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# Council



*St Edmundsbury*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Leader's Statement</b>	
<b>Paper No:</b>	<b>COU/SE/17/006</b>	
<b>Paper to and date:</b>	<b>Council</b>	25 April 2017
<b>Documents attached:</b>	<b>None</b>	

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1. There are significant changes and challenges ahead, but I am happy to report that St Edmundsbury remains on the front foot, continuing to pursue what is best for the people we serve and represent in West Suffolk.
2. We are making our voice heard but eagerly awaiting further detail from the Government as to exactly how new arrangements will work from 2019-20, when 100% of business rates is retained by local government. Just a few days ago, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Local Government Association held a regional consultation about this (in this very room) and it is important that the new way of financing local government works for us here in West Suffolk, especially given the changes to New Homes Bonus that we have already experienced.
3. At the same time, we're also engaging with Government on their Industrial Strategy and Housing White Papers, responding to their consultations. How we can move forward in meeting the twin demands for housing and economic growth, while supporting the wellbeing of our communities will be central to our work over the next few years.
4. Also, and while the Government appears to be currently focusing its devolution efforts on the major urban areas, we are working with colleagues across Suffolk to further articulate our 'ask' from Government around growth. And we are continuing to look to the west, to the Cambridge Peterborough devolution roll out, making clear that there is potential for even closer working in West Suffolk for our mutual benefit.
5. Looking more locally, many of you will be aware of the increasing pressures we are facing on our limited accommodation for homeless people. I'm pleased to confirm that following our successful bid to DCLG for a rough sleeper outreach worker across localities in St Edmundsbury, Forest Heath, Babergh and Mid-Suffolk, we have now successfully recruited one for 2

years. This outreach worker should help us reduce homelessness by providing a point of contact for individuals at risk of becoming homeless (or who are at the point of homelessness), whilst also having a role in linking agencies and our partners to help prevent it in the first place.

6. Work on the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplan is also well underway, using the blueprint so successfully developed in Haverhill. I'm pleased to say that the eight week Issues and Options public consultation has produced hundreds of responses following engagement events at Apex, Asda, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose, Bury Leisure Centre and Bury market, plus displays of materials at Apex, Library, Leisure Centre, West Suffolk College and West Suffolk House. We will be using these comments and suggestions to help shape a draft masterplan; and this will come to Members in the summer, followed by more public consultation.
7. *Outline planning permission has very recently been given* for development of Suffolk Park, which includes the Enterprise Zone on Suffolk Business Park. This is another significant step in successfully bringing forward this major employment allocation on the east side of Bury St Edmunds which the Council has worked very hard to achieve. It is designed both to encourage the expansion of existing businesses that previously may have been considering locating away from the area in order to find the space to grow, and to entice new businesses to the St Edmundsbury area; and I am delighted that Treatt, a world leader in fragrance and flavouring with premises currently on Northern Way, are submitting a planning application for an area of the Enterprise Zone. All of this is part of our strategic priority to enable economic growth, lift skills and expertise across West Suffolk (and with it levels of pay), and create new opportunities for our residents and future generations.
8. I take pleasure in welcoming some talented new individuals to the organisation. Leah Mickleborough joins us as Service Manager for Democratic Services and as our new Monitoring Officer, having spent several years in a similar role across the border at South Norfolk Council. We look forward to her support and guidance. Mark Miller joins us from Cambridgeshire County Council as Strategic Communications manager. He brings many useful insights into the workings of the Cambridge sub region and I am sure he will find things equally dynamic here in West Suffolk. We also look forward to welcoming our two new Assistant Directors at a future meeting. Julie Baird has just arrived from South Cambs District Council to take on the Growth role, and David Collinson arrives on 5 June 2017 as Assistant Director, Planning and Regulatory.
9. The agenda this evening reflects our strategic focus on becoming self-sufficient in the long term by investing in services and in our communities. The investment in leisure report before you tonight, if accepted, not only benefits our financial position (reducing the management fee to the council), but benefits Abbeycroft (giving investment certainty), and serves our residents (giving them even better access to all kinds of activities to improve their physical and mental wellbeing).

10. Before closing, may I take this opportunity to thank the Mayor, on behalf of us all, for her exemplary year of office. She has truly led by example. We look forward to welcoming our new Mayor and deputy Mayor at our annual meeting in May.
11. By that time, the county council elections will have taken place, and I would also like to pay tribute to our county colleagues – past, present and future, for their service.

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