
Shadow Council



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Although we are now at 15 January, this is my first Leader's statement for the New Year and after you kindly voted me into the role. Which is why I want to take this opportunity to wish you all a belated Happy New Year and express my excitement at the opportunities we all have ahead, working together to create the new West Suffolk Council.

As I meet other Leaders and councils from across the country, what is clear is the way we work and opportunities we have is ahead of many authorities. This has always been the corner stone of our plans for the new West Suffolk Council, to build on our strong foundations and create something new that better benefits the communities and businesses we serve.

I have already seen those words turn into deeds. As I look across the room tonight I see many councillors working more closely together, be they St Edmundsbury, Forest Heath, urban or rural, as well as across parties. John highlighted in his last statement how we have been working as one on this. It's fitting tonight we are discussing our joint historical roots as we look at the Coat of Arms for West Suffolk.

This way of working has brought forward policies and proposals that we have discussed previously and will debate tonight around these tables and will shape the new Council. It has also created new ways of working, more interest from Government, partners and investors but at the same time a better ability to face future challenges and crucially continue to deliver high quality services – even at Christmas and through the New Year.

Just before the end of last year I was talking to businesses about hundreds of millions of pounds of opportunities and investment in our area, including the F35 fighter programme. We agreed to support hundreds of thousands of pounds of investment in local community groups that are doing great work in our area.

The better ability to lobby and work in different ways with partners is paying off. Following conversations with our councils, 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 in West Suffolk, leading the way with our families and community work. But we are also innovating the largest Solar for Business installation we have going up on an international business in West Suffolk, and we just heard before Christmas of a grant for a £770,000 scheme to create smart energy grid pilots. Reducing pollution, cost to business and us as well as an income.

While tonight we may be looking briefly at the past and what binds us in a coat of arms it is also a good time to look ahead and what new story and initiatives we will make together. Therefore, a happy New Year to you all and I look forward to the new chapter for West Suffolk we are all about to write.

Councillor James Waters
Leader of the West Suffolk Shadow Council