
Council



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Title:	Leader's Statement	
Paper No:	COU/SE/18/020	
Paper to and date:	Council	30 October 2018
Documents attached:	None	

Leader's Statement

1. Since my last Leader's Statement, the Council, together with Forest Heath District Council, has been very busy (as usual!). And I am delighted that we are actually delivering the things we said we would do as the new West Suffolk Council. Although I will touch on these in more detail, you can see from events such as our West Suffolk Business Festival and the Housing Conference, the number of people and companies with high national profiles coming to West Suffolk, supporting and taking note of what we are doing. We are driving business investment and supporting local companies, contributing to the recent good news of increased tourism spend in our area – and tonight, in discussing Western Way, we will look at some of the transformational work we are doing to get public services to work in a better way for our communities. Something, incidentally that will, again, make us a UK leader. We have been used as an example of good practice and the future way of doing things in the recent LG Communications Academy for how we interact in social media with community pages, talking directly to people and not just waiting for them to talk to us. Similarly, the work our Customer Services do has been highlighted during National Customer Service Week, and is something that applies not just to one team but to councillors and everyone that works here too. Perhaps one of the most recent visual representations of this – and how we remain an organisation based in our communities, with staff who are proud of that – is the cascade of poppies outside these doors tonight. These were made by our employees, and their friends and family in their own time. Although supported by the Council, this was the initiative of those who made it and a great demonstration of the teamwork and dedication that exists to support, celebrate and commemorate our residents and area. Thank you to all involved.

COU/SE/18/020

Business Festival

2. Once again our ten day Business Festival has been hugely successful. I was pleased, with many of you, to attend and not only talk to some of the inspirational business people that are in our area but also see the wide range of companies that call West Suffolk home. What was so clear is that we are seen as a business friendly area and authority, investing in services and infrastructure that supports local jobs and brings in business. The Business Awards were a great way to celebrate the achievements of many of our companies who are often trading, not just locally, but on the national and international stage. I hope you will all join me in thanking all who attended or entered the awards, as well as our staff and, of course, our many partners for who put on such a great event and sponsored it.

Tourism on the rise

3. After such a successful Business Festival I was pleased to see the latest tourism figures for West Suffolk, showing that the industry is booming in our area. We all know what a great place West Suffolk is to live in, work and visit, and it seems that is also recognised nationally. We continue with our partners such as Bury and Beyond to see increased tourism spend here in West Suffolk. The latest figures show for 2017 what we are achieving:-
 - Nearly £539 million was spent through tourism in West Suffolk, an increase of 5.4 per cent on the previous year.
 - There was an increase of 5.4 percent in tourism jobs between 2016 and 2017. Around 10,650 people being employed in 2017 in tourism in West Suffolk.
 - Last year there were 11.4 million tourist trips made to West Suffolk, up 7.3 per cent on 2016
4. While we all know that many things outside our control can impact on us, we have been doing our bit through providing a world class destination, with great parks and leisure facilities for all to enjoy. Equally through our Screen Suffolk work Bury St Edmunds and West Suffolk is increasingly being seen on the big and little screens. Who knows, in years to come like Cornwall, who enjoys the Poldark effect, there will be a St Edmunds drama?!

Customer Services Week

5. We celebrated Customer Service Week this month. I know many of you in the room tonight have worked closely with our customer services team. More and more people are turning to contact us online but many also visit our offices or ring in for advice and help. Good customer service is not just about what our Customer Service Team does, it is about how our councils act. As Councillors we know the importance of this in putting residents at the heart of what we do. It is good to see this being demonstrated across the board, but also in individual incidents such as when one of our bin crews helped a resident who had gone unnoticed all night following a fall in very cold weather. There is, of course, always room for improvement, but I would like to thank everyone for continuing to provide exemplary customer services for our residents.

Western Way

6. Putting our residents and businesses first is, and should be, the main priority for any local authority or public service and we continue to look for new and even better ways of working for our communities. Tonight we will be looking at some initial thoughts on how we best deliver services and support here in Bury St Edmunds in the future. Creating a public service village has, for some time, been an ambition for this authority. It's not just about bricks and mortar, and whilst not wishing to pre-empt any debate about whether we should continue work on bringing forward more detailed plans, the outline proposal is about bringing public services and partners together to be more than the sum of our parts or the buildings we work in. Not only could this be a new way of using the buildings and area better, but a transformational way of working, bringing new jobs, leisure, health, education and other public services together in one place, with multiple funding partners. The aim is to make it easier for people to access services which in turn will be more effective and good value. This remains an aspiration of our council and of other local public services, and I look forward to hearing peoples thoughts tonight.
7. There is, of course, a very long way to go on this project but, if councillors support the outline business case going forward for more detailed work, this could be a national leading project and a real investment in the communities of West Suffolk by the whole of the public sector, and others in the private and voluntary sectors.

Housing Conference

8. Since we last met we have held a highly successful and very well attended Housing Conference, where nationally renowned speakers with experience in Government and industry met to hear what we are doing but also to consider what can and should be done ahead. The conference covered a range of issues that we face across the nation, such as building the right kind of homes, in the right place. It is not just about building houses, but building foundations (and place) and working together to support people of all ages to become (or remain) independent. It was the first time we have run this, and I am pleased to report how well received it was by everyone who attended.

Suffolk Design Guide

9. A ground-breaking 'Design Guide' for building and development in Suffolk is being created by the county's local authorities, and is inspired by award-winning designer Wayne Hemingway. Critical to its success will be local input and with this in mind, a survey has now been launched to ensure that the views of Suffolk people play a key role in future decisions. Although other counties have produced similar Guides, this will be the first that incorporates the wishes and opinions of the people that matter most: those that live (or have lived) in, work in or visit the county and especially West Suffolk.
10. The Suffolk Design Guide will provide ground rules for planning applications for future Suffolk projects and the survey (at www.suffolkdesign.uk) and asks people to say what they do and don't like

about the way Suffolk is currently built; from its public buildings to street lighting. Suffolk Design is much more than bricks and mortar and what houses look like; it's about road layouts, parking, paths, landscaping, vistas, planting and services. Good design helps a place work, and who better to tell us what is needed than the people who live, work and visit here.

11. The survey is just the start of the process and our councils will work with other public bodies, land owners, developers, parish councils, architects, engineers, artists, and amenity groups to finalise the finished Guide. A wide range of events will also take place including conferences, study tours, community events, developer meetings and interactive exercises. I would encourage you to take part; the survey remains open until Wednesday 31 October 2018.

Regional meeting comes to West Suffolk

12. I am pleased to say that on 2 November 2018, we are hosting the Eastern Region meeting of the Local Authority Research and Intelligence Association. It will be a great opportunity to share with other local authorities the innovative work we are doing and to make sure all our decisions are based on evidence and data.

Local Government Boundary Review

13. You may remember I mentioned this at our last Council meeting and Councillor Nettleton quite rightly asked me if we were sure of the date. As ever I am writing this before the papers are published and indeed before we have heard the findings of the Local Government Boundary Commission for the new West Suffolk wards; but by the time you read this I believe they should have been published. That said, few things are certain and whether they have been published or not, I would like to thank everyone for taking part, making their views known and engaging with the process.

Poppies

14. It was an emotional moment this month when we unveiled the cascade of hand crafted poppies that are hanging in West Suffolk House as well as other offices in West Suffolk. What is awe inspiring about these 4,000 poppies is that they have all been knitted or crocheted by people with a link to West Suffolk Councils, West Suffolk House, their family, friends and volunteers. Hours of work have gone into making these to produce a personal and heartfelt commemoration of the centenary of the end of the First World War. Poppies are also on sale with all proceeds going to the Royal British Legion Appeal. I think we all had a lump in our throats when we saw the military personnel and representatives from the Royal British Legion catch their first glimpse of it and tell those who created it how much we all appreciated what they have achieved.

Councillor John Griffiths
Leader of the Council