
Council



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Title:	Leader's Statement	
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Merry Christmas

1. As I write this it still feels a little early to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, but by the time we are all sitting together they will just be days away. Traditionally this is of course a time to be with families and friends, and perhaps even time for a break. But I'm sure that almost everyone at our Council meeting, and our officers, will no doubt be working throughout this festive period supporting our communities, helping the most vulnerable and delivering high quality services. In this regard, I and Cllr James Waters together, have thanked staff on behalf of all councillors for their hard work throughout the year and this coming period. And I would like to thank all Councillors too.
2. As I travel around West Suffolk it is always good to see the community celebrations and other events going on around the area in our towns and villages. It is a testimony to all those involved and to the groups and partners who put these on for the enjoyment of so many. This year we saw around 130,000 people visit the Bury Christmas Fayre making it one of the most successful ever. And, as I write this, there are just days to go before the Haverhill Family Christmas Weekend which we work with the Town Council on. Similarly, before we meet tonight many of you may have also gone along to the Clare Christmas Market which was held at the weekend. We are also holding Bury Festive Markets on Sundays during Christmas. Just some of many examples throughout West Suffolk but equally important are the services that we deliver every day and which our communities rely on.

A green Christmas

3. This season is perhaps particularly busy for our bin crews and recycling staff, encouraging people to dispose correctly of things like wrapping and packaging as well as reducing the amount they use. That's why I am pleased to see our involvement in an exciting recycled Christmas art project all about polar bears and penguins.

COU/SE/18/024

4. As well as celebrating and promoting the importance of re-using and recycling in Suffolk, The Suffolk Waste Partnership wants to raise awareness about plastic pollution and littering and the damage it can cause to the environment.
5. The project has had a fabulous response with 23 schools, a library, a care home and Brownies and Guide groups from all over Suffolk, including here in the West, taking part. They have been busily making over 1350 polar bears and penguins for the displays by recycling materials.
6. The art work has been hung in two displays upstairs at The Apex in Bury St Edmunds and at the Town Hall Cafe gallery space in Ipswich from 29 November, where they will be seen by thousands of visitors over the Christmas period. There's still time to see them and get ideas of your own as they will be on display until after the New Year.

Community Chest

7. Christmas is also a time of giving, and I am pleased to see that between us and Forest Heath District Council we have invested more than £400,000 in community led projects to benefit residents across West Suffolk.
8. The projects designed to help residents' health, family support, counselling, advice and advocacy, community activities and initiatives involving young people in arts and sports, are set to receive the funding through our Community Chest scheme.
9. Together our councils have given a total of more than £1,480,100 over the last three years in Community Chest grants across West Suffolk. The money is part of the Councils' Family and Community initiative and approach to achieve better outcomes and resilient communities.
10. This approach is one of the things that sets us apart from other councils, something we should be proud of, and hopefully the new West Suffolk Council will further support. Local charities, community groups and voluntary organisations are often the best placed to help address many of the issues we face in our society. Community Chest allows us to help make their ideas happen, to invest in our local families and communities, and in turn make life better for our residents -including some of the more vulnerable -in West Suffolk.

Social Prescribing

11. Christmas is also about looking out for one another. This not only means us looking out for neighbours and family personally, but also as public organisations working together to deliver things in a better way. One of the innovative ways we have been doing this is through social prescribing.
12. I am pleased that we, together with Forest Heath District Council, have been able to secure £663,000 to support this and further help the NHS in dealing with patients' social needs whilst improving individuals' wellbeing.
13. West Suffolk Councils led on securing the extra funding for the social prescribing scheme which has been run very successfully as a pilot in Haverhill.

14. This money will further strengthen the work being carried out by the Haverhill LifeLink scheme – run in partnership with ONE Haverhill Partnership - and be used to work with local partners in Mildenhall and Brandon to develop a social prescribing model for the two towns.
15. The scheme helps address social and wellbeing needs of residents which can also impact on health and are sometimes traditionally hard for medical services to address. This has led to people gaining confidence, reduced loneliness, getting back to employment, volunteering and helping physical and mental health as well as reducing debt.
16. Just over £160,000 has also been provided by the NHS West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group for the social prescribing scheme. While £500,000 was provided through the 100% Business Rates Pilot money that was awarded to Suffolk by Government for placed based issues. This was awarded and agreed by Suffolk Leaders as part of the West Suffolk Councils' share of the fund.
17. West Suffolk Councils have been backing the pilot in Haverhill with other agencies including the CCG and ONE Haverhill Partnership, where almost 200 people have been supported already in just over a year since its inception.
18. This, of course, makes a real difference to people's lives and helps them achieve their ambitions while preventing the need for more in-depth support later.

First phase of £1.5m Haverhill Leisure Centre

19. This is perhaps old news, but it has happened since we last met. For those looking to make a new year's resolution to begin, or carry on their already healthy lifestyle, I'm pleased to say the new fitness facilities in Haverhill's are back in full use. This is after a complete overhaul of the first floor, which now houses an extended gym, super-sized studio spaces and new changing rooms.
20. It marks completion of phase one of a £1.5m investment in our popular leisure centre, and managed by not-for-profit Abbeycroft Leisure. Phase two, which sees a remodeling of the main sports hall, is already underway and due for completion mid-January.

Happy New Year

21. 2019 will soon be upon us and we will as usual have both challenges and opportunities ahead, particularly with the creation of the new West Suffolk Council. I look forward to welcoming you all back in January and wish you and yours a very happy and healthy Christmas and New Year.

Councillor John Griffiths
Leader of the Council