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# Shadow Council



<b>Title:</b>	<b>Leader's Statement</b>	
<b>Paper No:</b>	<b>COU/SA/18/014</b>	
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<b>Documents attached:</b>	<b>None</b>	

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## Merry Christmas

There's just over 100 days until the new West Suffolk Council is created, and the first few months of 2019 will undoubtedly be busy to ensure the Council can hit the ground running on 1 April. But before that, I hope you all will get some time to relax and enjoy things with family and friends over Christmas. I know many of us in this room, and our Officers and staff, will be busy over the festive period and much of that will be delivering the high quality services as usual for our residents throughout Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury.

Christmas is also perhaps a time for reflection and, looking back at 2018 I think we can be rightly proud of the transformation and pace of change that we have achieved as Forest Heath, St Edmundsbury and now the West Suffolk Shadow Authority. I would like to thank you all and our staff who have made this possible and wish everyone a Merry Christmas.

We have been on a very significant journey which was forged by a strong partnership between the two West Suffolk councils. Councillor Waters and I have always seen this as a partnership, and I am sure this will continue, working together, after tonight's meeting.

## Building blocks

Tonight we will be discussing the Council Tax base for the West Suffolk Council. This is one of the many building blocks that we need to put in place so we are ready to create the new Council in April. In the next 100 days we still have much to discuss, including setting the first West Suffolk Council budget, agreeing the new council's constitution, setting up a committee structure and agreeing the polling districts for the elections in May. Those new building blocks that we will discuss early next year have very firm foundations, with the great cross party and council work that has gone on through the Future Governance Steering Group, Overview & Scrutiny and Performance & Audit.

### **The West Suffolk Council way**

One of the priorities for us and the new West Suffolk Council is to be even better able to support business, attract investment and manage growth. Already we have seen this in action. We have been engaging with businesses from across West Suffolk to discuss their ambitions for growth ahead of the formation of the new council next year. We worked with Suffolk Chamber of Commerce to deliver a successful Building for Business engagement event at Newmarket's Rowley Mile Racecourse. West Suffolk is the home of many vibrant and pioneering businesses competing across a wide range of industries and this event not only helped us explain our vision but also understand the ambitions of local business. This means rather than just keeping the status quo, we have the best way of delivering, working in partnership with business, to ensure we aid the growth of businesses, skills development, new jobs – and our economy and future prosperity. We are already seeing the benefits of creating the new West Suffolk Council and our businesses and communities are seeing how it can benefit them.

### **Happy New Year**

Looking forward to 2019 and the New Year, there are both challenges and opportunities that lay ahead for West Suffolk. There is still much to do, not to mention an election but there are great possibilities to build on the work we have already done for the future prosperity of the whole of West Suffolk and our economy, and for better outcomes in every way for our communities. I look forward to welcoming you all back in 2019 and to the successful creation of a new Council for West Suffolk. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

**Councillor John Griffiths**  
**Leader of the West Suffolk Shadow Council**