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# Council



*St Edmundsbury*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Leader's Statement</b>	
<b>Paper No:</b>	<b>COU/SE/18/008</b>	
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<b>Documents attached:</b>	<b>None</b>	

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[Tributes](#)  
[Unitary](#)  
[17-18 Cornhill](#)  
[Suffolk Park](#)  
[Housing](#)  
[Rogue landlords](#)  
[Haverhill Leisure Centre](#)  
[Haverhill House](#)  
[Warding Review](#)

## **Tributes**

- 1.1 I begin with tributes to two former colleagues who have recently passed away.
- 1.2 Former Council Leader Derek Redhead served this authority for 20 years. He was first elected in 1995 as a Conservative candidate, became group leader in 2000 after the resignation of Councillor Mike Brundle, and handed on the baton to me in 2002. He held his seat in Wickhambrook until 2015, and I was very pleased to be present at full Council that September when his long service was formally recognised.
- 1.3 Former Councillor Colin Muge represented Sexton Ward in Bury St Edmunds, (which became part of Southgate Ward) as a Labour councillor from 1995 to 2003. Colin chaired the work of the Housing Working Group that enabled the transfer of St Edmundsbury housing stock to Havebury Housing Partnership in 2002 and then went on to chair Havebury from 2005 to 2008. He was kind, wise and hugely able, but also a pragmatist. He brought enthusiasm and vitality to his roles, committed to the belief that everyone deserves a decent place they can call home.

COU/SE/18/008

## **Unitary**

- 2.1 This service and their achievements are a reminder to us all, that our endeavours underpin the future health and strength of our communities. We aren't in this for our own personal glory. We are here to work together for the benefit of our residents – they are at the heart of what we do and why we exist.
- 2.2 In taking the next step in our journey as a local authority, we are building on years of looking beyond boundaries and working collaboratively, with our neighbours Forest Heath and our wider public sector partners in Suffolk. We aren't reinventing the wheel but we are driving forward with ambitions that both benefit and have been backed by our communities.
- 2.3 Together with other Suffolk public sector leaders, I have voiced my concerns about the County Council's intention of commissioning a unilateral review of the county's local government.
- 2.4 Our concern is that the review by ResPublica is not objective, is a waste of time and money and could harm what we have already achieved.
- 2.5 But most importantly it wouldn't achieve the single most important thing, which is better services for residents.
- 2.6 Suffolk County Council should instead be working with us and our public sector partners in reviewing what we do and what is best for the people we serve.

## **17-18 Cornhill, Bury St Edmunds**

- 3.1 And I do not think there has been a time when our aspirations have been higher and our delivery programme busier. As tonight's agenda proves.
- 3.2 We will shortly be discussing the opportunities for developing 17 – 18 Cornhill, so I will limit my comments to saying that we identified this as a strategically important site in the Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplan, which was adopted in December 2017. The masterplan, which has been shaped by public consultation, identified a need to improve the transition from the arc shopping centre into the traditional town centre and was also a clear objective when we agreed to purchase the site.
- 3.3 If approved, it will be the first publically announced project under the new West Suffolk Growth Investment Strategy which goes wider than just providing the Council with a financial return, contributing towards delivering valued services. It is also about the wider returns measured in social and economic benefits for our communities.
- 3.4 In considering our multi-million investments, we will be assessing projects both on their own merits as they arise but also in the context of other committed investments. This will be realised by managing a balanced portfolio of investments to ensure that the Council is still achieving a net overall return of at least 1%. We are looking to achieve a blend of income,

initiatives that can spur economic growth and social, community and environmental benefits that help our businesses and communities.

### **Suffolk Park**

- 4.1 At the same time we are celebrating the second birthday of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership Enterprise Zone at Suffolk Park. I am delighted to say a local company has secured investment for two new warehouses on adjacent land. These are a speculative development of much needed stock that can be delivered by the end of 2018, putting the site ahead of alternatives where lead in and occupation can lag anywhere between one and two years.
- 4.2 It is pleasing that there is market confidence to invest in and build these units. Alongside Treatt which is expanding onto Suffolk Park, these two new units will help provide a range of opportunities both for existing local businesses looking to expand, and for businesses outside of the area wishing to relocate to West Suffolk. In light with the vision which we approved for the Suffolk Business Park, these will create a mix of new jobs and opportunities for our residents and continue to ensure that West Suffolk remains a great place both to live and to work.

### **Housing**

- 5.1 Turning to our Housing priority, I wish to recognise the achievements of our Housing Team in securing and running emergency accommodation to cover severe weather provision over the winter. And to acknowledge the strong public support in running this facility. I thank all those who contributed to this strong community response.
- 5.2 The new Housing Act, which came into effect on 3 April 2018, extends the Council's prevention duties to include everyone, rather than being based on priority need or intentionality. Last year the Housing Team helped assist and prevent more than 500 households from becoming homeless. As part of the Act, tailored support is developed in the form of a personal housing plan that looks into the issues behind why someone is at risk of becoming homeless, the support that will be offered and agrees the expectations on the individual's behaviour and actions.
- 5.3 We have recruited two more outreach workers to the Housing Team. Helping people who are homeless and perhaps rough sleeping isn't as simple as finding them a room and a bed. Many need additional help in order to turn their lives around and to keep whatever accommodation they have been placed in. That is why one of our new outreach workers specialises in getting people with drug and alcohol issues the support that they need.
- 5.4 The Council will need access to a larger pool of temporary housing, private as well as social housing – and we are keen to work with landlords to help meet this need.

- 5.5 We have invested £45,000 to gain the use of a 12-bedroom hostel and flats in Bury St Edmunds, bringing the number of temporary beds available in Bury St Edmunds to 40 and across West Suffolk to 70. The funding will go towards the 24-hours-a-day cost of support staff to run the temporary accommodation.
- 5.6 We are looking for more opportunities to boost the amount of temporary accommodation and calling for private landlords to get in touch so we can discuss how we can support them in providing housing for those who need it.

### **Rogue Landlords**

- 6.1 We value the role played by private sector landlords and the recommendations we will be considering later, to approve the necessary delegations relevant to a new policy recently adopted by Cabinet, will allow us to use civil sanctions in the rare cases of a rogue landlord. These sanctions have been developed in consultation with the vast majority of respected landlords who provide safe and healthy homes.
- 6.2 Rogue landlords endanger the health and wellbeing of their tenants, but tenants have an important role to play in terms of knowing their rights and working with their landlords. In developing the policy, we have worked with neighbouring councils, the Landlords Association and tenants themselves to understand the issues and raise awareness of the role of our Public Health and Housing Service in preventing bad practice.

### **Haverhill Leisure Centre**

- 7.1 This work is closely linked to our corporate priority for supporting healthy and strong communities and I have two further illustrations of this in action.
- 7.2 I am delighted that Cabinet has agreed a £1.5m investment in leisure facilities in Haverhill that not only increases the capacity for sports through a community use agreement with Samuel Ward Academy, but increases the variety of leisure opportunity available to residents of all ages and abilities. Haverhill is the first place to benefit from the Leisure Investment Fund set up improve activities and by increasing revenue, reduce the management fee paid to our operational partners Abbeycroft Leisure.

### **Warding Proposals**

- 8.1 My second illustration of strong communities is the brilliant response to the consultation on the ward boundary review. These representations have informed the recommendations before us tonight but I'd like to say thank you now, to everyone who took part, and to highlight a couple of striking messages that we took from our session with the Boundary Commission.

8.2 Firstly, it is ultimately up to the Boundary Commission to make the final decision on our wards – not us – but they will listen to both our own submissions and those of our residents and communities in equal measure. Secondly, the Boundary Commission and the Ministry were clear about how impressed they have been with both the Councils and its Officers in how they have progressed so far.

### **RAF Honington**

9.1 I finish with congratulations to the RAF on celebrating its centenary and especially the service people at RAF Honington. Many airfields across West Suffolk were used by the RAF during World War Two, while many of us will either have, or will know people in our families, or our communities who have served in the RAF. I am sure you will join me in wishing the RAF a happy 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

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