

## Leader's statement

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>COU/WS/22/014</b>	
<b>Report to and date:</b>	<b>Extraordinary Council</b>	26 July 2022
<b>Documents attached:</b>	<b>None</b>	

### Leader's Statement – July 2022

1. I wanted to start with a thank you to you all for attending this extraordinary meeting. The reason for bringing us together is to help make sure our communities and businesses benefit from nearly £1.9 million of new Government funding over the next three years.
2. This funding is very welcome and will be used to support a range of initiatives that will help the local economy, our rural areas and town centres. It will provide new job opportunities through improved skills and training, as well as supporting our families and community work.

### UK Shared Prosperity Fund

3. I will not dwell on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and will if necessary, share my thoughts at the meeting. That said, I am pleased we have been able to meet the very challenging timescales and engage with a range of stakeholders, including councillors, to help crystallise the opportunities and projects that will best help our communities and businesses.
4. Therefore, I need and want to thank everyone who has taken the time to help shape these opportunities and this will assist in developing the detailed plans going forward. Once again, with our forward-thinking work around families and communities, as well as economic development, we are in the driving seat to both secure and make the most of the £1.9 million funding.

### NHS update

5. I wanted to mention briefly the structural changes in the health and care system that the NHS has introduced nationally. You will have seen in the helpful message sent out by Councillor Mildmay-White to all members a concise explanation and film produced to explain what a is a very complex area. This has also been included in our regular newsletter update to all members with an explanation of the changes and links for further information, including the film.
6. These changes focus on the introduction of Integrated Care Systems which came into operation from 1 July as a result of the Health and Care Act 2022.

The Suffolk and Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (SNEE ICB) became operational and legally established from July 1, 2022, designed to assist closer working between health and social care partners for the benefit of local communities.

7. From the beginning of this month the NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk, NHS West Suffolk and NHS North East Essex clinical commissioning groups (the CCGs) were abolished.
8. While the NHS as a whole can perhaps be complex to understand, I am pleased to say that we all as partners, continue to share the same goal of driving forward better health and wellbeing outcomes for our residents. The way we continue to work across the system and boundaries delivering for example award winning facilities such as Mildenhall Hub, leisure centres, our parks and even our markets, as well as our families and communities work all play a part in improving the health of our communities.

### **Environmental Update**

9. I have just been looking through the papers for Cabinet which includes our update on the work we have been doing around helping to tackle climate change. This is something close to my heart and one of the first things we agreed as the newly formed West Suffolk Council. I am really pleased to see not only are we making great leaps in reducing our impact, but we are improving on our pre-pandemic levels too; here are some of the highlights.
  - Total emissions down 41 percent compared to 2010 baseline and down 15 percent compared to 2019-2020.
  - Renewable energy generated up 138 percent compared to 2012 and up 41 percent compared to 2019-2020.
  - Total owned vehicle emissions down 13 percent compared to 2010-2011 baseline and down nine percent compared to 2019-2020.
  - Business travel down 68 percent compared to 2010 baseline and down 51 percent compared to 2019-2020.
  - Total water consumption down 43 percent compared to baseline and down 35 percent compared to 2019-2020.
  - During 2021-2022, we held six Green Flag status parks.
  - Public electric vehicle (EV) chargers installed by WSC can support 67 EVs charging at the same time.
  - Energy delivered to drivers powered 353,170 miles.
  - 318 trees and 560 hedge plants planted during 2021-2022.
10. Here at West Suffolk House, where we are holding Council this evening, we also continue to make improvements.
  - Total West Suffolk House waste down 58 percent compared to 2012 baseline.
  - The recycling rate is 82.34 percent, up 51 percent compared to 2019-2020.
  - Total West Suffolk House waste down 56 percent compared to 2019-2020.

11. We are not only investing £9 million ourselves in various actions to help us reach carbon neutral, but I would also highlight that there are successful initiatives such as 'Solar for Business' which supports employers to go green and save money.
12. Not only does this scheme provide an income but it has saved more than 900 tonnes of carbon from being released into the atmosphere each year. It has also saved the businesses taking part a total of around £125,000 a year on reduced electricity bills.

### **Local Plan**

13. I want to take this opportunity to remind not only councillors, but our businesses and communities that there is still time to 'have your say' on the new Local Plan. These views will help shape the future of West Suffolk, including where new homes can be built and where employment growth may take place, as well as issues around health, transport and the environment.
14. As you know, we are now running the preferred options consultation. This will end on the day of Council, 26 July 2022, and people can find out more by visiting our virtual exhibition at <https://westsuffolk.exhibition.app/>
15. Once finalised and adopted, the West Suffolk Local Plan, will cover the period up to 2040. As well as helping to decide planning applications and where new developments take place, it will also contain the policies that will secure the delivery of affordable housing, new play areas, green public open space, health and education facilities, and transport provision.
16. The Government sets out the stages of public consultation that a draft local plan must go through. The draft West Suffolk Local Plan completed its first stage of public consultation in 2020, on the issues and options.
17. From that feedback, national guidance and emerging evidence, the Council has dismissed some sites and included others for potential development – and it is now seeking further feedback, as part of our "preferred options" consultation.
18. The Council is also carrying out another "call for sites" to ensure it has explored all possible options before it concludes the sites selected for the final draft local plan, which is due to go out to consultation next year.
19. In total, the future housing need identified by Government, means that 15,200 more homes will be needed in West Suffolk by 2040. Whilst 8,600 of these already have planning permission, at least 6,600 homes will need to be identified through the new local plan. The preferred options stage includes land for 7,134 homes (only 2,600 of which are on new sites put forward). This over allocation is because the Council needs to provide a level of choice and certainty that it will meet its housing needs.
20. People have been given the chance in various ways to have their say including online, a virtual village hall exhibition, and face to face at a number of public

exhibitions and engagement in this process has been pleasingly good and continues.

### **Cost of Living**

21. We all understand the issues the nation and our local residents and businesses are going through due to the high cost of living. This is of course a countrywide issue effecting all but is a daily struggle for many.
22. There are many initiatives we are delivering, or supporting, to help our communities and businesses in this respect. Once again, our work around families and communities as well as economic development means we are on the front foot in proactively addressing these challenges both in the short and long term. This is however something that needs to be tackled together, and everyone from national Government, public services and local community groups and businesses has a part to play.
23. Just over a month ago Suffolk Public Sector Leaders, which includes ourselves, other Suffolk councils, police and health, agreed around £1 million to help the county's hardest hit due to the cost of living crisis. The money is earmarked to help the continuation of hardship support services which were set up during COVID and are now being called upon again due to the challenges of the cost of living.
24. We have also recently announced an increase to our Community Chest Fund to help communities with the cost-of-living crisis.
25. We have increased the total available by 10 percent to now offer more than half a million pounds in help. The West Suffolk Council Community Chest grant scheme is open to community groups, charities, voluntary organisations, faith groups and social enterprises. Applications are now open, and I would urge you to encourage those who might benefit and meet the criteria to apply.
26. In the past three years, organisations and charities across West Suffolk have been awarded a total of £1.39 million in Community Chest funding by the Council to help them deliver vital local initiatives.
27. But we can of course always do more to build on the already good work we are doing to improve the lives of the communities we serve, and future generations; and given some of the challenges we are facing are beyond our remit control, I very much hope we will work continue to work together, and even better, with others on this vital issue.

### **And finally**

28. Suffolk Libraries celebrate their tenth birthday this year and I have wished them many happy returns on the Council's behalf. These are vital community centres that are much more than places to get books; they play an active role in education and the welfare of residents as well as the support of the most vulnerable. We have a long relationship with the library service and an excellent example of the need for such a facility at the heart of a community is demonstrated at the Mildenhall Hub. This new modern facility linked to other

services has seen an amazing 54 percent rise in books borrowed from 2018-2019 to 2021-2022 (that is an extra 19,070 books being borrowed) and over the same time the number of borrowers jump by 78 percent (an additional 970 people).

29. This is testament to how councils, public and private services can and should work together to drive better outcomes.
30. Suffolk Day was held last month. It is a good way of celebrating all the great things going on in the county, and especially in West Suffolk. Indeed, many counties are now following Suffolk's lead on this. Here at West Suffolk Council, every day is of course "Suffolk Day" and I know that is something that connects all of us, no matter what side of the chamber we sit. It is that ethos that will see us continue to meet the many challenges and seize the opportunities ahead. Indeed, this ethos has helped to ensure we have the measures already in place and in a good position to continue to deliver for our businesses and communities whom we all serve.

With best wishes,

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