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# Council



**Forest Heath**  
District Council

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Leaders Statement</b>	
<b>Report No:</b>	<b>COU/FH/16/010</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Council</b>	<b>29 June 2016</b>

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A council, put simply, is about the people it serves; how we create opportunities for new jobs, shape the place in which we live, and how we meet the challenge of finding innovative ways to provide quality public services on dwindling budgets.

Earlier in the year we invested up to £537,500 into the expansion of Omar Group's factory in Brandon. It is a deal that creates around 80 new jobs while the rent increase will help support the future funding of council services across Forest Heath. It is a great success story and I am pleased to report that the building is up, the doors are on and hopefully we will be celebrating the opening of the factory extension very soon.

Housing growth in the district is changing the shape of a number of wards that we represent and we need to make sure that people in every ward have a fair democratic say in the decisions we take. With this in mind we will be holding an electoral review before the next set of elections in 2019.

The local plan consultation finishes in July. We know that across West Suffolk, the number of homes is due to increase by around 20 per cent – and that presents its challenges not least when it comes to collecting and disposing of waste. What we have at the moment is bin lorries from Bury St Edmunds tipping at Red Lodge where the waste is then picked up by bigger lorries travelling back and forth from a site near Ipswich. We are working with St Edmundsbury and Suffolk County Council on the West Suffolk Operational Hub near Bury St Edmunds, which I believe will provide a better, more efficient solution for dealing with our residents' waste.

We continue to lead on our plans to revolutionise the way public services are delivered with the creation of the Mildenhall Hub. We know that we and our partners will need to spend big just to keep many of these old buildings open and that some just aren't up to modern day needs – so a shared hub just as close to the town centre makes sense. We know there will be traffic issues to address before this can go ahead but we can look forward to a costed scheme being presented to us in the Autumn while a planning application will be submitted early next year.

We are still chasing the Ministry of Defence for a decision with regard the future use of RAF Mildenhall. We held some very constructive engagement sessions with our communities and business leaders and were able to clear up some of the confusion and rumours that have filled the void the last few months. We are now building our business case, further investigating what can actually be achieved on the site and we will then present our evidence to the MoD.

RAF Lakenheath meanwhile will grow and will need significant investment, with approximately 25 projects being planned, valued between £100,000 and £25 million. We have been told that a building contractor will be appointed in 2019, which presents a £100 million opportunity for local companies.

Finally, devolution – more details and discussions are on tonight’s agenda but we have been negotiating hard and believe we will secure a hugely significant devolution deal from the Government – and what’s more this gets us to the table for bigger and greater things all of which will deliver real improvements to the areas and for the people that we represent.