
Council



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Title:	Leader's Statement	
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Documents attached:	None	

1. As councillors we have become accustomed to explaining to people why services have to change, why we can't find funds for every project or activity, why we're asking communities to take on more responsibility and become more resilient. Yet throughout these incredibly difficult times for council finances – probably the most turbulent for many decades – we still have a positive message to tell. Through prudent management of our financial matters and an attitude which has seen councillors and staff tackling challenges head-on when difficult decisions are needed we are in a position where we can continue to invest in our communities.
2. Alongside our partner, Forest Heath, we recently invested more than £340,000 in new grants for organisations focused on helping families and communities across West Suffolk to become stronger. This council agenda contains a report about the development of a new partnership agreement with Abbeycroft Leisure. Our partner is going from strength to strength as the recent opening of the Skyliner Sports Centre, a joint school and community facility with considerable input and funding from St Edmundsbury, has demonstrated. With our financial support, Abbeycroft reaches people across West Suffolk (1.6 million visits a year), helping them to keep themselves physically and mentally well (which has a real impact on individuals and families). Also in this agenda is the proposal to invest in setting up Civil Parking Enforcement, a move which I am sure will be welcomed by many residents and businesses as it enables us to tackle the current rash of illegal and inconsiderate parking.

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3. These are just three examples. Our focus on strong partnership working has brought us to a place where we can continue to make investments which will, directly or indirectly, support our communities. Indeed this year's Budget and Council Tax Setting report shows the huge range of projects we are looking to invest in over the coming month and years. There are projects which aim to cut costs, transform services or generate income which we can then use to provide services. There are even projects which will achieve all three aims.
4. This emphasis means we are changing the way we balance our budgets because projects rarely start and finish in a single financial year. As with any major business, delivering such large-scale projects will also sometimes require us to borrow funds in order to see a return later. You will see the scale of our proposed capital and revenue investments in the report and I look forward to your comments during our debate about next year's budget.
5. Finally, I would like to thank all our West Suffolk staff for the professional and detailed work they have carried out to make this budget, focused on investing in our communities, possible. They will also be responsible for working with ward councillors and Cabinet members to deliver this wide range of projects alongside the day-to-day delivery of our excellent services. There are challenging times ahead but I am confident we, working with our communities, are in a good position to meet those challenges.

Councillor John Griffiths
Leader of the Council