

Leader's statement

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Report to and date:	Council	21 February 2023
Documents attached:	None	

Leader's statement

1. As we are reaching the end of West Suffolk Council's first four-year term I have broken from tradition and put together a round-up of just some of what the authority and all of us together have achieved.
2. 'West Suffolk – The Story So Far' will be sent to you as a PDF for your information and, for use yourselves. It will also be added prior to the Council meeting as a downloadable file to the Council agenda webpage under Leader's Statement (click link: [Agenda for Council on Tuesday 21 February 2023, 7.00 pm \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/agenda-for-council-on-tuesday-21-february-2023-7-00-pm)) so the public can access it.
3. As you will see this is a considerable document, covering four years of many achievements, which is one of the reasons this is available electronically (rather than printing multiple copies).
4. You will also recall that one of the first things we did as a Council was declare a Climate Emergency and form a cross party taskforce; and one of the aims from that work was to reduce paper and printing (which is another good reason why I am sharing this electronically).
5. To sum up, this document represents the outcome of the work of all councillors and our staff at West Suffolk Council and is something we should all be proud of.

Budget

6. I will wait to comment on the budget until the meeting of Council. However, I would emphasise this, like all budgets before is more than an exercise in balancing books and neat columns of figures. The outcome of our budget decisions can be seen in the round-up of what West Suffolk Council has achieved over the last four years. It is the way we have continued to deliver high quality services while encouraging economic growth, improving our environment and working with communities and organisations to deliver initiatives such as Community Chest and locality budgets. We have been able to invest to create income, including renewable energy while improving leisure facilities and other initiatives to improve health and wellbeing. This has also

put us in the strong position of being able to face challenges such as COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis which affects not only our communities and businesses but also the ability of public services to meet increased demand. But what has always been clear is that our budgets are about delivering for and benefitting the whole of West Suffolk.

Community Chest

7. I also want to thank all members and staff who have worked together on the applications for Community Chest grants which were supported by Cabinet. These discussions are cross party and I know every effort is made to support in other ways those groups and initiatives which were not successful. Another £513,000 has been made available this year under our successful Community Chest initiative which provides funding for local community groups; and a total of 32 voluntary and community organisations, charities, faith groups and social enterprises, will receive funding for projects. This includes over £315,000 of Community Chest funding for ten projects identified specifically as helping people with some of the current cost of living challenges.
8. In total, over the last four years, the Council has directly invested more than £2 million in supporting groups across West Suffolk.

Make Your Mark

9. You may have also seen we have launched our Make Your Mark campaign as part of encouraging people to take part in local democracy from standing as candidates to voting in the elections. We ran a similar campaign for our first West Suffolk Council elections. You can find out more in our election section of our website [Voting and elections \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/voting-and-elections) as well as how people can stand to become a councillor [How to become a councillor NEW \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/how-to-become-a-councillor-new) and a short animation we are using on social media channels which used answers from West Suffolk Councillors <https://youtu.be/TVQ8CYboKC0>

And finally...

10. I look forward to seeing you all at this penultimate meeting of West Suffolk Council's first four-year term. And I want to thank you all for the work we have done together which has benefitted so many of the people, communities and organisations that we serve across West Suffolk.

With best wishes,

Councillor John Griffiths
Leader of West Suffolk Council