household items and/or making referrals into other organisations eg social care, and pass any with a need for help with money to the Financial Inclusion Officers.

Financial Inclusion Officers received 44 new referrals in December, 24 from Lowestoft and the balance from the Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham Community Partnership and Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth Community Partnership areas.

We closed 29 cases in December and 11 of these clients had a benefit check and 3 increased their weekly income by up to £90. Two received cash grants from the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme and one received carpets for their property.

Our weekly 'help with money' outreach at Number 28 community hub in Bungay has seen 27 people in six months. We are considering options for a second outreach location based on data showing the need of an area teamed with viable locations in the local community.

In November 2023, we organised and attended three 'Talk Money' events across the district (Felixstowe, Kelsale and Bungay) where we engaged with local residents and networked with other organisations. We also worked with a primary school in Lowestoft to put on two information sessions for parents and continue to attend outreach events with the Wellbeing on Wheels bus in Lowestoft.

**Warm Welcomes** – a list of the Warm Welcomes in East Suffolk can be found at: [here](#)

Eight projects have been supported through the Winter 2023/04 Cost of Living Community Grants, including a Winter Warm programme on Saturdays at Rushmere Village Hall, The Friends of Yoxford Village Hall Meet Up Tuesdays, frozen food for the St Peter and St John Church Kirkley Pantry, Creative Leiston Drop In, Bungay Community Support 'Good for You' Food and thermal items, and Beccles Ward Warm Welcomes.

We are working with Abbeycroft Leisure to run an ongoing programme of Cooking on a Budget classes for families and our Field to Fork Growing Spaces Grants will go live again in the spring and we are still seeking locations for new Community Pantries across the district.

**Felixstowe Leisure Centre Refurbishment Works** – £500k of refurbishment work at Felixstowe Leisure Centre commenced in December and is nearly complete. The work is to ensure that the customer experience at Felixstowe is maintained until the proposed new Felixstowe Leisure Centre is completed in the next few years. The refurbishment work includes reflooring, redecorating the gym and replacing the gym equipment, decoration and new lighting in the Leisure Centre entrance and reception, a new indoor cycling studio and finally, to be completed in spring, flooring of the swimming changing rooms.

Following the adoption of the Play Strategy 2023- 2027, we are currently consulting on the next phase of play areas that require improvements. The future of Townlands, Field View Gardens, Glebe View and George Brown Way in Beccles, as well as Nock Gardens in Kesgrave, will be reviewed to see whether they are used by the community or can be removed as per the recommendation in the Strategy.

Improvements are planned in Beccles, Felixstowe, Framlingham, Kesgrave, Trimley St Mary and Wrentham and we are keen to hear the views of the people that use these play areas. This information will form part of the tender documents for designs for each of the play areas and we will then consult with the local communities on their preferred choice. The consultation will end on 1 March 2024.

## **TOURISM**

### **The Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation Business Plan**

East Suffolk's tourism economy is worth c£700m per annum and accounts for 15% of our total employment which makes it a highly valuable sector for the district. To support this sector, we created The Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation (DMO) in 2012 in partnership with the local tourism industry. We continue to be the majority funder with additional funding being generated through membership fees and advertising. The DMO is responsible for marketing and promoting East Suffolk as a tourism destination, particularly during the 'shoulder seasons' to ensure sustainable tourism growth and providing tourism businesses with new routes to market.

The DMO has demonstrated its success through a membership base of 250 tourism businesses, a highly regarded website which generates significantly more traffic than the Visit Suffolk site (which promotes the whole county), provides invaluable business support to tourism businesses and also provides a forum for networking/collaboration through their annual conferences. In recent years, the DMO has also taken on responsibility for researching the potential impact on tourism of the major energy projects taking place on the Suffolk coast.

The current funding agreement with the DMO expires in March 2024 and a new business plan covering the period 2024-2027 is currently being drafted and will be presented to Cabinet for approval in February. It is proposed that we provide the DMO with £181k over the next 3 years to continue to deliver marketing, promotion and tourism business support services. In addition, the DMO will support the Sizewell C tourism mitigation programme and will have the potential to access mitigation funding to support this work. The construction of Sizewell C and resulting impacts on the local visitor economy mean that it is even more crucial that an organisation such as the DMO exists to support local businesses.

### **Suffolk tourism review**

As part of the county’s devolution deal, Suffolk County Council has committed to applying to become a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). This is a new sub-regional tourism partnership created following a review of tourism structures across Britain. They provide marketing, training, networking and industry expertise to enhance the tourism offer in a particular area and, as a minimum, their coverage should be at least one county.

Ahead of making this application, Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk district councils have commissioned a review of the current tourism support within the county to determine the most effective model moving forward. The recommendations of this review will inform the decision on whether Suffolk applies to become a single county LVEP or joins forces with Norfolk to create a two-county model. It will also identify how a stable and resilient strategic tourism partnership model can be delivered and how existing DMOs, along with private and public sector partners, can best collaborate to deliver this. The review is due to conclude in early February with recommendations going forward to the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders for approval.

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## LICENSING SERVICES

Since 1 November 2023, there have been four Licensing hearings:

- 1 x Premises Licence application for a social club in Kesgrave that was allowed with conditions.
- 1 x Premises Licence variation for a premises in Thorpeness which was allowed in part.
- 1 x Review of a Premises Licence arising from an allegation of illegal working at a premises.
- 1 x film age classification in relation to 2 films to be shown at Aldeburgh Cinema.

We are awaiting the date for a driver’s further appeal to the Crown Court. This followed the Council’s 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.

As an update to the Scrutiny Committee’s review of taxi licensing, a Request for Resources has been approved for a new Licensing Enforcement Officer. It is anticipated that this post will be filled by April 2024.

Licensing Services will have a stand at the marketplace event at East Suffolk House on 24 January 2024 and we look forward to showcasing our work.

## HEALTH

**Feel Good Suffolk** - referrals into Feel Good Suffolk (FGS) services reduced slightly in December to 178 compared to 190 in November and 338 in October. We expect this to



increase again this month with January and February typically being the most popular time for people to make healthy lifestyle changes.

Since October, 55 clients have received Smoking Cessation support through Allen Carr's Easyway Clinics and 150 clients were provided with Slimming World vouchers. Work is ongoing to develop weight management programmes to be delivered directly by our FGS Advisors, which should launch around March. In December, we submitted a 'Swap to Stop' application on behalf of the FGS partnership, to provide vape starter kits to support people to stop smoking. This has now been accepted and we expect delivery to begin towards the end of January. Progress has also been made with the Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) dispensing contract, with pharmacies in Suffolk now able to sign up and provide NRT to FGS clients, whilst our FGS Advisors provide behavioural support alongside the NRT offer.

An advert went live in early January for a shared FGS Area Coordinator role to coordinate day-to-day operations across East Suffolk, Babergh and Mid Suffolk. We will also shortly be recruiting to two more FGS Advisor roles to ensure we can meet demand.

**Connect Conferences** – the East Suffolk Connect Conferences in December attracted 51 attendees from across a range of statutory and the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector organisations. The aim of the Conferences (similar events were held in Ipswich and Babergh and Mid Suffolk) was to strengthen partnership working and reduce duplication across the health system, including the Community Partnerships who have many health related priorities. A final report will be produced and shared by mid-February which will detail next steps and planned activity to support Connect members to meet the health and wellbeing needs of their communities.

**Funding** - Connect groups in the Saxmundham and North-East and Felixstowe Integrated Network Team areas are working in partnership with us and Suffolk Public Health to allocate £50k of funding per area as part of the Suffolk, Your Needs Met initiative. The aim is to support communities with their emotional wellbeing. As well as a brand new wellbeing hub for Felixstowe, there are currently plans to deliver a number of projects across the Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham Community Partnership area which include community gardens, a life skills programme, Community Cuppas, projects to reduce social isolation and loneliness and awareness raising events throughout the year. Your Needs Met funding has also been allocated to areas within Beccles and Lowestoft who are delivering a range of projects to meet the needs in these areas.

**Safer Streets funding** – we have been awarded £273k, as part of the Home Office's Safer Streets initiative, to increase safety in the public realm primarily focused on reducing anti-social behaviour in the Lowestoft town centre. Two projects have been funded. Just over £200k will go towards new digital CCTV to increase range, visibility and coverage. A new digital control room will be installed this financial year, with new cameras being installed over the course of the next financial year, after consultation with all relevant partners regarding camera location.

£91k of our Safer Streets award will be spent on direct interventions with young people in Lowestoft. This will be supplemented with £50k match funding from the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders. This financial year we have funded St Giles Trust, Access Community Trust and Catch 22 to work with young people in schools and in the community. We are planning the intervention for next financial year in consultation with a range of partners and will look to

deliver a comprehensive and integrated initiative incorporating direct intervention, mentoring and youth provision.

### **CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY TEAM**

We are supporting managers to follow the annual health and safety cycle which covers a different topic each month. The focus for January is how people use their Display Screen Equipment. Each employee is required to complete a self-assessment for any workstation that they use on a regular basis ie at home or in the office. It is important that staff sit in a way that will not lead to the risk of ill health now or in the future. The key thing that all staff should understand is that laptops and tablets are not designed to be used for extended periods of time. Therefore staff must connect their device to a separate keyboard and monitor when working in the office and at home. Referring to laptops during meetings is acceptable as it should not involve extended periods of typing or viewing a small screen. Routinely using a laptop on the knees or on a table without a riser can lead to headaches and neck and shoulder pain. We will provide feedback to the Corporate Leadership Team on the number of people who submit assessments during January.

### **FOOD AND SAFETY**

We continue to carry out food safety interventions at the risk-based frequencies set by the Food Law Code of Practice. A statutory return to the Food Standards Agency on the delivery of food controls for 2023/24 is due to be submitted after 31 March 2024.

I accompanied officers on two inspections of food businesses in December. It was very useful to witness first-hand the work undertaken during an inspection, the reports provided following an inspection and how the food hygiene ratings are determined.

In early January, we responded rapidly to the food recall relating to Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire Cheese following an outbreak of E.coli linked to a death and a number of people in hospital. Two establishments in the district had been supplied with cheese from this company. We were praised by the Food Standards Agency for our swift response in providing information.

We also continue to be involved in significant Health and Safety reactive work, including a prosecution and several ongoing fatality investigations. We are continuing the project promoting the importance of gas and electrical safety checks for catering and hospitality venues.

The tuberculosis case that was subject to a court order has now left hospital following treatment. If they continue to take the medication, they should not pose a risk to others.

### **SUFFOLK COASTAL PORT HEALTH (SCPHA)**

We continue to deliver import controls against a challenging change backdrop that will continue into 2024 as delivery of a significant change to import controls is expected.

The preparatory actions taken last year have enabled Port Health to commence preparations for the implementation of the Border Target Operating Model (BTOM). Although the main impact on SCPHA is not envisaged until 30 April 2024, the next few months will see significant activity to ensure SCPHA is ready for that key deadline. The SCPHA BTOM plan has been

approved by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and funding bids have and will continue to be made to offset any expenditure required. Engagement with National Competent Bodies continues with a view to the practical implementation of the BTOM. However, in the short term, activity to support DEFRA with key operational advice and training activities is in progress.

The focus on the BTOM somewhat overshadows SCPHA, but it should not be forgotten that SCPHA continues to deliver public and animal health controls everyday and it is the hard work of the whole team that makes this a reality.

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**CUSTOMER SERVICES**

Note: Customer Services and Customer Relations now form part of the new Digital, Programme Management & Customer Services department, headed by Sandra Lewis.

**Listening to demand** - during October 2023, a small team drawn from Customer Services worked with an external consultant to listen to a sample of demands arriving into the team through our call centre. The aim of this exercise was to paint a picture of the demand we receive, whether this tends to be of value or preventable and how effectively we then respond to the need. This limited exercise is the first stage of a systems thinking approach to service design.

We learned several lessons, including people's expectations and perceptions of local government, the important distinction between complex and transactional demands, as well as the effectiveness of communication channels and working relationships between teams in the organisation. A more comprehensive report, proposing a set of experience principles and an action plan, will be brought to Cabinet in due course.

**Customer satisfaction survey** - over a period of around 12 to 14 weeks (from August to November 2023), a specialist public sector survey contractor (Opinion Research Services Limited) carried out a survey focussing on satisfaction levels with our contact centre operation.

Over four-in-five (82%) of those making an enquiry were either very or fairly satisfied overall with their contact with us. Between 85% and 90% of respondents agreed that call handlers were polite, took sufficient time (ie didn't rush), were understandable, helpful and provided all necessary information. From the survey's findings, we are exploring insights on new contact methods, opening times and the ways we handle and respond to demand.

**Wednesday mornings at the Marina** - following on from the previous Cabinet report on our reasons for increasing opening hours at the Marina Centre, since 15 November we have assisted 112 customers on Wednesdays on a face-to-face basis. Of these, 40 have been digitally assisted with both Council and non-Council services. We will continue to review all available data to ensure they are offering face to face provision on the correct days and times at the correct locations.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **People Strategy**

Cabinet has approved our People Strategy for 2024 – 2028. A People Strategy guides every aspect of the employee/employer relationship and is critical for attracting, engaging, training and retaining talented employees in the workplace. This Strategy has been developed by our workforce and reflects the needs of our people.

To develop the Strategy, several workshops were held with staff across the organisation, including face to face staff drop-in sessions held across our operational sites, engagement with our Corporate Leadership Team, Managers, Health and Safety and Wellbeing groups. As a result of these workshops, the People Strategy has two themes. The first theme is 'People' and this is about ensuring that we put our people at the heart of everything we do. We want to unlock the full potential in every individual, collectively supporting service areas and teams to deliver the best outcomes they can for our residents. Five priorities have been identified within this theme and these are:

- Wellbeing
- Ways of Working
- Tools and Resources
- Recruitment and Retention
- Connectivity

The second theme is 'Culture' and this is about our organisation's beliefs, values and attitudes and how we are recognised by our employees, residents and stakeholders. In continuing to build on our culture of being an inclusive, flexible, positive and welcoming place to work, five priorities have been identified and these are:

- Values
- Communication
- Reputation
- Relationships
- Consistency

To ensure we deliver against this Strategy, a yearly action plan will be developed so we can be clear about what we will be doing and what outcomes will be achieved. We will also undertake regular staff surveys, using the feedback from these surveys to ensure this Strategy remains relevant and that the actions we commit to undertake are making a positive difference.

## **DIGITAL AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT**

During December, the culmination of a major migration project took place for phase 1 of our Electronic Document Management system (EDMS) upgrade and development. This first phase included all Planning and Building Control records, over 3.5 million documents held electronically supporting current applications and case history were migrated to the new EDMS, meaning it will be easier for customers to access records online, more efficient for officers to access records while out on site using mobile technology and easier for back-office staff to maintain records. It also ensures the systems we use are up to date. Phase 2 of this project concentrates on Environmental Services and Housing and is scheduled for March.

Other major projects also started in December. We are implementing a new Asset Management system for use by both our General Fund Asset Management team and East Suffolk Services Limited. This is a large-scale project which will ensure compliance, health and safety, maintenance and all other records pertaining to our assets are held efficiently and accurately, enabling real time reporting and mobile access to tasks.

Also, in our work to support the East Suffolk Services Limited Improvement Plan, alongside improving Council service delivery, several projects have commenced within this programme of work including Waste Management, CCTV and Home Alarms.

Digital service delivery remains consistently above target, with 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 4.38 out of 5 stars (from 634 respondents in December).

There have been no cyber incidents during the last period, although we must always remain vigilant. We have continued to undertake our self-assessment using the National Cyber Security Centre framework and will use this to identify areas where we may wish to make improvements.

## **ASSETS**

### **Developments, Acquisitions and Disposals**

Cabinet approved the purchase of a retail site on Hamilton Road in Lowestoft. This has completed and the purchase has added an additional £42,500 to the portfolio's rental income. The vacant space is being marketed on a leasehold basis. The site provides accommodation in the Power Park with future redevelopment potential to support the offshore energy sector.

After Planning consent was approved for the development of the Nexus site, the contract for the development of the site was signed and the site was handed over to the contractor. Demolition of the existing buildings on site has been undertaken and a 'breaking ground' ceremony is earmarked for late January 2024.

### **Building Services**

The re-roofing project at the Rotterdam Road depot is nearing completion with contractors expected to have finished by the end of January.

We have been very busy with substantial repairs and maintenance work including repairs to the retaining beach wall in Felixstowe, cyclical maintenance to Rushmere Woodland Bridge and resurfacing and path works at Felixstowe skate park and library. In addition to this, storm damage repairs have been carried out at Arbor Lane steps, Lowestoft and external redecoration works have been completed at Leiston Town Hall.

## Shire

A project to develop and implement the use of the Shire system for the maintenance and compliance of our operational assets has started with the Digital and Programme Management team. The introduction of this system is pivotal for the effective management and compliance of our assets.

## Rent Reviews and lease agreements

Significant progress has been made on outstanding rent reviews and lease renewals. Since 1 October 2023, 53 lease events have been completed by the team resulting in a rental increase of in excess over £120,000 per annum.

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Freeport East capital seed fund

The business cases for the Felixstowe Tax Site capital seed fund investments were approved by the Freeport East Supervisory Board in November. This paves the way for a £12m investment in business infrastructure at the Port of Felixstowe. The funding will deliver two projects:

- **Site enabling and remediation works** which will account for £3.5m of the capital seed fund with the Port contributing up to an additional 35% of costs. This will prepare the site to attract inward investment to the Felixstowe Tax Site. The work will bring forward a 31 hectare site with a focus on investment from the energy (zero carbon), agri-tech, value added logistics and assembly sector.
- **Installation of high voltage power supply** at a total cost of £10.3m with £8.5m from the capital seed fund and the Port contributing £1.8m. This project will allow the unlocking of electrical utility infrastructure which is required to deliver the site for investment.

We are the Accountable Body and have drawn down the capital seed funds from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and will transfer funds following the approval of subsidy control assessments. Once fully occupied, the Tax Site can deliver up to 11,000 jobs with the majority in skilled professions. Overriding objectives of Freeport East include ensuring the delivery of inclusive growth and delivering net zero.

### East Suffolk Clean Hydrogen Conference 2024

Following the success of the inaugural Clean Hydrogen Conference in 2023, Cabinet Members have agreed to host a follow up conference in late spring/early summer 2024. This will provide an opportunity to showcase East Suffolk as the leading place in the region for the development of clean hydrogen generation, use and innovation. It will, once again, provide an ideal forum for both the public and private sectors to network and understand the national, regional and

local opportunities in developing a clean hydrogen economy. Speakers will include developers, wider industry representatives and education sector and national/regional policy makers.

### **Establishment of Sizewell C economic working groups**

The development of the Sizewell C new nuclear power station represents both opportunities and challenges to the existing East Suffolk economy. To address these, a series of economic working groups have been established under the Deed of Obligation. These include groups covering Employment, Skills and Education, Supply Chain and Tourism Mitigation. For each of these groups, annual implementation plans will be developed which will set out how the funding negotiated through the Deed of Obligation will be used to maximise local economic opportunity and minimise/mitigate any negative impacts.

We will receive £17m over the course of the construction programme for tourism impact mitigation, supporting local businesses to take advantage of the supply chain opportunities and to address the potential economic displacement effect of the development. We will work collaboratively with Suffolk County Council, the Chamber of Commerce, local tourism groups and conservation groups and Sizewell C in developing and delivering the implementation plans.

### **New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) transition**

The LEP will cease to exist from the end of March 2024 with a number of its existing functions being transferred to both Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils. The LEP Integration Plan, which sets out this transfer of functions, was approved by their Board and shared with Suffolk stakeholders in September 2023 before it was submitted to Government in November 2023. As part of the new post LEP structure, a business board will be established which will advise us on strategy, priorities, investments and programmes. The majority of the LEP's staff will be transferred to the two County Councils to deliver the ongoing functions, which will be in the areas of inward investment, strategy and sector development, innovation/growth, programmes and skills.

As part of this restructuring, Suffolk Investments Limited will be created. This will use Enterprise Zone retained business rates to create a 'challenge fund' into which Suffolk partners can bid. Funding bids will be focussed on specific businesses/sectors eg green growth, research and studies (such as infrastructure feasibility work). Emerging criteria also stipulates that funding should support the whole of the county and not be focused on a specific geography.

## **PARKING SERVICES**

This has been a busy period for us with the main areas of activity summarised below.

### **Parking reviews – ongoing over the next two years**

We are continuing our work with Town and Parish Councils to identify the areas that need a change of parking policy eg the introduction of new resident parking schemes, or changes to on street parking. We are in the process of engaging with the Beccles and Bungay Town Councils to meet with local councillors to better understand the issues that the current parking provision presents in those towns. We have drawn up proposals for changes in Felixstowe and Southwold and we are engaging with Town Councils in both locations to finalise what changes we might want to take forward to a new Traffic Regulation Order. This includes:

- Finalising the area review findings for Felixstowe to present to the Town Council this month.
- Working on the Beccles review including attendance at a town engagement event and meeting with the Town Council to discuss local needs. A further session will take place this month.
- Meeting with Framlingham Town Council to discuss the scheme previously proposed by the Town Council to understand the timetable for its implementation.

### **Car parks**

We are currently looking at plans for full resurfacing works at Angel Link North car park in Halesworth which will include creating bigger parking bays.

We are working with Economic Development to draft the revised plans for the Battery Green parking place and the future of the existing car park. From March 2024, Battery Green car park will be used as a compound for two years whilst the old multi storey is demolished.

### **Vandalism**

Sadly several machines have been vandalised in Southwold, Felixstowe, Aldeburgh, Leiston and Sizewell. These are being repaired/replaced as quickly as possible.

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## **ENERGY**

**Sizewell C** – the Court of Appeal dismissed the Judicial Review challenge by the campaign group ‘Together Against Sizewell C’ on 20 December 2023 and a copy of the full judgement can be found [here](#).

The Deed of Obligation associated with the Sizewell C project required Sizewell C Limited to notify us of the anticipated date of commencement at least 30 works days prior to the actual date of commencement. Notice of first commencement of works was received on 16 November 2023 and this can be found [here](#).

We have been working hard to ensure that all the appropriate agreements and commitments required under the Deed of Obligation and the requirements within the Development Consent Order have been complied with to our satisfaction. A letter was issued to Sizewell C Limited on 22 December 2023 to confirm our certification of Sizewell C Limited’s compliance with the obligations set out in the relevant documents to facilitate first commencement. The first commencement of the project will only involve the carrying out of specific works.

As required under the Deed of Obligation, Sizewell C Limited has established the governance groups with the first meetings being held within the first quarter of 2024 if not before.



Whilst the relevant obligations have been met to facilitate first commencement, there remains a huge number of requirements and ongoing obligations which will need to be agreed in addition to the monitoring which will be taking place.

**Sea Link** – National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) held their statutory consultation on the Sea Link project between 24 October and 18 December 2023. In order to seek the views of those Town and Parish Councils directly affected, we held a meeting on 27 November 2023. The comments received were incorporated into our response which has now been submitted. This response is available on our website [here](#).

Concerns have been expressed previously regarding the level and nature of engagement on the project and NGET is seeking to address this by holding a number of technical thematic meetings in the first quarter of this year. We will attend these to ensure that the assessments undertaken are robust and that appropriate mitigation measures are proposed should the project receive consent.

**Other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects** – we continue to engage with those promoting significant infrastructure projects affecting our district including Scottish Power Renewables on their East Anglia One North, East Anglia Two and East Anglia Three projects in relation to the discharge of requirements, National Grid Ventures on their LionLink project and proposed ground investigation works and other promoters on the Nautilus, North Falls and Five Estuaries projects. As part of the Offshore Coordination Support Scheme (OCSS), Sea Link, North Falls and Five Estuaries have been working together to explore the potential for offshore coordination and have received funding through the OCSS to develop and explore the feasibility of this further. We will, of course, engage in this process.

<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Kay Yule, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management
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Firstly I attach a link to our latest Planning, Building Control and Coastal Management Newsletter published last month. This goes electronically to all Town and Parish Councils, agents and developers, as well as District Councillors. It is also shared on social media and is being well received - [Planning, Building Control and Coastal Management Newsletter](#).

## PLANNING

Revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) were published on 19 December 2023, alongside a Ministerial Statement from Michael Gove (Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities). These revisions follow a consultation which took place between December 2022 and March 2023. In summary, the NPPF changes include (amongst other things) removal of the requirement to identify annually a five year housing land supply for decision making purposes where an adopted Local Plan is less than 5 years old and to identify a 5 year supply at the time the examination concluded (land supply should still be monitored and the Housing Delivery Test - which sets out consequences for under-delivery of housing - remains largely the same). Revisions also include greater 'protections' in areas with a made Neighbourhood Plan which is less than 5 years old and which contains policies and

allocations to meet its housing requirement, greater reference to the provision of opportunities for community-led housing and an emphasis on the creation of 'beautiful' developments. A presentation covering these and other changes has been given to the Strategic Planning Committee.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) received Royal Assent at the end of October 2023 and we anticipate further consultation on future changes to the NPPF under the LURA in due course.

The mandatory requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain are set to come into force in January 2024 following guidance and regulations published by the Government at the end of November 2023. The requirements will initially apply to planning applications for major development submitted from the point it comes into force, with smaller development to follow from April 2024. Preparations are underway, including the creation of two new posts in the Ecology team which have been recruited to. Councillors were invited to a training session on 8 January.

Recent flooding events have involved the team supporting Suffolk County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority with their Section 19 flood investigations, particularly where there are suggested links between flooding and development. Thankfully the work of the Planning team and the Lead Local Flood Authority to secure planning policy requirement for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems for new development has ensured that the surface water run-off has been prevented. This has avoided new development adding to flooding in surrounding areas and in some cases development has actually reduced the risk of flooding compared to the previous greenfield run-off from sites. However, in Witlesham, local flooding has been directly linked to a current housing development which failed to install its surface water drainage mitigation at the correct early stage despite efforts to secure this mitigation by condition. Our Planning team reacted swiftly and sought to address this breach by serving a Temporary Stop Notice. This is rare and extreme planning enforcement action for us to take but it was necessary to take control of the development, to stop works and to ensure that the mitigation was installed swiftly. That has now been done and the drainage mitigation is now performing as intended to capture surface water from the development. We will continue to work closely with Suffolk County Council on their Section 19 flood investigation on this site and others.

Our Coastal Partnership East team, Building Control and Planning teams have been involved in a number of coastal erosion issues along our coast as a result of the spate of recent storms, but primarily at Pakefield. This has been a huge pressure on resources but they have done a brilliant job supporting our residents and communities.

## **BUILDING CONTROL**

Following changes to the validation of local authority building surveyors coming from the Building Act, all of our Building Control Surveyors are now registered with the Building Safety Regulator. All are required to then pass professional validation examinations and in the closing weeks of 2023, six of the team passed theirs with another five surveyors sitting their exams in January. Exam results currently take up to 10 weeks to be released due to the sheer volume of Building Control Surveyors seeking to achieve validation competence by the April 2024 deadline. We support and encourage team members to achieve the highest possible personal and professional goals and special congratulations go to Dan Mckernan and Jamie

Hazel who were the first to receive professional validation following successful examination. Further congratulations go to Michael Charlton who received his Chartered Association of Building Engineers professional validation just before Christmas.

This is great news for us to have qualified and validated surveyors ensuring development is safe and meeting the required standards including energy efficiency.

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### **External Audit**

The external audit of the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts was concluded on 18 December 2023 and the audited Accounts are now published on our website. However, the audit of the two subsequent years has not yet commenced. Government proposals to re-establish the local authority audit framework on a more sustainable basis, with a focus on providing assurance on public bodies' most recent financial information, were referenced in a ministerial statement over the summer. The formal guidance from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Financial Reporting Council, as the incoming shadow system leader, are still pending.

Following the ministerial statement in July and the continuing expectation of a 31 March 2024 backstop date for the completion of all outstanding audits to 2022/23, the external auditors, Ernst and Young (EY), have taken a number of steps to prepare for implementation of proposals. These include:

- Maximising the completion of historic audits – working to close open audits where audit work is substantially complete and with a high likelihood of issuing an opinion in a short period of time. Currently, the delivery of these audits is likely to be phased through to early 2024.
- Pension fund audits – these audits are not subject to the reset of the system; EY continues to prioritise completion of all these audits to 2022/23. Applicable to Suffolk County Council.
- Value for Money reporting – as there are no anticipated changes to value for money reporting requirements, auditors' exception reporting responsibilities and statutory powers, EY continues to prioritise the completion of reporting up to the 2022/23 financial year. Given the increasing focus on the financial sustainability of the local government sector, EY commenced their value for money work with us in December for financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- Planning for 2023/24 audits – where capacity allows, EY will seek to commence planning for 2023/24 focusing on the most recent set of financial statements and supporting the reset.

### **Storm Babet funding support**

We, along with other teams, continue to work with Suffolk County Council to distribute flood relief funds to affected residents and businesses as quickly as possible and in accordance with Government criteria. As of 8 January 2024:

- 197 residents out of 215 applications received by us have been paid the £500 Community Recovery Grant and received Council Tax Discount as per the scheme guidance.
- 33 applications have been received from businesses and 2 have so far been paid the £2,500 Business Recovery Grant. It should be noted that the Government eligibility criteria which we are obliged to follow is more extensive than support for residents, hence the processing of applications from businesses can take more time.

The closing date for applications is 20th January 2024.

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## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- The permit for the Small Waste Incineration Plant to be operated by V C Cooke Ltd has been granted in accordance with statutory obligations. In addition, having commissioned legal counsel advice, an additional condition has been added relating to carbon management as well as those relating to air quality.
- Following the closure of Meadowbrook Kennels that has provided our stray dog collection and kennelling service for many years, Animal Warden Services has been awarded the new contract. The new service will be launched once the contract has been signed. We will also use the publicity for the launch as an opportunity to encourage responsible dog ownership.
- We are in Block 2 for the next phase of the Information at Work migration to the Idox Document Management System. This will commence in January and is set to be completed by the end of March. Whilst this will take up our resources in the short term, it will result in a more efficient case management system.
- In early December a Member training session on Investigating and Removing Fly Tipping was held. This was recorded and is available from Democratic Services for Members to view.
- We also arranged a face-to-face joint training day with the Waste Strategy team. This was a very productive session with some good learning outcomes and will be used as a foundation to draft joint waste protocol and procedures.

## CLIMATE CHANGE & SUSTAINABILITY

The following are some highlights from the activities we have delivered during November and December 2023:

- Suffolk Climate Change Partnership Community network events held in Saxmundham and Bury St Edmunds. We helped organise and deliver two successful events to bring together a range of community groups active in tackling climate change together with relevant stakeholders. The purpose was to enable community networking for, and foster connections between, groups, stakeholder organisations and parishes that are working for positive environmental change across Suffolk.
- The GreenPrint Forum organised a visit for Members and community group leaders to the Energy from Waste plant at Great Blakenham on 15 November. The guided tour of the facility explained how residual domestic waste is managed in Suffolk, plus explained the processes around the Recycling Centres that operate at locations around Suffolk to which residents bring a variety of waste streams for recycling.
- The Annual Greenhouse Gas Report has been completed and presented to Environment Task Group Members. The public version of the report will be published in mid-January.
- The Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan 2024 programme was signed-off by the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders in December, enabling this major group of projects to move forward, covering a range of themes from clean energy, sustainable homes, low carbon transport plus a suite of grant programmes and advice for homeowners and businesses.
- We attended the first local Green Careers day, hosted by East Norfolk College in Gorleston on 15 November.
- We organised and attended a series of work parties for volunteers, focussed on managing habitats across the district as part of the GreenPrint Forum programme and our Health and Wellbeing group.
- We also completed building sustainability audits for Riverside and East Suffolk House and are addressing issues that have been identified, although the results were positive in terms of use of energy and resources.
- Our Walking and Cycling Strategy delivery group held its first meeting on 29 November and will be developing a workplan to deliver the Strategy.

**East Suffolk in Bloom** - 82 sets of 500 bulbs were handed out to groups across the district in November including the Women's Institute, schools, Parish Councils. Groups applied in May 2023 and a panel met to decide who they should go to. The scheme will continue in 2024 given its popularity. These bulbs will bloom in spring.

**Grounds mapping** - a project to determine how to digitally map the areas cut by East Suffolk Services Limited is in its early stages. Currently the Grounds Maintenance team uses hand-coloured maps to work from, with no distinction between the Council, Suffolk Highways and other areas of land to be cut. This will be a long-term project and will require many hours of work to review all the current sites before the maps can then be digitalised.

**Green volunteering** - we are seeking to explore how groups and individuals can carry out work on our land such as developing wildlife areas and managing a specific site. We must ensure the safety of volunteers and minimise risks but without discouraging people from taking on such community action. Groups that may have been in existence for a number of years on an informal basis are coming forward and a council-wide approach is required to identify these, map them and formalise this whole process. More details will follow but the Strategic Waste and Contract Management team welcome input from Members who may know of such groups.

**New land in Aldeburgh** - we have recently taken on the ownership of 8 acres of land in Aldeburgh around Church Farm. This is a mix of verges, open space, hedges, trees and shrubbery in a residential area. The site was transferred from the developer as part of a Section 52 Agreement from December 1988. Works have started to bring the site up to expected standard, with a longer-term management plan set for development in 2024.

**Litter and fido bins** - all Councillors have recently been sent details of the consultation into how litter and fido bins are positioned and emptied in the district. This consultation runs until the end of January and responses from a number of Town and Parish Councils are now coming through. We are looking at a 'right bin right location' policy and will seek to rationalise the provision of bins going forward.

**Simpler Recycling consultation** - we have responded to the Government's consultation on introducing "simpler recycling" for residents in England. Working as part of the Suffolk Waste Partnership, we have identified a number of areas where we are in agreement with the Government's proposals and areas where we are seeking further clarification/amendments to their proposals. The most significant results of the Government's proposal will be the implementation of food waste collections and the introduction of new material to our recycling (glass/cartons) by April 2026. Twin stream recycling is recommended to allow for the greatest material quality to be gained from collections and we will now look in more detail at how these plans will be implemented. Further information has been published on the Suffolk Waste Partnership website [here](#).

**Vapes consultation** - we have also responded to the Government's consultation on public health linked to vaping. The environmental impact of vaping is significant due to the electrical components and batteries. There is also a significant fire risk if and when vapes are incorrectly disposed of. Vapes can be recycled in trial bins in the south of the district and the new kerbside collection will also allow for these to be collected for recycling. In the consultation response, we asked for a ban on the sale of disposable vapes, pointing out that there are many sellers who do not undertake their responsibilities for offering or advertising recycling.

**Suffolk Recycles website** - the new Suffolk Recycles website went live on the 4 December. We contributed significantly to the development of the content on this site, which is hosted by Suffolk County Council - <https://www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk/>.

**Clean up action day in Beccles** – we supported local residents in Beccles to undertake a community clear up day, clearing around 400kgs of debris from pavements and roadsides.

**Supporting Kirkley Pocket Parks** – we also supported work by Kirkley Pocket Parks and the Probation Service to clear our land in Lowestoft from litter and detritus to improve the local amenity.

**Glass it's Better in the Bank** - as part of the Suffolk Waste Partnership, we have launched the 'Glass it's Better in the Bank' campaign to ensure that glass is disposed of in bring sites rather than in residual or recycling bins at home. The last compositional analysis undertaken in East Suffolk (2019) showed that around 4.4% (around 1700T based on last year's data) of residual waste is packaging glass which can be recycled. The campaign is a fun campaign which is being delivered on social media and out of home advertising at supermarkets and bus backs.

**School talks** – we have delivered and supported assemblies and tours for children from Lowestoft and Easton. Sophie Underwood (Waste and Street Scene Monitoring Officer) delivered an assembly to the whole school and delivered a message about the importance of reducing waste and improving recycling. Amanda Childs (Waste and Street Scene Monitoring Officer) supported a tour to the Energy from Waste facility in Great Blakenham to show children around and talk to them about waste reduction and recycling. In total over 330 children have been engaged.

## Appendices

Appendices:
None

Background reference papers:
None