

## **Annual Report Suffolk Coastal District Council 2017**

It has once again been a very busy year - we celebrated the Queens 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, looked at and debated devolution, published our first joint Business Plan, responded to the latest consultation re EDF, inspired people to join in on the walking festivals, won awards for our sea front gardens in Felixstowe, voted in the EU referendum, held a beach hut consultation, recycled our old furniture from the Melton Hill offices and much more. Through our ward reports we have kept you informed and up to date with all that has been going on but we would like to take this opportunity to update and remind you of a few items. As always, planning issues keep us busy and can we remind you to copy us in on any correspondence so that we can help. Please do not hesitate to get in contact with us on any other matters if we can help in any way.

### **We moved to Riduna Park**

Suffolk Coastal moved in new office premises at Riduna Park in Melton.

The move from the previous ageing offices at Melton Hill in Woodbridge is part of the Council's continuing aim to protect the tax payer, by downsizing to reduce the Council's running costs in the future and to give staff more efficient and modern facilities to work in.

The new purpose built offices provide a contemporary and comfortable place for our staff to work and allow for improved flexible working for both staff and members and to reduce running costs.

### **Merger**

In March 2016 Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Council considered a paper where we looked at a possible merger, as you know both councils have been working increasingly closely, since appointing a joint Chief Executive in 2008 and the partnership has been key to the Councils' ability to make efficiency savings.

Not quite a year later both Cabinets approved the proposals at a simultaneous cabinet meeting followed by a SCDC Full Council meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> January, a day after Waveney councillors voted in favour of the merger - where both Council Leaders recognised the significance of this decision. Both approved to create a brand new 'super district' council, delivering services to communities across east Suffolk and will now work with the Department of Communities and Local Government to begin the formal process of merger. With the Secretary of State's agreement, the new Council would then hold elections, and commence operations, in 2019.

By creating a new, larger and more influential council, we will be able to keep costs down, enabling us to maintain and improve the services that local people depend on.

Working in partnership has already helped the councils save over £16m since 2010. However, further savings cannot be made unless the partnership progresses further. A new, merged, council will be better placed to address the shared challenges that both councils face.

The formal process of merger will now get underway and the Chief Executive, in consultation with the two Leaders, has submitted a written request to the Department of the Communities and Local Government. Final ratification of the decision will then be made by the Secretary of State in September 2017.

The two existing councils will then be formally dissolved with elections to the new authority in May 2019.

There is a lot of work to be done and following last year's public consultation on proposals for new constituency boundaries, the Boundary Commission for England is once again asking for your views.

Almost 20,000 responses were received during the 2016 consultation – these comments have now been published and the Commission is inviting comment on them until Monday 27 March: <https://www.bce2018.org.uk/>

After this date, the Commission will consider all representations received from both consultations and will consider whether any revisions are needed. If the Commission decides to revise the proposals, then a further consultation on the revised boundaries will take place.

The Boundary Commission for England is an independent and impartial non-departmental public body which is responsible for reviewing Parliamentary constituency boundaries in England.

### **Protecting the tax payer**

Suffolk Coastal has vowed to develop a more commercial approach to providing services, in order to protect the local tax payer.

At its Full Council meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February, Suffolk Coastal District Council agreed its budget and set its portion of the Council Tax for the coming financial year.

The Members decided that, in order to continue to provide high quality services, the Council would increase its part of the Council Tax bill for 2017/18 by 3.25%.

In real money, this equates to a rise of less than £5 for people living in a Band D property, with the Council Tax on Band D increasing by £4.95 from £152.37 to £157.32 a year.....or by less than 10p a week!

“I remain very positive about the future and believe Suffolk Coastal has a key role to play in fostering a strong economy by helping businesses develop, driving the provision of more housing, particularly extra affordable homes, and creating new jobs in the district,” said Suffolk Coastal's Leader, Cllr Ray Herring.

“While east Suffolk has a robust economy, the Council has recognised the need to adopt a more commercial approach to providing services. We need to make sure we get a fair market value for services, if we are to keep council tax down and protect the tax payer.

“No one wants to pay more for services or pay more council tax. But we are faced with dwindling financial support from central Government, so we have a difficult balancing act to ensure everyone pays their fair share to support the services we provide to the community.

“By being more commercial in our approach, we create the funds to be able to invest in important community projects, such as improving our leisure centres, as well as continuing to deliver our Enabling Communities agenda to provide

essential grants and support in order to help make our communities stronger and more able to do things for themselves.”

Through its partnership working with Waveney District Council, Suffolk Coastal has already drastically reduced its staffing numbers and made joint saving of over £16million since 2010. These savings have been achieved while safeguarding frontline services provided by the Council.

“We need to build on our success and continue to drive down costs. We need to focus on how we will successfully deliver our ambitious Business Plan, while supporting the local economy,”

“We are driving forward on all fronts, from the proposed merger with Waveney District Council through to moving to new, more economical offices in Melton at no cost to the tax payer.

“There are financial challenges ahead, but we are confident we can deliver quality services, while continuing to make efficiency savings and investing in the future.”

Suffolk Coastal District Council has an annual budget of about £12 million. About £7.7million of this comes from Council Tax. Although Suffolk Coastal collects the Council Tax (on behalf of Suffolk Coastal, the County Council, Police and Town/Parish Councils), only about 10p in the pound goes towards providing our district council services.

We are also facing a steep reduction in central Government grants. Grant income from central Government has dropped from £7.4million in 2010/11 to £600,000 in 2017/18 – and is projected to fall even further in the future.

Because the district’s economy is so strong, the Council has benefited from what is called ‘incentivised income’, through New Homes Bonus and business rate retention, although there is still a projected budget gap of £2.1 million in 2018/19.

Rather than make cuts to services, Suffolk Coastal is committed to reducing its dependence on central Government grants by becoming more financially self-sufficient, through reduced spending and becoming more business-like in order to generate the income we need to make up this shortfall.

### **Joint response re Sizewell.**

We have also provided our response to Phase Two of the consultation on the proposed Sizewell C nuclear power station. It is fair to say, we have been disappointed with the amount of information EDF Energy have provided. Although we do support the project in principle, we cannot give it our full support without more detailed information. The onus is now on EDF Energy to provide more information about the project, and to demonstrate it has listened to our feedback (and the responses from all our communities)

### **Planning documents given the go-ahead**

Suffolk Coastal's Full Council formally agreed to adopt the recently approved planning documents which set out site allocations for new homes in the district over the next 10 years.

The Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies Development Plan Document and the Felixstowe Peninsula Area Action Plan were considered by the Planning Inspectorate and found to be "sound" with the Inspector's report being received by the Council on 16 January 2017.

In August and September 2016, the public examination into the documents took place and identified a series of Main Modifications which were then subject to a period of public consultation. The Council has included all the Main Modifications as required by the Inspector within the documents that have been formally adopted as part of the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan.

The documents will together establish and agree the most suitable land to meet the forecast demand for housing in the district as well as considering the requirements for employment land, town centres, open spaces, infrastructure and other land use planning issues as the Council seeks to implement the Core Strategy.

The documents will now become part of Suffolk Coastal's Local Plan alongside the Council's Core Strategy which was adopted in July 2013.

### **Improving our leisure facilities - Leisure Centres set for transformation**

Suffolk Coastal has announced ambitious plans to invest in its leisure centres.

The work is part of the council's commitment to improve its leisure centre offer and to encourage more people to become more active.

One of Suffolk Coastal's 10 priorities in its Business Plan focuses on the need to provide high-quality, modern leisure centres that the whole community can enjoy, with state-of-the-art equipment, that come at no additional cost to the tax payer.

The work builds on the progress made by the Leisure Strategy formed in 2014, which sets out how improvements to the leisure provision will be made across the district, over the next 10 years.

A five year programme is now being launched, with Deben Leisure Centre as the first to be upgraded, followed by Leiston and then Felixstowe. While the timetable of works is still being finalised, it is expected that refurbishments will start at Deben Leisure Centre in 2017, with the other centres following in subsequent years. Suffolk Coastal is working closely with its operational leisure partners, Places for People Leisure, to ensure that disruption is kept to a minimum and existing users receive regular communications and updates.

When our leisure centres were first built, they gave our communities a great sense of pride, such as Deben Pool which couldn't have been built without the support and hard work of local groups and residents. However, our leisure centres are now aging and need updating to today's and future standards so that

they have the best facilities and become the destinations of choice for our residents.

We want to increase the number of people using our leisure facilities and boost overall numbers of people taking part in health and well-being activities as part of our commitment to getting more people fit and active.

### **Implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement in East Suffolk.**

We had a key decision to make on whether we should take over responsibility for parking enforcement. Suffolk is one of the few counties in England where district councils do not have this responsibility, and parking enforcement is still carried out by the police.

The lack of enforcement action is seen in communities across the district, with mounting discontent over 'unpoliced' illegal parking – in particular at pinch points around schools. There are significant safety issues associated with this and, under current arrangements, District Councils are powerless to enforce a solution. CPE would provide those powers. The law permits the responsibility for parking enforcement to be transferred from the police to local authorities and income from tickets stays with the authority, potentially enabling self-funding.

This proposal includes a range of options such as on-street pay and display or the development of new car parking facilities, and putting in place a very streamlined enforcement operation, fully integrated with our current off street parking enforcement service. There is a lot of work to be completed to implement this and we urge you to continue to report items to the police.

### **Launched the Exemplar Grant programme**

Suffolk Coastal District Council announced the launch of a new grant programme in October.

The Enabling Communities Exemplar Programme looks to assist community initiatives with grant funding to deliver new 'flagship' projects that will have a significant impact on communities and tackle need in a sustainable way. Voluntary and community organisations can apply for grant assistance between £1,000 and £10,000 to help a specific project or activity across our communities at a ward or across multiple wards that need more funding than is available through the Enabling Communities Budgets.

To be eligible for funding, the project must be supported by the relevant Ward Councillor or the relevant Cabinet Member(s). The Exemplar Programme has no set deadlines, so you can apply at any time and a decision will be made within 8 weeks of Council Officers receiving your complete application.

There has been £132,000 of funding set aside to fund projects through this programme, which can be spent on costs to fund a new community project or help fund new community capital projects, please check grant criteria before applying.

The fund has been designed to be accessible, responsive to community need and more aligned with the Enabling Communities Budgets and contribute towards Council's Enabling Communities Strategy and Business Plan.

Please get in touch: email [grants@eastsoffolk.gov.uk](mailto:grants@eastsoffolk.gov.uk) or call 01394 444721.

**The Enabling Communities Budget** is our other grant which continues to be very successful. Each Ward Councillor will have £6,500 to spend directly on new projects or community groups in their ward, as they see appropriate. If you are interested please contact your local Ward Councillor for more information on ECB's or the exemplar grants.

### **Held another successful Annual Forum**

The East Suffolk Partnership's (ESP) annual Forum celebrated its biggest Forum to date in November and the theme was 'the future of east Suffolk' which attracted a wide variety of delegates from local businesses, Town and Parish councils, voluntary organisations, health services, the police, local councils, and education. The event focussed on providing a 'time out' from our continually changing world to look towards the future of east Suffolk and posed to delegates how to take advantage of the emerging opportunities and challenges.

The aim of the conference is to help build better partnership working in east Suffolk, allowing the delegates the opportunity to meet members of the East Suffolk Partnership Board and hear about progress in developing a collaborative approach to working across east Suffolk. Once again, the events will be supported by Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils and the East of England LGA.

### **Made Car Park improvements**

Work to Melton Riverside Car Park next to Melton Railway Station started in November and completed in January where we created 20 extra car parking spaces. The work completed by Kier Construction also involved doing a general clean-up of the picnic area, re-dressing the surface, increasing the total number of parking spaces to 50.

The Council hope the improved car park will provide better access for regular users of the Country Park and extra parking for those using the nearby facilities at the station and new district council offices, providing additional public parking at times of peak demand such major planning meetings.

Work is only weeks away from being completed at Thorpe Road car park in Aldeburgh where the work involves improving the drainage of the site and surface of the car park.

### **New 'one stop shop' officially opened at Woodbridge Library**

The new shared customer services facility in Woodbridge Library was officially opened today in May and allows us to provide better customer services to local people by dealing with more things at the first point of contact. By creating this 'one stop shop' for Suffolk Coastal services at Woodbridge Library our Customer Services Team can deal with a wide range of enquiries, including council tax, housing benefits, tourism and much more.

People can also able to make appointments to see staff from other Council services, such as Planning.

Customers also benefit from services that the library provides including printing services, internet access and free WiFi.

### **Encouraging people to Switch your Council Tax to Direct Debit.**

As part of a national campaign, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils are encouraging as many people as possible to pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit.

Direct Debit is the most convenient way to spread the cost across the year and gives you peace of mind that your bills will be paid on time, every time, with no missed payments. It really is the perfect way to stay in control of your bills. Set up a Direct Debit with your bank and payments will be made automatically, meaning you will never forget to make that vital payment. But don't worry, you will stay in control as a Direct Debit can be cancelled at any time. What's more, everything is protected by the Direct Debit Guarantee – so you can be confident that you will get a full refund from your bank in the unlikely event that an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit. It also helps councils protect public money by ensuring bills are paid on time and it reduces the time it takes for us to deal with payments which frees up resources for other vital services. To sign up, call our Customer Services team on 01394 444339 (Suffolk Coastal)

### **Brought in New powers to tackle fly-tipping**

The Suffolk Waste Partnership continues to warn anyone thinking of dumping waste in the county that new powers came into force on 9<sup>th</sup> May that allow local authorities to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to any person found to have fly-tipped.

**Any person issued one of the new Fixed Penalty Notices for fly-tipping would then have 14 days to comply by paying £200, which is reduced to £120 if paid within 10 days, though individual local authorities will have the power to fix the level of the penalty at up to £400.**

Failure to comply with the notice may result in prosecution proceedings, which in the event of a conviction by a Magistrates Court can result in a maximum fine of £50,000 and / or a prison sentence of 6 months being imposed, with Crown Courts able to impose even steeper penalties of up to 5 years imprisonment and an unlimited fine.

Householders also have a legal duty of care to ensure that their waste does not end up being fly-tipped and can be prosecuted and fined up to £5,000 if convicted by a Court for failing to fulfil this duty. So to stay safe, always carry out the following SCRAP checks when arranging for your rubbish to be removed by anyone other than your local district or borough council:

- Suspect - Beware of rogue waste carriers – reputable companies do not usually make direct approaches. If in any doubt as to whether someone is a legitimate waste carrier, do not allow them to take your waste.
- Check - Ask for their waste carrier registration details. You can verify them by visiting the online register at <https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers> or by calling 03708 506 506. Note down the registration number of the vehicle used to take your waste away.
- Refuse – Any unsolicited offers to have any rubbish taken away. Always carry out your own research and choose who you wish to approach.
- Ask questions - Always ask what exactly is going to happen to your rubbish and seek evidence that it is going to be disposed of appropriately. A legitimate, professional waste carrier who wants your business should not object to being asked reasonable questions.

- Paperwork - Make sure you get a proper receipt containing the written information for your waste. This should include what has been removed and where it will be going. Make sure the Company or tradesman's details are included.

If you see someone dumping rubbish, please report it to your local council along with any details that might help us to identify and trace those responsible, including the registration of any vehicle involved: 01394 444000

### **A county first – Created a digital map created for east Suffolk**

Work to create a digital map showing free PC and Wi-Fi locations in east Suffolk has now been completed – the first of its type in the County!

The map to help our customers find their nearest computer location has been created by Customer Services.

Points on the map include children's centres, libraries, Citizens Advice Bureaus and Jobcentres. Each icon provides detail on the level of service offered at each location such as free Wi-Fi and computer access as well as access to IT training and support.

<http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/community/digital-map-for-east-suffolk/>

### **Suffolk Coastal launched a new noise service**

As the weather starts to improve Suffolk Coastal's Environmental Protection Team is asking its local residents to spare a thought for their neighbours.

Around 40% of the population said that noise affects their quality of life with noise nuisance from pubs, clubs, barking dogs and loud music from neighbours proven to cause stress, loss of sleep and high blood pressure.

The Environmental Protection Team at Suffolk Coastal deals with around 500 complaints of noise nuisance each year, most of which occur during the summer months.

Officers can be contacted through Suffolk Coastal's weekend evening hotline on: 01502 527132. Noise complaints can also be reported during the normal working day by telephoning: 01502 562111.

### **Food Hygiene - Remember to ask 'where's the sticker?'**

We are pleased that many food businesses across east Suffolk have been awarded the highest possible rating for food hygiene, however, we are reminding you to check the food hygiene rating sticker when choosing where to eat out.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) helps people make an informed choice about where to eat by highlighting restaurants, pubs and cafes with excellent food hygiene. Food businesses can display their black and green FHRS sticker advertising their current food safety rating. This gives an immediate insight into the kitchen and shows how seriously the business takes food hygiene.

All food businesses are checked by the Council's Food and Safety Team to ensure they are compliant with food hygiene law and so if a business is not displaying a FHRS sticker, it might be they have something to hide! Food businesses with poor food hygiene standards will have a rating of 0 (urgent



improvement necessary), 1 (major improvement necessary) or 2 (improvement necessary).

People are encouraged to take food hygiene seriously when choosing where to eat and so if the FHRs sticker is not visible, always ask 'where's the sticker?' You can also check the rating of over 440,000 food businesses online at [ratings.food.gov.uk](http://ratings.food.gov.uk).

All food businesses are capable of achieving the top FHRs rating of 5 (very good) and having a top rating can attract more customers. Food establishment owners should make sure their FHRs sticker is proudly on display on the door, the menu and in any advertising.

### **Universal Credit**

A new, single, benefit that incorporates Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. It was introduced at Lowestoft and Beccles Jobcentres in March 2015, however this initial phase of the roll out contained several 'gateway conditions' and only applied to single people that were 'non householders' (did not own a home or have a mortgage) and would have previously applied for Jobseekers Allowance. For general information on the changes go to: <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>.

### **More info..**

#### **Love East Suffolk' returns for spring**

The 'Love East Suffolk' litter pick scheme is back for 2017 to encourage, enable and reward people to show some love for the environment we live in.

Last year the incentive based community litter pick scheme helped clean up over 7.6 tonnes of waste across Suffolk Coastal and Waveney whilst also giving groups funding to spend in their community.

In 2017 both Councils hope to encourage even more groups to take part – beating the 2,035 people who got involved during 2016.

To incentivise more groups of volunteers to help litter pick in East Suffolk, the Love East Suffolk scheme offers a £20 payment to all groups who register their litter pick to take place between 1 March to 31 May 2017.

All registered groups who carry out their pick during this period will also be entered into a prize draw, with prizes of £200 awarded to winning groups in each of five 'neighbourhood areas' in Suffolk Coastal and in each of four 'neighbourhood areas' in Waveney with funding once again provided by Norse.

The scheme ties in with the Great British Spring Clean taking place 3 – 5 March which aims to bring together people from across the country to clean up litter that blights our towns, villages, countryside and coastline.

Both Suffolk Coastal Norse and Waveney Norse can provide volunteers with equipment including sacks, disposable gloves, to groups by booking online and will also arrange for gathered litter to be collected. Litter pick sticks, bag hoops, and green vests can also be loaned out, subject to availability. (book online:

<https://eastsuffolk.firmstep.com/default.aspx/RenderForm/?F.Name=ow54YQdcJw&HideToolbar=1>) more details on our website.

*Further information:*

All groups participating between 1 March and 31 May 2017 will receive £20 for their nominated community fund or charity, and will be entered into a £200 grand prize draw

To be eligible, all registered groups must submit a photo of their event and permit use of the photo for our publicity purposes.

All cash awards would be payable to a recognised charity or community group chosen by that team of volunteers.

**Felixstowe to celebrate our Armed Forces**

A celebratory event to show appreciation of the work of the Armed Forces is to be held in Felixstowe this year.

2017 marks the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dutch attack on Landguard Fort in Felixstowe and to mark the occasion, and to recognise the huge contribution made by our servicemen and women from the past until the present day, Felixstowe has been chosen as the venue for Suffolk Armed Forces weekend.

A weekend of action-packed entertainment is planned for Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 June 2017 and plans to be a high profile, one off free event for all age groups.

There will be a unique package of entertainment including music from choirs and military bands to an evening of pop and rock, military displays, food stalls, children's activities and fireworks, and some thrilling battle re-enactments between the Dutch and English with cannon, muskets and swords. All this by Felixstowe's fantastic seaside with all that has to offer as well!

We're very excited about hosting Suffolk Armed Forces Day in Felixstowe. We hope the weekend will raise public awareness of the contribution made to our country by those who serve and have served in Her Majesty's Armed Forces as not many people, locally or nationally know that Felixstowe played an important role in the history of our nation. We're proud to be bringing together the community, armed forces personnel, their families and service veterans for this celebratory weekend that is set to be the biggest Armed Forces event in the region. This important event puts Felixstowe on centre stage and promises to bring history to life for all the family and is a fantastic opportunity for us to showcase what we have to offer.

The event is being organised in partnership by organisations including the Suffolk Armed Forces Covenant Group, the Landguard Fort Trust, Royal Marines Association and Royal British Legion, with assistance from local authorities and military units.

To make this an event we can all be proud of we need the support of businesses, organisations and individuals who understand and value our armed forces, our community and our history.

If you would like to talk more about how you could be involved, please feel free to give our project officer Paul Grant a ring on 07850 427928, or email: paul.grant@eastssuffolk.gov.uk

### **Scam warning to residents**

Unfortunately we have reported about scams and frauds a lot over the year and we are continuing all residents to remain vigilant following reports of possible scam attempts.

If you think you have been targeted by a scam, or know someone who has, then call Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040** or report it online. Action Fraud is the UK's national reporting centre for fraud and internet crime.

### **Help us keep standards up - closing date 10.03.17**

Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Councils take pride in the quality of service its elected Members provide.

However, we need to make sure there is a rigorous, independent procedure in place to investigate any complaints against our Councillors.

We want to appoint a new 'independent person' to help maintain the high standard of conduct of local councillors across both councils.

If you have an independent mind and a strong sense of what is right or wrong, this could be the role for you.

The role involves helping deal with any complaints about councillors' conduct, as well as providing advice to any councillors who have been complained about.

If you are fair, pragmatic and committed to high standards of behaviour, we'd like to hear from you.

To ensure the independence of the role, you cannot be appointed if you are currently a councillor, co-opted member or officer of that council, or have been within the last five years. Neither can you be a relative or close friend of such a person.

If you are interested we would encourage you to apply online.

<https://www.suffolkjobsdirect.org/administration-business-support-customer-service-independent-person/43965.job>

The successful applicant will be given training and will also be paid a nominal sum (of £300 a year, plus £50 with expenses for each complaint they investigate). It is estimated that the time commitment would be about three hours a month.

The closing date for applications is Friday, 10 March 2017, with interviews scheduled to be held on Thursday, 23 March 2017