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# Council



*St Edmundsbury*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Leader's Statement</b>	
<b>Report No:</b>	<b>COU/SE/16/008</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Council</b>	28 June 2016
<b>Documents attached:</b>	<b>None</b>	

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1. Today's council agenda is remarkable, both for the expected level of public engagement – which is very welcome – and because it is an excellent example of the leadership role that St Edmundsbury, and our partner Forest Heath, has in our communities.
2. Thankfully, we live in a democracy, which is something many living in less fortunate countries envy. In the United Kingdom this means that people elect someone to serve and represent them, and to take decisions on a range of issues. At national level our MPs need to make judgments based on what they think is best for the country overall, even if sometimes this may not be directly advantageous to their own constituency. County councillors similarly take decisions about matters which affect Suffolk as a whole and (sometimes frustratingly for us) this can mean our borough loses out because they decide there is an area of greater need elsewhere. The same applies to those of us serving our electorates here in the borough, and indeed across West Suffolk. While we must always take into account the views expressed here and within our own wards, we also have the responsibility to look strategically and further afield.
3. It may sound like a cliché, but I believe we have the duty, as elected councillors, to take decisions -however difficult at times - for the greater good, not just for today but for the generations who follow us. Local government these days also needs to work in new ways and in partnership with others, which is not always easy to accomplish. I am sure we are not the only council that is acting more commercially (which can feel uncomfortable) to maintain and improve the services we provide for our residents while also keeping Council Tax as low as possible and bridging the gap left by cuts in Government funding. Our horizons must grow wider since we can rarely work effectively in isolation nowadays.

4. If we want to make a real contribution for our local economy, jobs, growth and housing then we also need to be at the table where decisions are being made. If we want to build a solid financial future that will see us able to continue delivering good quality, cost-effective services locally for the people we serve then we need to work with partners who have the same aims and challenges. We are certainly not the only council looking at what devolution could mean for us, or how we deal with waste in the face of housing growth and changing technology, or where our boundaries need to be to ensure fair democratic representation – all of which are very much about shaping the future.
  
5. I believe that, as elected councillors, it is our duty to make ourselves aware of the information available on often complicated and wide-ranging topics, consider all those who look to us to create a liveable, workable present and future, and accept the leadership role that often goes beyond our own immediate communities. In any decision-making system there are almost always people who will oppose a view or a decision for a range of reasons – and often very good reasons when looked at from their own perspectives. As councillors however we must carefully listen and consider all views and opinions and, equally carefully, consider the research and evidence. We then need to take the decisions which will have the most benefit for the people we serve. Such decisions are, of course, rarely easy to take – nor perhaps should they be, and I look forward to thoughtful and informed debates at this council meeting.

**Councillor John Griffiths**  
**Leader of the Council**