
Council



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Title:	Leader's Statement	
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Paper to and date:	Council	19 December 2017
Documents attached:	None	

Councillor Carol Bull

1. I am really pleased to welcome Councillor Carol Bull to the Cabinet as the new portfolio holder for Future Governance. As we shape our new single council this will be an important role to help bring forward this new transformation and I know Carol will do an excellent job supported by fellow councillors.

Single Council

2. The hard work and careful thought that went into producing the compelling business plan for single council has been recognised with the announcement by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government that he is minded to support our proposals. We will hear later next year but I want to thank officers, partners, MPs and councillors, no matter what party they are from, for the hard work, challenge and solutions put forward. It is no coincidence that our application has been quickly processed overtaking many councils going through the same process. It is a reflection of the ambitious and aspirational aims we have to get the best outcomes for our communities and businesses.

Strategic Framework

3. West Suffolk is a success story and our ambitious programme of investing in our businesses, growth and communities as well as helping support residents to bring real local initiatives to the fore. Today we will debate the new Strategic Framework which sets out our vision and aims and builds on the great work we have already started.

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Economic Success

4. I am really pleased to see the latest Business Register and Employment Survey for the UK shows the percentage increase in people in employment in West Suffolk has risen more than the national and East Anglian average. The percentage rise between 2015 and 2016 is also above Suffolk and neighbouring areas, such as Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. There are many reasons for this but it is a clear demonstration that West Suffolk is attracting business and that our aims to manage growth and support the local economy, jobs and skills is the right one.

West Suffolk Operational Hub

5. One of the main projects we are delivering to deal with growth while acting with partners to get the most effective outcome for our communities is the development of the West Suffolk Operational Hub. We are ready to act once we have a decision by the Secretary of State to build this much needed facility.

Government Listening

6. We have just heard that Government has listened to our bid for One Public Estate funding and granted us a further £108,000. The money is set to be spent by all public agencies working in West Suffolk as part of the successful One Public State (OPE) programme we already have in place and which is already bearing fruit. The work looks at how public land and buildings can be better used to improve services, reduce costs and free up space for new homes and jobs. Examples of OPE in action in St Edmundsbury include the Western Way Masterplan and the West Suffolk Operational Hub. This latest grant will help to develop the existing work carried out in Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Mildenhall and extend the same approach to Newmarket and Clare.

Community Chest

7. Projects to help people recover from alcohol abuse, get young people involved in sports development, tackle mental health issues, assist struggling families and support carers, will receive a welcome boost and Christmas present this month.
8. We, together with Forest Heath District Council, have decided on £370,000 of new Community Chest grants for 2018/19 at our Cabinet meetings this month. The grants all focus on helping families and communities to become more resilient, stronger and caring for each other

Night Shelter Arrangements

9. Since January 2017, the West Suffolk councils have assisted or prevented more than 450 households from becoming homeless. They work with partners who are specialists in mental health and wellbeing as well as substance misuse. Often people who are sleeping rough have complex needs and through the work of a support officer, the councils try to get the necessary help for those people who are sleeping rough in an attempt to help them get off the streets and stay off the streets. We have set up night shelter arrangements this season with the help of partners to where possible keep people off the streets in this cold weather. I know this is

difficult and complex work and I would like to thank all those involved in this.

Christmas Fayres and celebrations

10. Our towns and communities have entered into the Christmas spirit and showcased St Edmundsbury Borough in a festive light. Bury St Edmunds Christmas Fayre saw a record year with over 300 stalls and 120,000 visitors. I would like to thank all involved on behalf of the council in putting on this nationally recognised event which brings visitors to our great area and supports the local economy. A special mention should also go to our partners who provided parking, support or sponsorship as well as our fellow public and emergency services which helped people enjoy in safety. But this is not the only event with Haverhill Christmas Festival and Clare Winter Festival and other community events making our area get into the Yuletide spirit. In addition, to help our local businesses and shoppers we have brought in free parking in some of our car parks in Haverhill and Bury.

Merry Christmas

11. In conclusion, I would like to wish everyone a very merry Christmas and hope you all enjoy the festivities at this time of year. But there are two recent events that stand out for me that epitomises what Christmas is all about.
12. The first was our Council was involved in helping the BBC Programme DIYSOS bring some much needed support and improvements to Simon Dobbin and his family. Not many of you may know but presenter Nick Knowles went to school in Bury St Edmunds and he and the team stayed in the town while the build in Mildenhall was going on. Our involvement included many of our services and Screen Suffolk to help make this happen. The changes to his house, according to Simon's wife, gave him his dignity – what better gift at Christmas to give?
13. The second event shows our services living our ethos of looking out for our residents and helping be another set of eyes and ears. One of our bin crews in Barnham noticed that one of their regulars was not in his drive as normal and when they drove past again thought there was something wrong. The driver saw out of the corner of his eye something that didn't look right and when they stopped to investigate discovered an elderly gentleman partly hidden in foliage in his drive. He had been taken ill the night before and had been out all night. Our eagled eye crew found him and made sure he was comfortable until the ambulance arrived. I think we should thank them, not only for their quick actions which in my mind undoubtedly prevented something that could have ended more tragically but also for showing how we as a council care about our residents and will go the extra mile.
14. I think these embody what Christmas is about. Giving, is not always presents, but giving that extra to help our communities thrive – and what better Christmas wish for 2018 is there.

I wish you all every happiness in, and for, the New Year.