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# Council



*St Edmundsbury*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Cllr Terry Clements Planning and Regulation Portfolio</b>	
<b>Report No:</b>	<b>COU/SE/14/009</b> [to be completed by Democratic Services]	
<b>Report to and date/s:</b>	<b>Full Council</b>	<b>16 December 2014</b>
<b>Portfolio includes:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Planning (Development Control)</li><li>• Planning Policy</li><li>• Building Control</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vision 2031</li><li>• Environmental Health (excluding Environmental Management)</li><li>• Licensing</li></ul>

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## 1. Planning Services

### 1.1 Planning Policy

The adoption of Vision 2031 at the last meeting of the Council has placed the Council in a strong position to manage the delivery of growth while protecting our rich and diverse natural and historic environment. A number of developers are now starting to bring forward sites that are allocated in Vision 2031 and, on those sites that require masterplans and development briefs, developers are being encouraged to involve Members in the consultation process.

The Planning Inspectorate's examination of Joint Development Management Policies local plan document is ongoing. The six weeks consultation on the Inspector's recommended Main Modifications to the policies ended on 27 November and the comments are being considered by him prior to issuing his report. It is still hoped that the final document can be brought to the February meeting of the Council for adoption.

Public consultation is currently taking place on the Draft West Suffolk Shop Front and Advertisement Design Guidance. The document in itself will not be a part of the formal development plan, but it will inform and be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. Consultation on the document runs for seven weeks and ends on 9 January 2015.

### 1.2 Planning Applications

As illustrated in the table below, the total number of planning applications being

determined by the Council continues to show an upward trend compared with the downturn in 2009/10. In particular, the monthly average for the number of major applications determined is the highest for eight years and this demand shows signs of continuing as sites allocated in Vision 2031 start to come forward.

<b>YEAR:</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>MAJORS</b>	<b>Total of All App. Types determined or withdrawn</b>	<b>Monthly average</b>	<b>Monthly average - majors</b>
April 07-08	1378	36	2703	225.3	3.0
April 08-09	1253	33	2302	191.8	2.8
April 09-10	1028	20	1453	121.1	1.7
April 10-11	1015	18	1455	121.3	1.5
April 11-12	1056	34	1480	123.3	2.8
April 12-13	988	28	1675	139.6	2.3
April 13-14	964	27	1731	144.3	2.3
April 2014 to date	641	26	1238	154.8	3.3

### **1.3 Government Policy Changes**

At the beginning of December the government announced immediate changes to the National Planning Guidance removing the requirement for developers of sites of 10 or less new homes to make contributions to the provision of affordable housing and “tariff” style contributions. In rural areas, the government has stated that local authorities have the ability to reduce this threshold to 5 homes. The government has stated that it intends to amend the National Planning Policy Framework to incorporate these changes. Officers are seeking further advice as to the status of this change to the Guidance ahead of amendments to the NPPF and the impact of this change on the borough.

The Government has also announced that they will take further measures to speed up the “end-to-end planning process”, including:

- taking forward measures to ensure that the principle of development need only be established once, to give greater certainty and allow locally-supported development to proceed more quickly;
- taking steps to speed up section 106 negotiations, including revised guidance, consulting on a faster process for reaching agreement, and considering how timescales for agreement could be introduced, and improving transparency on the use of section 106 fund; and
- keeping the speed of decisions on major applications under review, with the minimum performance threshold increasing to 50% of major

decisions on time as performance continues to improve.

I will ensure Members are kept informed of the introduction of these changes as and when appropriate.

## **2. Environment Team**

### **2.1 Fuel poverty and affordable warmth**

Through its participation in the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, the Borough Council has been able to support Suffolk's communities, businesses and residents to realise the economic benefits of reducing energy consumption, adapt to the future impacts of climate change and reduce carbon emissions.

Project work has provided direct financial benefits of more than £675,000 to residents, businesses and communities in the Borough over the last five years.

As of the Partnership's services, vulnerable households have received energy efficiency advice and support to reduce household bills through the Suffolk Warm Homes Healthy People programme.

Since its launch in January 2012, Warm Homes Healthy People has supported 135 households in the Borough with a fully-funded independent energy survey as well as offering practical help and advice around the installation of measures to improve home heating, from small energy efficiency improvement jobs to emergency boiler repairs. Referrals were also made to installers for loft and cavity wall insulation using utility company funding to the value of £48,606.

The annual cost to the Council of this and other services provided by the Partnership is £12,857.

## **3. Business Regulation and Licensing**

### **3.1 Allergens**

From 13 December 2014, all food businesses (e.g. restaurants, takeaways, bakeries and delicatessens) must declare any of 14 identified allergenic ingredients which are used in non-prepacked or loose foods that are sold or provided. The EU Food Information for Consumers Regulation (No. 1169/2011) lays down rules for the new requirements.

The 14 common allergens are:

- cereals containing gluten
- crustaceans
- eggs
- fish
- peanuts
- soybeans
- milk
- nuts: declaration of almond, hazelnut, walnut, cashew, pecan nut, Brazil nut, pistachio nut and macadamia nut (also known as Queensland nut)

- celery
- mustard
- sesame
- sulphur dioxide or sulphites (where added is present at more than 10mg/kg)
- lupin
- molluscs
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Across West Suffolk it is estimated that nearly three quarters of the 1800 food establishments will be affected by the new rules. Officers carrying out routine food hygiene interventions have been raising allergen awareness at all opportunities during the last few months to support as many businesses as possible in complying with the new rules. The Council has the power to enforce, not the duty as this lies with Trading Standards at Suffolk County Council, however officers are working in partnership and have significantly more face to face contact with the affected businesses through food hygiene interventions.

### **3.2 Renewal arrangements for personal licences due to expire in early 2015**

Currently individuals are not required to have a personal licence to be employed in a pub or other business that sells alcohol. Premises licensed to sell alcohol must have a designated premises supervisor, who holds a personal licence. The single exception is a community premises that has successfully applied to dis-apply the DPS requirement under the Licensing Act 2003. Anyone who does not hold a personal licence must be authorised to sell alcohol by a personal licence holder. There is no such requirement for the supply of alcohol in a members' club. Personal licences allow the individual to sell alcohol on behalf of any business that has a premises licence or a club premises certificate. The relationship is similar to the way that a driving licence permits the driving of any car.

The Government is aiming to remove the requirement for personal licence holders to renew them every 10 years through the Deregulation Bill, which is currently before Parliament. The first personal licences were granted in February 2005 and St. Edmundsbury BC have issued 1,090 to date. However, the Bill is unlikely to receive Royal Assent before February 2015, the ten year renewal date for the first licences. To ensure that personal licence holders are not disadvantaged by this position, the Government have stated that they will introduce new arrangements, through secondary legislation, to cover those affected.

### **3.3 The potential for social media and analytics to predict food related infectious diseases**

The Annual Science Report 2013/14 from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has revealed some interesting research which supports planned increase usage of social media for intelligence gathering. It tested the potential for social media and web data to give advance warning of the start of the seasonal peak of norovirus cases seen each winter.

Working with the FSA foodborne disease division and the FSA's social media manager, Twitter content was investigated and the most common keywords

used to describe symptoms of norovirus were pinpointed. Aggregated data on the number of times these keywords were used on Twitter and Google search each week were examined, and correlated to the laboratory-confirmed norovirus cases for the same periods. Some interesting patterns and correlations between tweets and laboratory report data were identified. Whilst the FSA report provides significantly more detail, the research does indicate that there is potential for Twitter in particular, to provide an early alert to predict an escalation in laboratory reports in any given week.

The FSA's digital team will now focus their social media listening on the best performing keywords and further refine the research alongside existing surveillance mechanisms to see if a similar approach could be applied in other areas to help highlight emerging risks and to gather intelligence.

The publication of this research will greatly assist in preparing the West Suffolk Business Regulation resources in readiness for handling the emerging risks and investigating outbreaks of disease. Furthermore it sets the foundation for increased social media usage by the service to not only support business growth and provide key messages but also to help in identifying potential problems for investigation and resolution locally.