

**COUNCIL**

Thursday 27 September 2018

**CABINET MEMBERS’ REPORT AND OUTSIDE BODIES REPRESENTATIVES’ REPORT TO COUNCIL (CL 26/18)**

**Cabinet Members’ Report to Council**

<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Geoff Holdcroft, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development
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**Economic Development**

***Transport East***

Transport East was launched in March 2018 as a vehicle for the delivery of a collective vision for transport and wider infrastructure in the East of England. The aim of the forum is to drive forward a truly joined-up transport network and secure vital investment in future infrastructure. Transport East enable partners to discuss common issues, share best practice and create a strategic vision for the future of transport and infrastructure across the region for decades to come.

I represent Suffolk’s Districts and Boroughs on the forum; its next meeting was on 14 September and I will report back on progress

***East-West Rail Consortium***

East West Rail is a major project to establish a strategic railway connecting East Anglia with Central, Southern and Western England.

The Western Section route between Oxford and Bedford, including the link from Aylesbury, is due to be completed in the early 2020s, while the link between the Bedford area and Cambridge could open in the early 2030s.

A high-level study has concluded there is a positive economic and strategic case for improving East West Rail’s Eastern Section, from Cambridge to Norwich and Ipswich, and beyond. Atkins’ Conditional Outputs Statement, commissioned by the East West Rail Consortium, found that current demand for rail is constrained by limited direct links and low service frequencies in locations to the east of Cambridge.

An eastern section working group has now been formed and has met twice. Current work is on a “Prospectus for Growth” to present the case for implementing improvements. The consortium met

on the 11 September in Cambridge and agreed that Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk District and Borough Councils will take this forward with support from the consortium's contractors.

### ***The 2018 Suffolk Coast DMO Conference***

The Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation Conference will be taking place on Thursday 1 November at Ufford Park Hotel, Golf and Spa, Woodbridge.

Planned agenda items include:

- Expedia Group – how to develop your destination
- Energy projects in East Suffolk – impacts and opportunities for businesses
- The National Coastal Tourism Academy – new market opportunities
- Releasing the story of Sutton Hoo.

As always the conference provides excellent opportunities for networking amongst businesses and other sector representatives.

### ***East Suffolk Business Festival***

The East Suffolk Business Festival aims to raise the profile of the East Suffolk business community and seek to connect all of the business support and training agents together through a ten day events programme.

It is based on the well-established West Suffolk festival model and aims to create opportunities for businesses to connect with each other and generate leads, to grow their business, widen their knowledge, support training and development and create new employment for the local area.

Many of the events will already be established that partners regularly put on and others will be specifically arranged for the festival. Any event will gain free publicity through a dedicated marketing campaign using social media as well as on a new website [www.eastsuffolkbusinessfestival.org](http://www.eastsuffolkbusinessfestival.org) (due to be launched shortly).

The Festival will begin on Monday 29 October with Screen Suffolk hosting an event around how filming can benefit local business and communities. Then on the final day, Friday 9 November, there will be a dedicated slot at the ESP Annual Forum and then WDC are the headline sponsors of the Lowestoft and Waveney Chamber of Commerce Business Awards.

## **Energy**

### ***Sizewell C***

Preparations, including workshops between EDF Energy and SCC and East Suffolk Officers are going on apace ahead on an expected Stage 3 Consultation in the New Year. Members of JLAG, the Joint Local Authority Group established with SCC, continue to receive regular updates.

Earlier this month the Chief Executive Officer of EDF Energy, Simone Rossi visited Suffolk where along with other senior officials visited the proposed site and also met with community groups. In the

afternoon that team met with myself, the Leader, the Chief Executive and the Head of Service together with our counterparts at SCC.

The following press release was issued following the meeting

“Today proved a great opportunity to meet Chief Executive Officer of EDF Energy, Simone Rossi and members of his senior Sizewell C project team, including Jim Crawford. Our meeting was an opportunity to put the people of Suffolk’s views forward on some of the key issues relating to the proposed development of Sizewell C. Our general discussion covered subjects that were featured during stage two of the public consultation in 2017.

“We spoke about transport matters, environmental impacts, opportunities for skills and growth as well as some of the design and accommodation elements for the project. We hope EDF Energy take on board our views as part of their third round of consultation which is expected early next year.”

### ***Other Energy Projects***

In addition to Sizewell C other energy projects are being proposed for area which are raising concerns not only individually but because of the cumulative impact they will have. I led a delegation to see Clare Perry, the Energy Minister, to press government to allow those cumulative impacts to be assessed when making decisions about individual projects.

The following press release was issued after that meeting and to coincide with this Council’s response to Scottish Power Renewable’s consultation on this offshore wind farms.

Suffolk local authorities have used the response to Scottish Power Renewables current consultation to call for energy firms to co-ordinate their work plans better – to reduce the disruption of their project on local communities. In a joint response, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council have highlighted the power company’s plan to site a substation in Friston, despite fierce local opposition, as an example of the piecemeal approach to the planning of these projects – and how local needs are being ignored.

East Suffolk is becoming increasingly important nationally for providing electricity for the nation – with a series of major projects in the pipeline. Estimates suggest that this area will be responsible for a quarter of the country’s electricity supply by the 2030s. But the infrastructure projects to generate and produce this electricity obviously have a major effect on the environment and the local communities. Now, in responding to the current consultation being run by Scottish Power Renewables, the local authorities have highlighted the cumulative effect of all these projects – and appealed for the power companies to work together to minimise the disruption. The local authorities have also raised the issue directly in a very positive meeting with Rt Hon Claire Perry MP, Minister of State for Energy and Clean Growth and the local MP Therese Coffey.

“East Suffolk, with its unique environment and fragile area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB), is shouldering a huge responsibility for meeting the country’s future energy needs,” said Cllr Geoff Holdcroft, Suffolk Coastal District Council’s Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development.

“While some companies are engaging with the local authorities and our communities, others like Scottish Power Renewables are not listening, so these massive energy infrastructure projects are

being carried out by different companies with little or no co-ordination or consideration for the cumulative effects on the communities that we represent,”

“We have been consistently calling for more thought to be put into where, when and how the projects are developed to develop energy hubs and minimise the aggravation to the local communities and to reduce the pressure and disruption to our infrastructure.”

In addition to the existing Sizewell B nuclear power stations and sub-stations for the Galloper and Greater Gabbard offshore wind farms, the area is now expecting the Sizewell C nuclear power station plus two sub-stations for Scottish Power Renewables East Anglia Offshore 2 and 1 (North) schemes; two inter-continental connector converter stations for National Grid Ventures and a single major National Grid Transmission substation connecting these to the pylon lines.

The issue has been particularly highlighted during this round of consultation by Scottish Power Renewables, which is ignoring calls by the local authorities to review its decision to place its substation in Friston – meaning 5 miles of countryside will needlessly have to be dug up for cables to reach the substation and there may be multiple huge buildings.

“In the previous round of consultation we argued strongly that there were likely to be major environmental impacts caused by SPR’s suggested sites between Leiston and Friston and that other options should be tested carefully but, despite this, our advice has been ignored and Scottish Power Renewables has continued to focus solely on the Friston area in this consultation,” said Cllr Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council’s Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection.

“While our councils support the need for these energy projects, to safeguard our country’s future electricity supply, and support the move towards sustainable renewable energy generation, it should not be done while ignoring the genuine needs and concerns of the local communities – or at the cost of our environment.”

Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Coastal have worked together to prepare this joint response to the Scottish Power Renewables consultation.

These developments are seen very much as game changers, as part of a wider package of economic development investments in the area that the Councils want to embrace and support whilst acknowledging that to do this comprehensively, for the future benefit of the area needs the support of Government to help get it right. The Councils state they support and embrace the principle of low carbon energy generation and the trading of energy across a European wide transmission network and want to help them be delivered if the local dividend is for the benefit of the whole area.

Therefore the Councils are committed to working together to ensure that where such schemes are brought forward they will have a positive impact on Suffolk, and East Suffolk in particular; supporting significant local growth by delivering:

- substantial economic benefits;
- significant and sustained training and skills opportunities; and
- substantial community benefits.

To read the full joint response see: [www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Offshore-Windfarms/Response-on-Stage-2-SP-2018-08-23.pdf](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Offshore-Windfarms/Response-on-Stage-2-SP-2018-08-23.pdf)

## **ICT**

### ***PSN & ICT Security***

The annual submission for continued connection to the PSN (Public Services Network) has been made to Cabinet Office and approval is expected. The submission is based on a comprehensive external assessment of ICT security which took place in June/July.

### ***Blackberry Mobile Email***

The previous mobile email service, GOOD, was retired in June and Councillors have been migrated to the new Blackberry system. Feedback from Councillors on the change has been positive though some Councillors did need to upgrade their personal devices in order to use Blackberry and there are some Councillors who have yet to sign up for the Blackberry mobile email service.

### ***ICT Support***

ICT Service Desk continue to monitor Councillors ICT support issues, the volume of call remains fairly consistent with approximately 5 calls per week with top issues being password re-sets and blocked emails.

### ***Committee Management System***

A new Committee Management System (CMIS from Astech) has been selected for both SCDC and WDC and is being implemented, this will offer improvements in the publication and access of committee information and reports.

### ***Web Casting***

A project has been instigated to enable web casting of council meetings from both ESH and Riverside. The project also includes some upgrading of existing audio visual equipment, providing a more consistent user interface as well as a dedicated video conferencing facility between the two conference rooms. Tenders for this project are currently being evaluated with contract award expected early Oct and works completed by Jan 2019 to allow time for the new systems to be thoroughly user tested before the new council comes into effect on 1 April 2019.

### ***O2 WiFi***

ICT continue to closely monitor the performance and availability of the O2 WiFi service at East Suffolk House following SCC upgrade works earlier this year.

### ***And finally***

Woodbridge's Thoroughfare has been short-listed for this year's Great British High Street Awards, putting it in the running for a £15,000 prize.

The Suffolk entry is up against 25 other streets in the "Champion" awards category, which have been chosen by an independent panel of judges following a "rigorous" selection process. Contenders will now battle it out

in a public vote, which makes 30% of the final scoring, and will then have to impress an expert panel to be crowned Britain's best.

Choose Woodbridge, the town's business and tourism association, submitted the entry for

High Streets Minister Jake Berry MP said: "Congratulations to Thoroughfare on being short-listed as one of the UK's best high streets in this year's Great British High Street Awards.

"The awards celebrate the great work that is being done to revive, adapt and diversify the nation's high streets and the quality of entries this year has been outstanding. Over the next six weeks The Thoroughfare has the chance to impress an expert judging panel as they also battle it out in a public vote for the title of Britain's best high street."

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### Draft Local Plan Consultation

The ten week consultation ended on 14 September. It has generated great interest, considerable debate and some open acrimony.

As at 10 September we had:

<b>659</b>	Comments
<b>429</b>	Respondents
<b>5,645</b>	Documents downloaded / interactive map views

We are anticipating a substantial upsurge in the last week. As expected, the vast majority of the interaction related to the sites being put forward:

	<b>Support</b>	<b>Object</b>	<b>Observations</b>
Section 12 Area Specific Strategies	17	371	53

I am sure that all Members will have been involved in this consultation. I have been trying to organise another session to gather feedback and to update and involve all Ward Members. Unfortunately, it has been impossible to arrange a date and venue but the Team are always available for advice if needed.

### Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Following on from the Government's White Paper on Planning, the paper "Building the Right Homes in the Right Places" and a comprehensive consultation, the revised NPPF has now been published. It sets the underlying principles for all our planning policies and we must ensure consistency between

this and our upcoming Local Plan. There is a strong emphasis that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led;

As you would expect, the emphasis is on facilitating the construction of new homes. Some of the key points are:-

#### Five Year Building Land Supply

The 5year building land requirement is still included but the NPPF now includes the new standard methodology for calculating housing need. This is something we have been advocating since the original NPPF was introduced. It should eliminate the vagaries and challenges we currently experience with the calculation of our housing needs. We are expecting new household projections to be published by the Office for National Statistics during September.

#### Housing Delivery Test

Alongside the retention of the requirement to identify and update annually the five year housing land supply, it introduces the Housing Delivery Test as a mechanism for assessing recent housing delivery across a local planning authority's area. The details have not been published but it will mean that we will be assessed on the number of houses actually delivered each year. Failure to meet the targets will incur special measures. This could need some significant changes in the planning function to force completion of developments once consent has been granted.

#### Viability

Given the increase in viability challenges from developers that have taken place over recent years, there is guidance as to how these should be handled. In future all viability assessments will be made public documents. Very often these viability challenges relate to the need to provide affordable housing but it can arise from a Section 106 charge.

#### Efficient use of land

The Framework stresses the need for efficient use of land and the need to maximise the number of houses that should be considered for a site.

#### Building on Small Plots

The original draft proposed that 20% of houses should be built on small plots (half hectare or less). This has now been reduced to 10%.

#### Importance of Neighbourhood Plans

Emphasis is given on the importance of Neighbourhood Plans. The expectation is that the NPs will play a vital role in the definition of the special qualities of an area It also introduces the requirement for the LPA to quantify the number of houses expected in a Neighbourhood Plan area.

<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Carol Poulter, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Green Environment
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## Latitude

During July the Environmental Protection Team, along with other officers from the Council, were closely monitoring preparations for the Latitude festival and the event itself to ensure that it was run in accordance with licence conditions and that public health and the safety of festival goers was protected.

Latitude now attracts around 40,000 festival goers which is equivalent to the populations of Felixstowe, Woodbridge, Framlingham and Wickham Market combined. Latitude effectively becomes the second largest town in East Suffolk for 4 days a year and is built from scratch in the month before including its stages, campsites, security fencing, power and most importantly from an environmental health point of view it's water supply.

The Environmental Protection Team has two main functions at the event, the regulation of the water supply and the control of noise as a statutory nuisance and in support of the licensing objectives. The team has also undertaken phosphate samples in the lake to determine nutrient loads to assist in the prediction of algal bloom which may affect open water swimming in the lake. The team also support other agencies as necessary.

The water supply to the festival is classed as commercial under the Private Water Supply Regulations 2016, it is constructed on site every year and consists of an 8km ring main serving the campsites and ancillary areas and a 4km ring main serving the arena. These feed a network of tap boards, toilets, showers and catering supplying all domestic potable water for the festival, some 4 million litres of it over the course of the event. The source of the water is 3 boreholes on the site supplemented by over 100 x 25,000 litre tanker deliveries over the course of the festival. Each water bunker point is associated with a borehole; the largest has a total 400,000 litre capacity in 4 pillow tanks. Each area has multiple stage water treatment consisting of a combination of pre-storage UV and chlorination and post storage chlorination. The team's role with the water supply continues throughout the year, due to the isolation of the bores checks are undertaken during the course of the year to ensure they are secure, a water safety plan is provided by the festival 28 days prior to the start which is reviewed and assessed to ensure it is sufficient for that year. Once the bore holes are opened and the pumps powered officers undertake a set of regulatory samples to ensure that raw water quality is acceptable and work with the festival organisers where regulatory failures are found to ensure point of use water is wholesome. Officers oversee the build up of the supply to ensure that it is compliant with relevant legislation and is adequately protective to human health; the supply is signed off in conjunction with the organiser's water safety staff at various points in the build. The whole supply is then risk assessed to ensure that the water supplied to all points will remain free from the risk of contamination.



During the festival daily checks on the infrastructure are made to ensure it is in good condition and there are no illegal connections, free chlorine levels are taken regularly across the site as a critical control point for microbiological contamination which is supplemented by the festivals own samples which include bacterial analysis at a local laboratory. Any concerns with the supply, whether identified by officers or not, are investigated and problems resolved as soon as possible, this includes the use of formal notices, where necessary, to ensure work is undertaken as required.

It is no exaggeration to say that the festival water supply is one of the most significant public health risks in this district, the source water along with the quick build and short term nature of the supply, the number of people in a relatively unhygienic environment and the number of potential points of failure are inherently high risk and require close control to protect public health. The issues to consider are different every year and are broad in nature, the weather plays a large role in specific risks for example in wet years mud is a significant source of possible contamination and in very dry years like this one the sufficiency of the supply is a significant problem. Officers have to consider counter terrorism issues with security of the supply and tankers through chemical and bacterial contamination of the water to the physical integrity of the pipes and tanks. The issues are numerous and change with each stage of the festival, not least the fact that this is a water supply being built for a large town who all turn up together on the same day and require a fully functioning water supply of sufficient capacity to meet that demand, it cannot be ready too soon for risk of stagnation and it cannot be ready too late for obvious reasons.

Failure of the water supply is one of the few show stopper scenarios that is seriously considered by all agencies and the organisers every year. The knock on effects of either a water related outbreak to the emergency medical and hospital units in the area are significant, a 1% infection rate would be 400 people. The knock on effects to public order and the road network of an unplanned festival closure are equally concerning to the police. In 2011 we faced this scenario but through the efforts of officers the scenario was avoided.

In terms of noise control we undertake a sound propagation test on the Thursday before the festival to ensure that the Music Noise Levels (MNLs) set in the licence can be adhered to at the designated monitoring points by setting the levels at the mixing desk front of house. After this we base the weekends out of hours operation from the festival, responding to complaints across the district as well as any we receive about the festival itself. If complaints are received the Council's complaints procedure is followed and we liaise closely with the on-site acoustics team to address the issue. If officers are not on complaint work either on or off site they undertake monitoring of the MNL's at the designated monitoring points to ensure the site is compliant with its licence and to reduce the chance that complaints are received. If MNL's are being breached officers again work with the on-site acoustics team to bring them into the limits. The role in terms of noise is very much both proactive and reactive.

It is not unusual for staff to walk over 50 miles and work over 80 hours in festival week but the festival does require a lot of year round input as well. Several months before the festival the team's comments are made to the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) and discussions start with the organisers and after the festival checks are carried out to ensure the site is decommissioned properly and any

issues are addressed for the next year. It is a year round job extending far beyond the four days of the festival.

<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Steve Gallant, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health
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## Latitude

During July eight members of the Food and Safety Team visited food traders on the first full day of the three day Latitude festival. One member of the team attended multi-agency meetings on site each evening (Thursday to Sunday) and monitored compliance over the four day festival weekend.

This year Festival Republic used a number of different contractors than they had over the previous ten years so there was a greater need for assessment of compliance with food safety, health and safety, public health and licensing laws.

Before the event Festival Republic were advised that they should not permit food traders to operate unless they had a rating of 3 or above under the Food Standards Agency's Food Hygiene Rating scheme as that should indicate that they are "broadly compliant" with food safety law. However, it appears that several of the traders that were present had not advised their home local authority that they operate temporary outlets under their registration of fixed food business premises. As such they are not rated for their outside catering activities at festivals and "pop-up" venues etc. and therefore the rating they display did not reflect their standard of compliance when running their temporary catering operation. This issue has been raised with the Food Standards Agency.

The types of issue found during the inspection of the catering operation included a failure to provide and/or use suitable hand washing facilities and a failure to have an appropriate means of disinfecting equipment and surfaces. Both of these are basic food safety requirements and should not have been overlooked by any food business trading at Latitude Festival.

Although each food business is responsible for meeting the requirements of food safety laws officers found that the main contractor's representatives were not sufficiently aware of what standards the food traders should be meeting and as a result some traders had not been adequately informed of the services that they would be provided with. In particular there were traders who had expected to have a dedicated water supply and were not equipped to collect and store water from a shared stand pipe some distance from their unit. If Festival Republic had not sourced, within hours, a number of portable hand washing units for the traders to use there was a real risk that several food units would have had to close.

We are always reluctant to stop food businesses from trading and will try to work with the business to find a solution but the attempts to share facilities with neighbouring traders was found not to be effective due to distance, time pressure and the neighbours' stored water being insufficient for two businesses to use for hand washing.

One food trader in the campsite was found to be far below the minimum standards and was stopped from trading until they could demonstrate they could do so safely. The key issues were: no water for hand washing or cleaning; no disinfectant, dirty equipment and surfaces; bedding and other evidence of people sleeping in the van amongst open food supplies; and poor refrigerated storage. The local

authority where the food business was registered was contacted and they have agreed to review this business' rating on the basis of the East Suffolk intervention.

In accordance with national guidance the local authorities where the sixteen poor performing food traders are registered were informed of our findings and the traders' food hygiene rating may be reviewed as a result.

Public safety is a priority for Local Authority enforcement of health and safety. The Safety Advisory Group (SAG) met with Festival Republic after the 2017 event and again in the spring before the 2018 event to reduce the likelihood of problems arising at the event. Key issues that were addressed was the use of the lake for swimming, security of all persons on site in light of evolving counter terrorism advice and the change of medical provider. Festival Republic engaged a medical provider that was able to carry out greater diagnostic testing on site, in particular to check for fractures, which resulted in the first Latitude Festival where there was zero impact on the local NHS resources as nobody was taken to hospital for further investigation and there were no reports of 999 ambulances being held up in any traffic associated with the festival. Another area that SAG has influenced changes over the past few years is the significant improvement in traffic management; this is something that was discussed via SAG and shows the need to have early input to events.

### **Community Safety Update**

Monthly Anti-Social Behaviour Partnership meetings continue in Felixstowe, Woodbridge and Leiston, jointly chaired by the Police and the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer. Tier 1 is attended by all partners/local councillors and all issues discussed that affect the area from an ASB perspective. Tier 2 is open to partners only as discussions are under a strict confidentiality agreement because they focus on individuals of concern.

Suffolk Family Focus – The Family Intervention Officer works with some of the most chaotic families in the district as part of the national Troubled Families initiative. In the past 12 months referrals have been received from social services, early help team, mental health practitioners, school and the education welfare service. There have been 6 cases closed within the last 12 months; none of which have been reopened. There is a current case load of 9 families and a waiting list.

A number of PREVENT / WRAP workshops have been delivered to both internal frontline staff and external partners including taxi drivers, Landlords and the Suffolk Coastal Pub Watch partnership. These workshops are designed to raise awareness of PREVENT aims, the responsibility front line officers have in identifying those who may be vulnerable to terrorism and radicalisation, how to prevent them from engaging in or supporting terrorism and how to report individuals who may be causing concern.

Operation Camouflage was held at Rock Barracks over five days in August, again providing challenging activities, confidence building and social skill development to over 80 young people. This is the twelfth year of Op Cam in partnership with the MOD and it continues to support a range of young people, some of whom returned to support the event as young volunteers and some were from Suffolk Family Focus families.

County Lines - 'County lines' involve the supply of drugs from urban hubs to county hubs using mobile phones as deal lines and are a key threat for Suffolk. These gangs rely on vulnerable adults and children to conduct and or facilitate this criminality and can involve high levels of violence, including the use of weapons and firearms to intimidate and control others. The East CSP's held a joint workshop in July 2018 to discuss County Lines issues and concerns and develop a local Action Plan.

Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's) - Consultation is taking place with each of the affected Town and Parish Councils to consider whether there is sufficient evidence to justify continuing with the new Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO's) which automatically replaced Designate Public Protection Orders on 20 October

2017. PSPOs will not be retained if there is no justification/evidence for them, particularly as the Police have alternative tools to use more effectively and in a more timely manner including Dispersal Orders and Community Protection Notices.

Domestic Abuse (DA) 'say no more' campaign is linked to the international ongoing campaign and the CAAA (Coastal Action Against Abuse) have officially joined. Funding has been secured for Countywide Satellite accommodation and specialist support for DA victims. 3 places have been secured in Suffolk Coastal and have been filled.

Police SNT priorities currently include County Lines, rough sleepers (Felixstowe & Woodbridge) and ASB.

### **Licensing**

The current Licensing Manager will be leaving in October of this year; this has provided the opportunity to restructure the team to best meet current and future demands of the service.

Overall responsibility for the service area will transfer to the Legal Services Manager, who has a particular interest and expertise in licensing and a Senior Licensing Officer post has been created to take responsibility for the day to day management of licensing functions and line management of the team. The Senior Licensing Officer post will be filled by an internal candidate.

Whilst the team performs to a high standard and provides an excellent service, the restructure has enabled greater efficiencies to be made. It has allowed members of the team to take on a different roles, or to extend their hours, so providing more capacity, career development and succession planning. It has also generating savings.

I am confident that the changes will enable the excellent service provided by the Licensing Team to continue.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to Caroline Evans, the current Licensing Manager, for of all of her hard work and commitment to the role, over the last few years. Caroline has made a significant contribution to the work of the Licensing Service, with her wide knowledge of the subject, her confidence and superb organisation. She will be missed and I and sure that along with me, all Members will wish her the very best for her future plans.

Meanwhile, and returning to practical issues, the public register of licences, available on the East Suffolk web pages, allows the public to search for and view Premises Licences and Personal Licences issued under the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003; it also lists Temporary Event Notices received, in addition to all 'taxi' licensed vehicles and licensed drivers.

The software used by the Licensing Team to process applications has now been configured to add an online register of all Gambling Act 2005 licences too. The database now allows the public to view premises which have a current licence for a range of activities including betting bingo and gaming machines. The register includes the alcohol licensed premises that have a permit/authorisation to offer gaming machines and clubs holding permits to offer gaming facilities and machines.

The other new entries now viewable on the register are pleasure boat licences, charitable collection permits, rickshaw licences and horse and carriages licences.

All the premises licenced under the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005 viewable through this register have a link to a small map to indicate the site of the premises.

Link to register: <http://licensingpa-wdc.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/PAforLalpaclIVE/1/WcaHome>

## Outside Bodies Representatives' Report to Council

<b>Felixstowe Forward</b>	
<b>Representative:</b>	Councillor Geoff Holdcroft and Councillor Andy Smith

### Annual Engagement Event – Felixstowe Horizons

On-going attendance at Joint Felixstowe Working Group, North Felixstowe Development (including Leisure Development) and South Seafront Development: This resulted in the 'Felixstowe Horizons' theme for this years engagement event. The event had excellent attendance.

The annual engagement event has become an exemplar for place based working.

### Felixstowe and Resort Business Improvement District (BID)

This forms the basis of the exit strategy for Felixstowe Forward and, if successful, will create an investment of £100k per annum for the businesses within the BID area to spend on priorities.

BIDS are Business Led, Business Controlled and Business Managed. Currently in the feasibility stage of development:

- Research and Development - Exploring options and challenges.
- BID area identified. Commercially viable at an anticipated levy of approx. £100k
- Ballot List is in the process of being cleaned up in preparation of engagement.
- Business Survey about to be finalised.
- Next Steps – work on baseline agreement, and test viability of a BID with 15% of ratepayers.
- Anticipated ballot end of 2019

### Ongoing contribution to Economic Development and Regeneration

Felixstowe Forward continues to contribute to KPI's of ED&R around businesses engagement and support. Since the Engagement Event there has been an increase in enquiries about potential inward investors and businesses looking to relocate to Felixstowe.

Felixstowe Forward contributes to visitor impact KPI's: It manages and advises on event bookings, manages tourist information through the Visit Felixstowe Beach Hut, website and social media sites. It has run a Visit Felixstowe Campaign for two years with a 22,000 leaflet distribution across Suffolk.

There has been increased awareness of the resort: Publicity in The Telegraph and The Guardian. Good news stories on local BBC TV and ITV and regular features on BBC Radio Suffolk. Sky TV recently used Landguard for the semi finals of the Landscape Artist of the Year competition.

### Things Connected Pilot trial 'Understanding Footfall':

Felixstowe was chosen by Suffolk County Council and Digital Catapult (Innovate UK) as one of only four Local Authority trials in the UK of Low Power Wide Area Networks. A recent meeting with key stakeholders in Suffolk explored next steps with plans for a Hot House event at BT. This will create a pipeline of projects that can be submitted as funding becomes available.

### Enabling Communities

Felixstowe Forward as a place based initiative also contributes to the Enabling Communities strands of work and has made good progress in establishing a Felixstowe Dementia Friendly community. It is also about to launch a pilot TimeBanking initiative.

<b>Leiston Together</b>	
<b>Representatives</b>	Councillor Geoff Holdcroft and Councillor T-J Haworth-Culf

**Leiston Together** was formed in January 2017 and is a partnership between Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Council and Leiston cum Sizewell Town Council which aims to help deliver four priorities for Leiston.

Elsbeth Gibson, Change Manager is based in the town council offices three days a week and works to the Board of Leiston Together which is chaired by Barry Norman and meets every two months. The Board is working on a delivery plan which covers the town centre regeneration; support for business and enterprise; promote the health and wellbeing of older residents in the town and improve local provision for young adults, 16-25.

Over the last six months the following progress has been made:

- The Leiston Together Board now includes the Chair of the Leiston Community Land Trust who is leading the town centre regeneration; the Principal of Alde Valley Academy and Suffolk County Councillor for Aldeburgh and Leiston, Cllr Russ Rainger.
- Launch of Leiston Links Social Prescribing Project at Leiston Surgery, April 2018
- Community Matters 4 week pop up event in Leiston, 9th April – 4th May 2018 for the public to meet and talk to over The aim of the project was to offer the community of Leiston the opportunity to access information, support, workshops and 1-2-1 sessions from organisations concerned with Health and Social Care, Adult Education, Employability, Volunteering, Voluntary Services and Community Safety. 87 sessions were available from 10am – 3pm at Leiston United Church over the 4 week period.
- Leiston Dementia Project with Leiston approved as working towards being a Dementia Friendly Town
- Leiston Good Neighbour Scheme has been formed and over the last 6 months has formed a committee and recruited 25 volunteers to provide a befriending service for older people in the town.
- Leiston Big Weekend 9th 10th June 2018 run and organised by Leiston Events Group was a great success and supported by Leiston Together. Over the 2 days it is estimated that 2000 people attended the big weekend events. A programme of social events has been planned for the rest of the year.
- Launch of Business Networking events every month for businesses to pop in and meet other colleagues in the town. These business networking events take place on the last Wednesday of each month at NWES, Sizewell Road, Leiston and have been welcomed by local businesses. A programme of speakers and events has been planned up until March 2019.
- On 19th June a formal meeting to discuss housing and town centre regeneration, chaired by Mr Andy Jarvis, led to the valuation from Asset Management of the SCDC land in the town centre currently used, and generating income as a carpark.
- Suffolk Day 21st June 2018 hosted at the Long Shop was supported by Leiston Together and attended by over 200 people.
- NHS 70th Anniversary Tea Party 23rd July 2018 organised in partnership with Leiston WI, the Long Shop and Leiston Surgery. This was partnership working at its best with over 179 invitations to every individual on the patient list who celebrates their 70th birthday in 2018. The Leiston Dementia Project provided a 'timeline of the NHS from 1948 to 2018 and the event was well received
- A bid to Coastal Revival Funding for £44k to create a visitor information point in the town
- Appointment of Lorraine Baker, Business Development Co-ordinator for a 6 month role funded by the Coastal Community Funding allocation to Leiston CCT.

We are currently planning the following activities over the next six months:

- Park Run Sizewell Beach launch date 25th August 2018 a weekly organised 5k run which takes place every Saturday at 9am from Sizewell Beach heading north along the coast
- District wide East Suffolk Business Festival aiming for the relaunch of Leiston Business Association from 29th October 2018
- A programme of business networking events to take place every month on the last Wednesday of each month from 5.30 – 6.30 at NWES, Sizewell Rd Leiston including guest speakers and topical issues

- Launch of Suffolk New College On the Coast provision in Leiston for post 16 year olds
- Leiston Celebrates Christmas! Organised by Leiston Events Group
- A newly refurbished Leiston Leisure Centre by February 2019

If you would like to know more about Leiston Together or to get involved, please contact

[elspethgibson.leistontgether@gmail.com](mailto:elspethgibson.leistontgether@gmail.com) or [elspeth.gibson@eastssuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:elspeth.gibson@eastssuffolk.gov.uk)

<b>Association of Suffolk Museums</b>	
<b>Representative</b>	Councillor Tony Cooper

## **SUFFOLK MUSEUMS PARTNERSHIP**

The strength of the Suffolk Museums Partnership is in the continued commitment to it from all local authorities in the county and Arts Council England (ACE). This core support enables the Association for Suffolk Museums (AfSM) to draw in additional inward investment to Suffolk for museum projects from external sources.

Key achievements in Suffolk this year include:

- Positive outcomes for people who are users of secondary mental health services who have been attending Recovery College courses, delivered by the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust in partnership with the Association for Suffolk Museums.
- Increased opportunities for children and young people to participate in museum activities through the Lowestoft Rising Cultural Education Partnership projects, The Grit and Lowestoft Folk received grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).
- Increased numbers of children visiting museums in Suffolk, including those attending family events and activities promoted in the Summer in Suffolk Museums programme.
- Enhanced museum resilience through increased numbers of volunteers and improved connections to the wider community through the Lowestoft Rising with Museums project, funded by Arts Council England (ACE). The three museums in Lowestoft that took part welcomed 23 new volunteers and saw an overall 12 per cent increase in visitors.
- New opportunities for people from a more diverse range of backgrounds to work in museums through Transforming People to Transform Museums, which was awarded £568,000 from HLF Skills for the Future programme.
- The separate full colour SMP Annual Report gives a more detailed description of these projects and an insight into the way Suffolk museums contribute to the economy, the health and wellbeing of wide range of people, and learning for all ages.
- AfSM is grateful for all contributions from all partners, freelancers, and funders. The importance of their support in many developments in Suffolk cannot be understated and the Association remains very grateful for the funding and guidance they provide.

## **PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT & ADVICE**

The SHARE Museums East training programme continues to be regularly used and valued by Suffolk Museums. This includes their annual conference, as well as other regional conferences and network meetings, several of which are hosted in and draw on the experience and expertise of people working in Suffolk Museums. An online training needs survey informs this programme.

SHARE was awarded four years Sector Support Organisation (SSO) funding from ACE for 2018-22. This has enabled SHARE to offer continued funding support for Jenna Ingamells' post of Suffolk Museum Project Officer, and SMP projects up to March 2022.

Suffolk has increased its number of museums that are within the Accredited scheme to 36, with The Red House now officially Working Towards Accreditation.

AfSM acknowledges the continued work that Jayne and Jenna carry out in support of Suffolk Museums.

## **AfSM NETWORK, COMMUNICATIONS AND TRAINING**

The AfSM communications review made significant progress. A full review and update of AfSM contacts led to an increase from 98 to 178 contacts on the Newsletter email list. A newly developed Newsflash email list now includes 159 contacts. This will be reviewed again next year, to ensure data is held in line with the new General Data Protection Regulation.

The AfSM Newsletter was distributed each quarter and upgraded to a new Mailchimp format. The new format provides data on usage, including website links being used. The first edition in Mailchimp was opened by 117 of the 178 recipients. New features include a Spotlight article, Ask Suffolk Museums, and updates on AfSM Projects, as well as an increased number of articles submitted by members.

The Suffolk Museums joint leaflet has been redesigned and reprinted. It has been expanded and developed from six pages to 12, and 30,000 copies distributed by Take 1 Media. Four museums took up the opportunity to be involved in the Take 1 Media Trade Passport that provides discounted visits.

The AfSM and Suffolk Museums Logos have been updated, including a new colour scheme that fits in with new AfSM branding colours. Work has been taking place on developing and redesigning the website, which will be launched in coming year.

AfSM Network meetings have been consistently well attended. The morning meetings have included afternoon training opportunities. A session on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was held at Bawdsey Radar in January.

## **FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING**

The Lowestoft Rising Local Cultural Education Partnership and Heritage Lottery Fund supported two projects involving Suffolk museums. The Grit involves around 270 primary school children from nine schools and Lowestoft Maritime Museum. It is exploring the story of the Lowestoft Beach Village. Lowestoft Folk involves four schools, four care homes and Lowestoft Museum. It is an intergenerational project based in Lowestoft around the theme of local folk traditions.

The Museum Development Manager and three Suffolk Museums have been working alongside arts organisations, schools and colleges to establish the Heart of East Anglia Local

Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP). We look forward to projects developing from this in the coming year.

This year included the second season for the Summer in Suffolk Museums (SiSM) project. It is a promotional initiative that aims to publicise and promote family-friendly activities and events over the school summer holidays at museums throughout Suffolk. A total of 32 museums took part, compared to 30 last year. All the museums who took part in 2016 also took part in 2017. Participating museums offered over 60 family-friendly events and activities. Visitor feedback shows that they had a positive experience and were interested in visiting other museums. Benchmarking data (see below) shows an increase in visits from children and young people since this initiative was begun.

## **PROMOTION**

It was the seventh season SMOTY awards, with 15 entries into the main award and family-



friendly award categories. This year SiSM worked in partnership with the Suffolk Museum of the Year Awards (SMOTYA). Museums that took part in SiSM were automatically entered the SMOTYA awards. The visitor feedback forms from SiSM provided an extra qualitative aspect to the judging process. BBC Radio Suffolk, East Anglian Daily Times, and University of Suffolk continued to support and promote the awards.

Six museums were shortlisted for the main SMOTY award and put forward to the judging stage. These were the National Heritage Centre for Horseracing and Sporting Art, East Anglia Transport Museum, Gainsborough’s House, Lowestoft Museum, Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum, and Dunwich Museum.

Six museums were shortlisted for the Family-Friendly award. These were Moyse’s Hall, The Red House, Felixstowe Museum, Ipswich Museums, Museum of East Anglian Life, and Halesworth Museum.

The National Heritage Centre for Horseracing and Sporting Art was awarded Museum of the Year 2017, and the East Anglia Transport Museum was awarded the Merit award. Moyse’s Hall was awarded the Family Friendly Museum of the Year, with The Red House receiving the Merit Award.

West Stow Anglo Saxon Village was awarded the Access and Learning special award.

There were 14 entries into Object of the Year 2017. Halesworth Museum won with 1883 votes for their Dwele Flonking trophy.

SMOTY awards will be under review in 2018 and be relaunched in 2019.

**BENCHMARKING**

Benchmarking enables museums to look at their performance and compare it to others of a similar kind. A total of 28 Accredited Suffolk museums contributed to the regional benchmarking scheme (80 per cent). It shows that in over 440,000 people visited Suffolk museums. This is worth over £6m to the local economy. Visits included over 138,000 children, an increase of 55 per cent from the previous year. A total of 1,353 volunteers gave over 188,000 hours, which is worth over £1.3m to Suffolk museums.

<b>Leiston, Saxmundham and District Citizens’ Advice</b>	
<b>Representative</b>	Councillor Tony Cooper

**Introduction**

The Leiston, Saxmundham and District CAB provide advice from its offices in Leiston. The Bureau also operates outreach services at Saxmundham, Woodbridge, Framlingham and Wickham Market. In addition, the Bureau operates a telephone service for Rendlesham on a dedicated telephone numbers.

The Bureau aims to provide the advice people need for the problems they face, and equally, to improve the policies and practices that affect people’s lives. All advice given is confidential, free, independent and impartial.

The Bureau held its AGM on 11th July 2018 in the Aldeburgh Community Centre. The information in this report is taken from the Bureau’s Annual Report 2017/2018 which was presented at the AGM. Copies of the full report are available on request.

The Bureau dealt with in excess of £1,112,836 in new debt, **up** from £742.202 in 2016/7 and the **highest** for 3 years.

Details are broken down as below;

<b>Priority debts £</b>	<b>2017/2018</b>	<b>2016/2017</b>	<b>2015/2016</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2013/14</b>
<i>Rent arrears</i>	£17,586	£24,946	£14,461	£11,045	£9,740
<i>Mortgage arrears</i>	£396,917	£42,843	£332,049	£598,815	£551,951
<i>Council Tax</i>	£20,218	£38,661	£17,798	£16,817	£16,398
<i>Utilities</i>	£32,706	£54,985	£31,655	£184,968	£27,790
<i>TAX/NI</i>	£66,779	£120,726	£7,119	£47,820	£5,217
<i>Benefit overpayment</i>	£46,053	£97,139	£19,397	£22,697	£11,260
<i>Top Priority</i>	£580,259	£379,300	£422,478	£882,162	£622,365
<i>Non- Priority debts</i>	£532,577	£344,902	£635,161	£366,719	£650,331
<b>Grand Total £</b>	<b>£1,112,836</b>	<b>£742,202</b>	<b>£1,057,639</b>	<b>£1,248,881</b>	<b>£1,272,687</b>

Very little has changed in the debt world in the last year, the options are still the same and in fulfilling the criteria for the four options there has been little or no change: Debt Relief Orders (DROs); bankruptcies; Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVAs); and debt management plans (DMPs) either formal or informal through Citizens Advice. This last option is rarely used these days if a client fulfils the DRO criteria. However, we are seeing a significant change in the type of debt in two areas: rent arrears - although the figures above show a decrease from last year in these but a rise from the previous three years - and guarantor loans. Rent arrears are quite tricky to deal with as naturally clients must protect their home and keep a roof over their heads. If a DRO is suitable, rent arrears are a qualifying debt for this option, but clients still stand to lose their home if the rent arrears are not paid. The landlord can still follow eviction procedures, even though the debt goes into the DRO. Under insolvency rules the intermediary preparing the budget is allowed to use £50.00 a month of the budget towards the arrears, but often this will not be acceptable to the landlord if the arrears are high. Also, clients very often struggle to find even this amount. Discretionary housing payments can be applied for if a client is on housing benefit and local support agencies work with us to apply for these. With a local housing allowance cap it is difficult for many clients not to fall behind with rent. The over-occupancy rules have affected many of our clients who would move to a smaller property to avoid this, but any arrears must be cleared first and of course smaller properties are not necessarily available. It is always stressed very firmly to clients that this is the number one priority debt but it is becoming increasingly difficult to deal with in debt resolution. Guarantor loans are another rising debt issue and many people in debt wrongly make an assumption when completing a debt pack that this is not their debt. If the person for whom they stood guarantor is unable to meet the contractual payment on the loan, the guarantor will always be responsible for full repayment. It is very hard not to want to help someone, for example an adult child trying to get established or perhaps a good friend who needs some financial help, but the golden rule is if you do not have this money set aside to cover the debt DON'T ACT AS A GUARANTOR. When a client comes to us seeking debt advice they are given a debt pack to complete and all our advisers are now required under FCA (Financial Conduct Authority) to have extra training before advising debt clients. The debt pack clearly sets out the requirements from the client, e.g. proof of income, debt paperwork and supporting benefit evidence so we can get a full picture of their situation.

#### **Issues Dealt With;**

Benefits are still the number one issue dealt with, while debt figures have dipped. It is highly likely that the decrease in debt queries will rise by the time the next report is issued. Relationship issues have jumped to the number three spot, overtaking employment and housing. On housing, a fairly common issue raised is the repair and maintenance of rented property, including social housing; this

category also includes neighbour disputes, boundary issues, anti-social behaviour by tenants and planning.

The removal of fees for Employment Tribunals has not caused a noticeable increase in employment work so far, but we are still seeing cases of unpaid wages and unfair contract terms on a regular basis. People who have worked for an employer for under two years have limited rights and it appears that some less scrupulous employers are aware of this.

The discrimination category now includes domestic abuse, which advisers are being trained to discuss with clients to try and establish the true extent of the situation. Abuse need not be physical, it can also be psychological, financial and emotional and it can happen to anyone, irrespective of gender, age or any other characteristic.

In all areas of advice it is clear that mental health is a growing concern. We have clients who need professional support but who do not meet the full criteria for accessing that support. All advisers are trained to treat everybody with equal respect and consideration but we have all had to learn how to watch for and deal with cases where a bit more time and explanation is needed. Working with the local Social Prescribing Team means that clients and patients can be referred to the right places for help, rather than being passed from pillar to post and back again. This is an area where we hope that closer partnership working between the relevant agencies can ease stresses and strains for everyone – support services, GPs and, of course, clients.

#### **FINANCIAL AND OTHER GAINS;**

As stated above, we have moved to a new recording system, Casebook, and we are still working our way through the instruction manual. Some of us have got as far as finding the list of reporting tools provided on Casebook, but to be honest we still have a way to go before we can really use those tools so that we can run the system to full advantage. In the past, we wrote down manually the gains we achieved for our clients, separating out the various elements and then adding them all up at the end of the year.

Under Casebook, our unfamiliarity with the system means that we have been able to produce very limited information on gains to date. This very meagre information is below. The income figure includes welfare benefits and tax credits, as well as unpaid wages and employment settlements. The reimbursement section covers things such as refunds for goods and services. The last figure includes debts written off, debt relief orders, bankruptcies and statute barred debts. Hopefully, before the next report is issued, we will be able to break the figures down into more meaningful categories.

The breakdown for gains in 2017/18 is as follows:

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Total £ amount</b>	<b>Average £ per Client</b>
Debt write off - other	£45,172	£7,529
DRO - debt relief order	£253,328	£12,063
<b>Total – written off</b>	<b>£298,500</b>	<b>£11,056</b>
Benefit / tax credit gain - a new award or increase	£19,060	£3,177
Benefit / tax credit gain - award or increase following revision or appeal	£27,799	£6,950
Benefit / tax credit gain - Money put back into payment	£7,854	£1,571
Benefit / tax credit gain - overpayment reduced/ not recovered	£1,798	£1,798
Civil proceedings completed	£655	£655
Charitable payment	£6,460	£281

Compensation - awarded	£90	£90
Money recovered	£1,563	£521
Other (financial)	£1,364	£1,364
Other savings achieved	£624	£312
<b>Total - income</b>	<b>£67,267</b>	<b>£1,564</b>
Financial gain / improvement	£66,000	£66,000
Refund / Repair / Replacement agreed/scheduled	£9,482	£3,160
Tax rebate	£2,077	£2,077
<b>Total - reimbursements</b>	<b>£77,559</b>	<b>£15,512</b>

In line with the commentary within the report the level of income and reimbursement we assisted members of the community to access were both higher than in previous year.

### **REVIEW OF AIMS & OBJECTIVES;**

We review our aims, objectives and activities each year. This review looks at what we achieved and the outcomes of our work in the previous twelve months. The review also looks at the success of each key activity and the benefits they have brought to those groups of people whom we are set up to help. It also helps us to ensure our aims, objectives and activities remained focused on our stated purposes. We have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aims and objectives and in planning our future activities. In particular, the Trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set.

### **UC OR NOT UC**

The impact of the much publicised roll-out of Universal Credit (UC) revolutionising the UK benefits system has yet to be felt in Leiston and Saxmundham. We are still what is referred to as a live service area, and until January this year, UC was only available to straightforward clients (single, no dependents). From January, no new UC claims can be made in live service areas and at present, Leiston Jobcentre Plus has only 6 clients on UC. Everyone else has remained on the legacy benefits. This means that the vast majority of our working age clients claiming benefits remain on Job Seekers Allowance, Employment & Support Allowance or Income Support. The last year has seen us help a large number of clients who have been turned down for ESA following their Work Capability Assessment. The first stage is to request a mandatory reconsideration (MR). Most MRs seem to be little more than a rubber stamp of the original decision and we then help clients with the appeal process. Appeals are heard at tribunals in Ipswich and can be a daunting and stressful process for clients. We can help them prepare but are not able to accompany them to the hearing itself, and it is very clear that clients are their own best advocate. We also advise clients claiming Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Again, we can help with a MR and appeal if necessary. A national review of previous PIP decisions is underway following legal challenges which found against the DWP. This has meant that the transfer of existing Disability Living Allowance claimants onto PIP has been slowed down, but will still happen and the differences between the two benefits are reflected in the number of claimants who have been in receipt of DLA for years but fail to satisfy the PIP criteria. Nationally, the roll-out of UC highlighted problems and amendments have now been introduced to deal with some of the worse elements of the new system. The government faced political pressure and this led to a slowing down of the roll-out process. Our full service date slipped, but the date is now set, the DWP are starting training their local staff and Full Service takes off on 17th October 2018. Over the coming year, we can anticipate an increase in the demand for benefit advice as UC becomes the norm. We should be able to benefit from the experience of other Bureaux. Offering budgeting support to new UC claimants has been shown to help them make the switch from fortnightly to 4 or 5 weekly payments. We are planning to have sessions in the Jobcentre Plus offices in Leiston and Woodbridge and have already built closer links with DWP local staff.

## Felixstowe and District Citizens' Advice

Councillor Doreen Savage

The Citizens Advice service began in the UK in September 1939 as a war-time service and has continued to provide free, impartial, independent and confidential advice to anyone who needs help, ever since then. The Felixstowe & District Citizens Advice Bureau commenced in operation as a stand-alone service in 1984 and has been supporting people in and around the Felixstowe area from that date forward. Following a national re-branding exercise in 2016 the term 'Bureau' was dropped from the title and **Citizens Advice – Felixstowe** continues to provide face-to-face and telephone advice from its main office in Orwell Road as well as outreach locations at Felixstowe Library, two doctors surgeries and both Hollesley Bay and Warren Hill prisons.

There are currently just under 300 local Citizens Advice offices across the country, all working beneath the national umbrella Citizens Advice organisation. Each local office is a registered charity in its own right and is responsible for its own fundraising in order to maintain its presence and support local people. There is no central funding received locally from the national organisation and indeed, each local office has to pay a membership fee to the centre in order to maintain its membership of the service and continue to use the Citizens Advice brand.

And of course, with that trusted brand comes many years of support and service and an extremely good reputation both locally and nationally for providing high quality advice to anyone who needs our help. As far as we are aware, Citizens Advice are the only advice provider in the UK who quality assures the advice it delivers to its clients with as many as four different levels of scrutiny to be passed before we are satisfied that the information and support given to the customer is correct and accurate. Our organisation has a robust infrastructure behind it which ensure we have access to the most up-to-date information available at our fingertips.

We are proud to be able to be that first point of call for anyone who has a concern of any sort – whatever the issue may be. We have a dedicated Money Advice Team here in Felixstowe who can help with any debt or financial issues and we also have a dedicated Financial Capability worker who can work with people who, whilst not currently in debt, can foresee issues arising in the future and need to look at their options. We will work with the customer and help them prepare a budget, looking at their income and expenditure and will also look at negotiating with potential creditors in order to enable them to manage their finances better.

Our trained benefits advisers can help those who are currently in receipt of welfare benefits or who are looking to make a claim for the first time and our team of highly trained, dedicated volunteer advisers will help anyone who contacts us looking for help on a range of issues such as housing, relationships, employment, tax, consumer issues etc. – as well as those money and benefits issues mentioned earlier.

Whilst we do not claim to be the 'experts' in every subject – if we don't know the answer to a question, we probably know someone who does! We work very closely with other local charities and organisations who specialise in specific areas of advice and help and we also have good links with our local solicitors and can refer those people whose issues are very complex and perhaps need the trained legal eye to look over the situation in more detail.

We work in close partnership with the town council, the district council and the county council too, in order that we can access support from the appropriate specialist teams who can help with specific housing and council tax issues and we have an excellent relationship with the local provider of social

housing within the Suffolk Coastal area. We are eternally grateful to those organisations for their continuing financial help with funding.

We are also working in close partnership with Suffolk Coastal District Council and the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) to prepare for the launch of Universal Credit in our area. We know from experience elsewhere in the country that the transition to Universal credit for some people is causing major problems – especially around budgeting and the use of digital services. A claim to Universal Credit has to be made and maintained online which requires the claimant to have access to a computer, tablet or mobile phone which has access to the internet. There is also a minimum five week waiting period from the date a successful claim is made to the first payment of benefit being received and this is causing all sorts of problems with budgeting and associated issues around such things as housing and paying rent etc. Some areas around Felixstowe went live on Universal Credit in April with the remainder – including Felixstowe itself, due to go-live in October of this year. With our links to the DWP, the housing teams at the district council and our knowledge and experience in helping people budget, we will be best placed to help anyone who is struggling with the Universal Credit claim itself or with the associated problems that this brings.