



August / September 2019

Welcome to my monthly newsletter

East Suffolk to battle climate change

East Suffolk Council voted unanimously to step up its positive work on environmental issues to help fight climate change at its Full Council meeting on 24 July.

While the Council recognises there is a good record of taking action on environmental issues across East Suffolk, it has now joined other local authorities in recognising the fact there is a climate emergency – and committed itself to doing more to reduce its own carbon emissions and to encourage communities to help fight climate change.

What next?

- The Council is commissioning an independent review of its progress to-date which will identify opportunities for further work to reduce carbon emissions which will feed into an action plan that will help us monitor progress towards meeting this challenging new target.
- The Council will be setting up a cross-party member task group to consider the results of that independent review and to recommend future priorities for action on climate change, building on the progress that has already been achieved.
- The Council will continue to work with its partners across the county to ensure a coordinated approach, joint working in areas where we can deliver more by working together and to ensure a strong voice to influence and encourage others to act.

What have we achieved already?

- We have moved to new more energy efficient council offices in Melton and Lowestoft which are more compact, well insulated and utilise renewable energy sources including air-source heat pumps at East Suffolk house and solar PV at Riverside Road

- We have helped businesses and residents to reduce their energy bills through free advice and improvement grants
- We are refurbishing our leisure facilities building in renewable energy generation
- We have been running campaigns across the district to improve air quality and reduce plastic waste and littering.

Accommodation to be provided for rough sleepers

East Suffolk Council has been awarded £292,316 following a successful application to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to provide accommodation for rough sleepers and those facing homelessness in Felixstowe and Lowestoft.

The funding will be used to deliver two interlinking projects, providing specific housing 'pathways' for those who are vulnerable to homelessness, including people with mental health issues, those experiencing domestic abuse, ex-offenders and care leavers.

The first project, called 'Somewhere Safe to Stay', will provide emergency beds in 'hubs' in both Felixstowe and Lowestoft. Available for up to 72 hours, the emergency accommodation will ensure the users are safe whilst also having their needs assessed and appropriate support made available.

The second project will be a Supported Lettings scheme, which will see the Council employ dedicated officers to help former rougher sleepers move on from emergency accommodation into supported, temporary or longer term housing.

Framlingham goes digital with official launch of a free public WiFi system

Framlingham went digital with the launch of a new free public WiFi system on 3 August.

The market town was chosen to pilot the new scheme, called 'Digital Town, to help people access the internet and make use of digital technology.

The new WiFi system is the first phase of the scheme, which will trial different interventions to enhance the town's economic development and wellbeing – making Framlingham the first of what could be a long line of towns in East Suffolk to receive free WiFi and other digital solutions.

The innovative scheme is delivered in partnership between Framlingham Town Council, Framling Business Association and East Suffolk Council.

Leiston Leisure Centre is open for business

Leiston Leisure Centre fully reopened on Saturday, 10 August – marking the completion of the £4 million redevelopment. The centre was closed in August 2018 to undergo the works over two phases as part of East Suffolk Council's programme to improve leisure facilities in the District and encourage more people to become active.

Phase One reopened in June 2019 and included the swimming pool, reception and soft play area, as well as a brand new addition to the centre – a thermal suite with sauna and steam room, feature showers and relaxation area.

Phase Two included a new spacious fitness suite, two new dance studios and cycling studio, as well as improvements to the squash courts and sports hall.

We will now be focusing on the third project in the programme, which is Bungay Leisure Centre. The centre is due to close for redevelopment on 12 September 2019 and the work is expected to take ten months to complete.

Residents are reminded only rain goes down the drains

Residents and businesses are being encouraged to dispose of their waste correctly and reduce the pollution caused by litter entering the draining system.

The 'Yellow Fish' anti-pollution project is delivered by community charity Groundwork Suffolk, the East Suffolk Greenprint Forum and East Suffolk Council to raise awareness of the importance of preventing litter from entering the surface water drainage. Unlike foul water systems which feed into sewage treatment works, surface water drains usually lead directly to natural watercourses. Any waste entering these drains can therefore end up polluting the watercourses, harming fish and other wildlife.

To help spread the project's message of 'Only Drain Down the Drain', Groundwork 'Green Champions' visited homes in Felixstowe, Lowestoft and Woodbridge in mid-August.

As part of the project, Groundwork has also been raising awareness of the Refill scheme, which encourages people to take their reusable water bottle with them when they go out. There are now over 20,000 businesses, shops, cafes and public buildings in the UK registered as Refill Stations where people can refill their water bottles for free, including the Council's offices in Lowestoft and Melton.

Funding boost for new community centre

Plans to provide Woodbridge with a new youth, art and community centre has been given a funding boost by East Suffolk Council.

Jetty Lane, the Community Interest Company (CIC) behind the project, has been granted £188,800 from the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is the biggest CIL grant issued to date. This will cover pre-construction costs for the new community centre and the remaining funds are being supplied through donations and other fundraising efforts. The work is expected to start by the end of 2020.

'Bin the butt' and help keep East Suffolk tidy

Residents and visitors to Lowestoft have been encouraged to dispose of their cigarette butts correctly to help reduce littering in the town centre. The East Suffolk Communities Team and East Suffolk Norse were in Lowestoft town centre along with Groundwork Suffolk and the East Suffolk Plastic Action Champions on 17 August to raise awareness of cigarette butt littering. The event was also supported by Lowestoft Town Council.

Cigarette butts are the most common form of littering. In a survey carried out in Lowestoft in 2018, 53% of all litter was smoking-related waste and across the country, one in 10 people do not consider putting a cigarette down the drain to be littering.

As well as harmful plastic, cigarette butts contain toxic chemical ingredients including arsenic, lead and nicotine which can all be released when the butts break up in the environment.

Anyone seen littering, including dropping a cigarette butt, can be fined £80 via a Fixed Penalty Notice. Failure to pay this can result in prosecution, a criminal record and a further fine of up to £2,500.

Money saved from fraudulent activity

East Suffolk Council's Corporate Fraud Service, supported by the Council's Housing and Legal Services, has prevented, identified or recovered fraudulent activity totalling £1,823,485 between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019.

The Corporate Fraud Service investigates a variety of frauds which the Council may be vulnerable to, including fraudulent Right to Buy and Gateway to Homechoice applications, social housing fraud, false council tax discounts, business rates and housing benefit claims.

As part of fraud investigations, 5 council-owned properties were found being inappropriately used by tenants, such as being sub-let which is a breach of the tenancy agreement. These properties have since been made available again to those in housing need.

One of the main areas of work for the Corporate Fraud Service is ensuring robust checks are made on all 'Right to Buy' (RTB) applications submitted to the Council. As a result of these checks, 20 RTB applications were cancelled following fraud intervention. The properties relating to these RTB applications, with a market value of £2,821,500, have remained available for housing tenants.

Ipswich Northern Route exhibitions attracted over 2,000 people

Public information events to consult on route options for a new road to the north of Ipswich have attracted more than 2,000 people. In total 11 events have been held at village halls and community centres across Suffolk since the consultation period launched on July 5. The events gave the public the opportunity to view the proposed route maps, junction options and speak to officers from all authorities about the project and ask questions.

The consultation is being jointly led by Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council, East Suffolk and Babergh and Mid Suffolk councils. It is also supported by West Suffolk Council. Whilst there is no plans for any further public events, the materials used are now set to travel the county allowing people the opportunity to view them and encourage them to have their say online.

The materials will be on display at the following locations until the end of the consultation on 13th September 2019:

19 – 23 August	Riverside Offices (Foyer area), 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft, NR33 0EQ	Monday – Friday 8am – 5pm
27 – 30 August*	Ipswich Town Hall Reading Room, Cornhill, Ipswich, IP1 1DH	Monday – Friday 10am – 4pm
3 – 6 September	Stowmarket Library, Milton Road, Stowmarket, IP14 1EX	During library opening hours
9 – 13 September	Endeavour House, Reception Area, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX	Monday – Friday 8am – 5pm

*Closed Bank Holiday

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