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# Council



*St Edmundsbury*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Leader's Statement</b>	
<b>Paper No:</b>	<b>COU/SE/18/017</b>	
<b>Paper to and date:</b>	<b>Council</b>	25 September 2018
<b>Documents attached:</b>	<b>None</b>	

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1. I hope you have had a good summer and , alongside the hard work that we all do for St Edmundsbury and in our areas, have been able to enjoy the good weather.

## **Blooming marvellous**

2. Congratulations to Bury St Edmunds in Bloom on its success in the Anglia in Bloom awards at which it scooped 12 Gold awards including for the Abbey Gardens and Nowton Park, plus Best Local Authority Award for the Abbey Gardens central floral bedding display. Well done also to Bury in Bloom's coordinator Melanie Lesser who was nominated for The Mike Ames Award. Once again this puts us in the Britain in Bloom competition. This is not just about making our area look nice but has a direct benefit on tourism and attracting business and people to our towns and villages. It is part of our drive to support our communities, prosperity and quality of life in every way we can. These awards are a great achievement and down to the dedication and sheer hard work of all involved including our own parks staff, volunteers and the local community, especially in the exceptionally hot weather we experienced. In the spirit of our new West Suffolk Council area, well done to Brandon as well for being awarded best newcomer.

## **Electric vehicles**

2. Be it plant or electric bulbs we are always looking for ways of helping our economy and environment. This month saw us hold a successful Electric Vehicle (EV) roadshow in the arc. It highlighted the financial, economic and environmental benefits of EVs. As you probably know, our Councils already operate charging points in car parks in Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Newmarket and keeps demand under review. I understand we will shortly be announcing the details of a pilot scheme designed to make it even easier for residents to charge EVs outside their own homes.

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3. On top of that West Suffolk councils will be holding an event specifically aimed at local businesses as part of the West Suffolk Business Festival in October. They already offer a Greener Business Grant which will match fund a business up to £1,000 towards the cost of an EV or company charge point.

### **Interns combating loneliness**

4. One of our own initiatives of supporting internships at West Suffolk Councils produced another great initiative this summer. Following the work of the Jo Cox Commission, helping to raise awareness of the problem of loneliness, West Suffolk councils interns created the Togetherness Fayre – an event to bring communities together and combat loneliness.
5. Studies have shown that loneliness can take a toll on both a person's physical and mental health – over nine million adults are often or always lonely (British Red Cross and Co-op) with 3.6 million people aged 65 and over that use television as their main form of company (Age UK).
6. With this in mind our interns created the Togetherness Fayre bringing together local businesses and charities to showcase the work they are doing in Suffolk to reduce loneliness for all people.
7. As you know both we, here at St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath District Council have supported a number of charities and other organisations in initiatives designed to combat loneliness. The Councils have put in funding towards some of these through its Community Chest scheme, and through councillor locality budgets as well as our ground breaking Families and Communities work.
8. The free to attend Fayre was held on Wednesday 8 August 10am-2pm at the Athenaeum and provided a great opportunity for organisations to recruit new members, network and to spread awareness of the services on offer. It was a great success, not only in terms of helping tackle the issue of loneliness but seeing our interns from across services work on such a very worthwhile project themselves.

### **Community Chest Open**

9. Over the summer we have invited community groups, charities and voluntary organisations in West Suffolk to apply for our Community Chest Fund. This £300,000 of funding is available to projects that can improve the lives of West Suffolk residents by helping communities to support themselves.
10. Initiatives to combat loneliness, provide support networks to parents, and befriending schemes designed to break down stereotypes and bring generations closer together, have all helped West Suffolk residents as a result of Community Chest funds awarded in recent years. Since it was launched in 2015, Community Chest has also helped locally trained

volunteers work with families before they reach crisis point and to help young people feel more a part of their local community.

11. This is an initiative I think we can all be very proud of and makes a real difference to people's lives. I would like to remind councillors that applications are open until 5pm Friday 28 September 2018 so please help spread the word to your local groups and organisations. Decision on applications are due to be made by late December and successful bids will be paid in April 2019.

### **Landlords' forum**

12. Earlier this month we held the West Suffolk Landlords Forum. This is part of our work to support both residents getting the right homes but also helping businesses. Landlords were able get advice about changes to the law around Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and the need for Energy Performance Certificates (PCS).
13. The forum also discussed the support available to help bring long standing empty homes back into use. Topics also included measures that have been put in place, such as a guaranteed rent scheme, to mitigate against the possible impact of Universal Credit on landlords and their tenants.
14. Importantly, those attending were also able to discuss when the need to keep homes warm during winter particularly for older or vulnerable tenants, and the support that can be accessed to help with this.

### **Making strides nationally**

15. We have been highlighted nationally for our work in helping people keep fit and active. Figures released by the Department of Transport show that St Edmundsbury has had one of the five largest increases in the country of adults walking at least once a week.
16. The figures, collected through the 2017 National Travel Survey, show that people in St Edmundsbury on average walked 10.1% more in 2016/17 than the year before. As well as providing Green Flag accredited parks and open spaces, St Edmundsbury supports opportunities to get together to walk, with events like the Suffolk Walking Festival, (Parkrun which can be run, jogged or walked) and the Health Walks Programme.
17. As you know one of our priorities is for resilient families and communities that are healthy and active and now we can see our work actually taking large steps forward. I do not need to tell any of you how special St Edmundsbury is and the unique and beautiful areas we have and look after to walk in. Maintaining and promoting these areas is not just about physical wellbeing but also is important with issues such as mental health.

## **Portfolio Holder**

18. Although I have already mentioned this in my Shadow Authority statement it would be remiss not pay tribute to Cllr Pugh's many achievements at our own St Edmundsbury Borough Council. As a St Edmundsbury Borough Councillor, Cabinet Member and ward member Councillor Alaric Pugh has been a most dedicated councillor. He has helped drive growth and the way we invest helping us transform completely the way our council works. At the same time he has been a champion for his local area. Clare and its surrounding area is never far from his thoughts and he has done sterling work to make sure it is never far from ours also. I think we all understand his decision to step down after 35 years in public service and again, I would like to thank him. I will also be pleased to welcome Councillor Glossop to the Cabinet to lead on planning and regulatory services as well as work closely with me on the Council's considerable growth agenda. Susan has of course worked closely with Alaric and brings considerable expertise and understanding of the issues and area. I and the rest of the Cabinet look forward to working even more closely with her.

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