

East Suffolk Ward Member Report for September 2022

Helping East Suffolk ease the squeeze on cost of living

As we head into the colder months, East Suffolk Council has a responsibility to help residents find the support they need. That is why we have launched Ease the Squeeze – a comprehensive scheme which helps connect those needing help to those helping.

We are working closely with key partners on a number of local schemes, while also directing people to other available support and services.

All the information, including practical support, funding and advice, has been gathered on our website, at www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/squeeze. This page is continuously being updated as more schemes, services and support becomes available, so please share this with others.

We will also be running a social media campaign to raise awareness of the website.

'Efficient, clean and super green' refuse lorries hit the streets of East Suffolk

East Suffolk Council has welcomed the addition of 'efficient, clean and super green' biofuel-powered trucks to its fleet of refuse collection vehicles.

The arrival of the vehicles on the streets of East Suffolk is the latest move towards switching the entire fleet to eco-friendly fuel.

Last year, the Council approved plans to switch its diesel fleet to be fuelled by HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) and reduce total carbon emissions by more than 30%. An advanced renewable and sustainable fuel, HVO offers up to 90% reduction in carbon emissions compared to diesel.

The 246-vehicle fleet, mainly operated by waste management partners East Suffolk Norse, was the biggest single contributor to the Council's carbon footprint last year. A third of the vehicles will initially be converted to HVO, including 60% of heavy goods refuse lorries.

Free Wi-Fi programme expands to another two East Suffolk towns

Free-to-use public Wi-Fi has now been launched in Southwold and Woodbridge following recent launches in Felixstowe and Lowestoft and as part of a range of digital projects.

To support local towns and businesses, East Suffolk Council is delivering a range of digital projects which aim to strengthen the local economy and improve connectivity within the district's market towns.

New technology will enable the Council to understand the number of visitors to the towns, the busiest periods, the average time people spend in the town centre and much more. This will enable the council's Economic Development team to provide tailored support for local businesses and provide data-based evidence to support other ongoing projects.

Design Champion

A new role has been created within the Planning team to ensure high-quality design is at the forefront of new developments in East Suffolk.

The Design Champion role heads up the newly created Specialist Services team, which comprises highly skilled landscape, heritage, design, and ecology experts. East Suffolk Council is believed to be one of the first local authorities in the country to appoint a Design Champion. Urban designer and landscape architect, Chris King is experienced at promoting design quality in place-making.

The creation of the Design Champion role also aligns closely with the national planning agenda, with recent and anticipated future changes to national planning policy placing an increased emphasis on achieving high quality design in new development.

Community celebrates opening of redesigned and modernised play area

An updated and improved play area has reopened to the local community that helped shape its new design. Among many new features, the play area in Purdis Farm now includes seating and sculpture based on clay models handcrafted by local youngsters. Funded through East Suffolk Council's Outdoor Playing Space Fund, the redevelopment of the Murrills Park play area has been a community effort from as early as its inception.

In the summer of 2020, East Suffolk Council consulted residents of Purdis Farm for their views on how to spend available funds for 'sports and active play' from the Outdoor Playing Space Fund for Parishes. The responses helped to create a tender – awarded to successful bidder, Groundwork East, ahead of a series of community events earlier this year to give residents an opportunity to see the new designs and offer feedback.

Asset of Community Value - process amendments

Assets of Community Value, also known as 'Right to Bid'. Changes in process will launch on 3rd October 2022.

Why the changes? -To ensure consistent levels of detail within applications that then inform the decisions made. We are also facing new challenges, including speculative nominations and those aimed at preventing development. We believe that by asking nominees to think in more detail about their application prior to submission, there is a greater chance of community ownership or suitable alternatives being found.

Primarily the changes relate to the application form and the questions we are asking. Several new questions have been included to relate to assets that are currently closed but have had a benefit in the past (for example, village pubs currently not operating), and those that are attempting to achieve a relisting – another 5 years on the ACV register

We anticipate the nominations we receive in future will be more likely to succeed at taking assets into community ownership, should the opportunity arise. There are still challenges for community groups to face, however they will be more aware of how to address them through this application process. We also anticipate the changes reducing the number of speculative applications and those that are not ‘in the spirit’ of the original legislation.

East Suffolk Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule Hearing

The independent Examiner (Mr Andrew Seaman MRTPI), has determined that, as part of the examination of the draft East Suffolk CIL Charging Schedule, there will be a Hearing on 11th October 2022. The Hearing will be held at East Suffolk House, Station Road, Melton, Woodbridge, Suffolk, NR12 1RT, starting at 9:30am. Those who made appropriate representations on the draft CIL Charging Schedule in autumn 2021 or requested to be ‘heard’ by the Examiner (in relation to Modifications) have been written to by the Programme Officer to inform them of the Hearing.

The Examiner has published a Hearing Programme, which contains a list of the matters he wishes to discuss and hear/test evidence on. He has also published a Hearing Briefing Note, which sets out what will be discussed.

Only those who have the right to be heard can speak at the Hearing, but as the Hearing is in public, anyone else can observe if they wish.

The Hearing Programme, Briefing Note and copies of all other relevant material and representations can be viewed on the Examination website

(<https://eastsuffolk.inconsult.uk/CILEXA2022/viewContent?contentid=937267>).

Retirement of the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive of East Suffolk District, Stephen Baker, is to retire from his role. His last day will be 31 December 2022.

Stephen started his career as a Chief Executive in 2002 at East Northamptonshire District Council, moving to Suffolk Coastal in 2005. In 2008 he became one of the first shared Chief Executives when he took on Waveney DC as well. We all wish him well.

Tony Fryatt

17 September 2022