
Council



Forest Heath
District Council

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Merry Christmas

I want to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. What a successful year we have had, and will continue to have next year. Just last month I was talking to businesses about hundreds of millions of pounds of opportunities and investment in our area. We have just agreed to support hundreds of thousands of pounds of investment in local community groups that are doing great work in our area. Our lobbying and partnership work is paying off as the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority announced their aspiration for the Cambridge metro to link to Mildenhall and Haverhill. We have secured more funding for social prescribing to deliver in this life changing work in Mildenhall and Brandon. Next year we will see the creation of West Suffolk Council, and the further opportunities that will bring to drive prosperity. I want to thank everyone around this table and the staff that have delivered these improvements and successes, sometimes through challenging times and while delivering high quality services for our residents. While this is the time of year when people relax with their friends and family, I know many of us and our staff will be working through this festive period. I hope you get a break and enjoy Christmas.

Community Chest

One thing that sets us apart from other councils is our families and communities work. Therefore in this time of giving I was pleased to see us agree that, together with St Edmundsbury Borough Council, we have invested more than £400,000 in community led projects to benefit residents across West Suffolk.

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 approach to achieve better outcomes and resilient communities.

The organisations that benefit from this use that money to deliver positive outcomes for people that truly touch people's lives. It is part of the ethos behind the new West Suffolk Council to be big enough to have a strong say, but remain local to work alongside our communities to deliver tailored initiatives with residents at the heart of its design.

The projects are designed to help residents' health, family support, counselling, advice and advocacy, community activities and initiatives involving young people in arts and sports, and are set to receive the funding through our highly popular Community Chest scheme.

Local charities, community groups and voluntary organisations are often the best placed to help address some of the issues we face in our society. Community Chest allows us to help make these ideas happen, to invest in our local families and communities, in turn making life better for residents including some of the more vulnerable in West Suffolk.

Social Prescribing

I am very pleased to see that the Social Prescribing initiative that has been trialled in Haverhill will now be coming to Mildenhall and Brandon. This follows a successful bid by us and St Edmundsbury for just over £660,000.

This scheme supports NHS and wider public services system in dealing with patients' social needs whilst improving individuals' wellbeing. Put simply, it is a life saver that has a major impact on the lives of people who take part helping them tackle anything from mental health, isolation, debt, wellbeing or getting back into work...to name just a few.

West Suffolk Councils led on securing the extra funding for the social prescribing scheme.

This money will importantly enable us to work with local partners in Mildenhall and Brandon to develop a social prescribing model for the two towns. It will also further strengthen the work being carried out by the Haverhill LifeLink scheme.

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. 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 in just over a year since its inception.

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 place based issues. This was agreed by Suffolk Leaders as part of the West Suffolk Councils' share of the fund. I would like to thank all those involved.

Five Ways

We will all have seen that the lights have been switched on at Five Ways roundabout to improve safety and reduce congestion. While we welcome the investment in this we will continue to lobby for a more permanent solution and improvements at the Newmarket junction with the A14 and A142. Transport improvements are vital to the area and one of the reasons for the new West Suffolk Council has been set up to lobby for this.

Get Ready for Growth

I was pleased to represent our Council at RAF Lakenheath to celebrate the start of a new contract to bring the F35 to our area. This is bringing more than £1 billion in investment and opportunities over the next five years and is an exciting time.

Earlier this year in Newmarket, I spoke to national and local companies at a packed 'Get Ready for Growth' meeting to see how they can be part of multi-million contracts for the USAF and growth in West Suffolk.

Hundreds of millions of dollars is being invested in the Lakenheath area as part of the USAF programme to base the F35 Fighter and its supporting personnel in the UK. This has opened up opportunities for UK and especially local contractors to provide services.

We are at the heart of this work not only helping manage this growth and supporting business but as ever, being good friends and neighbours to the current and new military personnel.

Happy New Year

As I said, what a year we have had and what a great year we are going to have. I look forward to welcoming you back and working with you in 2019 to create the new West Suffolk Council. Until then have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year