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# Council



*St Edmundsbury*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Leader's Statement</b>	
<b>Paper No:</b>	<b>COU/SE/16/014</b>	
<b>Paper to and date:</b>	<b>Council</b>	27 September 2016
<b>Documents attached:</b>	<b>None</b>	

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1. When every day seems to bring another change and another challenge to local government it is particularly pleasing to have the opportunity to recognise something that is a constant. Later on this agenda we will be able to do exactly that by recognising the contribution over many years that our local Sea Cadets have made to civic life and that the Royal Navy has made to the security of this borough – an unchanging commitment which is something truly to celebrate in today's world.
2. Meanwhile, we continue to deal with change and challenge in our usual way, by being proactive and positively embracing the opportunities they bring. Our Medium Term Financial Strategy, which we will be discussing later, isn't a document set in stone, it is reviewed and amended as needed so we can continue to ensure we are a council, alongside our partner Forest Heath, which is in good financial shape and does more than simply 'keep the lights on'. Central Government is changing the role it has with us and, in turn, we are changing the role we have with our towns, parishes, families and communities. Personally I think that is something we should all take a certain amount of pride in – we look forward, not backward, at what we can, not what we can't, do. The communities who have taken over the ownership and running of their community centres, for example, or who actively take part in the 'Love Where They Live' campaigns are to be commended because they have also embraced new ways of working, with our support, and are making great successes of their projects. It can sometimes be tough as a councillor to say 'sorry, we can't do that for you any more'. Equally it's hugely rewarding when you add 'but we can support you to help yourselves' and then see how engaged and active our families and communities can be with a locality budget award, or Community Chest grant.

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3. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who gave their thought and took the time to contribute to the consultation on the Government's proposed devolution deal for Norfolk and Suffolk. While it can be viewed as an immensely complicated topic, in reality I see it as really pretty simple – do we want people in Westminster making strategic, financial and other decisions about our roads, homes, necessary infrastructure etc, or should we be taking and influencing those decisions at a more local level? The consultation responses are now with the Secretary of State and we await his decision on whether there is sufficient support to go ahead. If he agrees, then all of the councils which have signed up to this devolution process will vote later in the autumn on whether to accept the Government's devolution deal.
  
4. The drive behind devolution is the economy – using the new powers and funding that comes with them to create more jobs, homes and prosperity for our residents and businesses. This is something with which St Edmundsbury is very familiar and I'm sure many of you will remember the strong consensus there was across the council when we took the decisions which resulted in multi-million, and hugely successful, developments in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill town centres. We have a strong track record of working with our local businesses which is one of the reasons why our annual business festival is so successful. It is now the West Suffolk Business Festival and this year it runs from 4-14 October. I encourage councillors to look at the many and varied events, and to help publicise to businesses in your wards the wide range of support and information that will be available.

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