

Leader's monthly bulletin – August 2023



Welcome to the first edition of my monthly bulletin as Leader of East Suffolk Council.

The bulletin is aimed at keeping councillors, officers, and town and parish councils up to date on the month's main news stories and any emerging issues from the district.

Caroline

A new day in East Suffolk!

East Suffolk Services Limited began officially trading at the beginning of July, delivering a range of operational services for local communities on behalf of East Suffolk Council. As part of our commitment to seeking the best possible value for money for residents, businesses and stakeholders, the council agreed to create a 'Local Authority Trading Company' (LATCo) in the autumn of 2021, enabling it to play a more direct and influential role in the delivery of important services.



ESSL operates as an 'arms-length' commercial business, separate to the council, and is responsible for delivering crucial services such as waste and recycling collection, grounds maintenance and street cleansing.

Councillors can direct public enquires regarding services provided by ESSL to the ESC customer services team on 0333 016 2000 (0800 440 2516 out of hours) or via customerservices@eastsuffolk.gov.uk. For additional support and information on the delivery of services provided by ESSL, councillors can contact the Contract Management team at East Suffolk Council at operations@eastsuffolk.gov.uk.

Designs revealed for exciting seafront redevelopment

Final designs for improvements at the Royal Plain, Royal Green and the South Quay Wharf areas of Lowestoft have been revealed as part of a major programme to reinvigorate the town's seafront. The improvements – the first phase of the London Road, Lowestoft High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) and Seafront Masterplan – include installation of new fountains at Royal Plain, as well as enhanced green spaces, public realm and leisure provision. An event was held at the East Point Pavilion on Thursday 6 July to enable residents to view the final designs.

Due for completion by May 2024, improvements to the Royal Plain area will complement the repurposed East Point Pavilion, the Eastern Edge beach huts and the refurbished beach huts near to the Claremont Pier. The Seafront Vision project is one of five within the Town Investment Plan, which received £24.9m from the Government's Towns Fund last year.



Designs have also been finalised for the next phase of improvements at Jubilee Parade. The development will include a two-storey café, concession units, public toilets, a Changing Places facility, and extensive public realm improvements to the surrounding seafront area.

An accessible lift will be installed to connect the lower promenade with the first-floor level and greatly improve accessibility between the Upper Esplanade and Lower Promenade for wheelchair and pushchair users. Work is scheduled for completion by May 2025.

Developer urged to address incinerator concerns

As the Leader of East Suffolk Council, I am urging developer VC Cooke Ltd to address concerns about its proposed incinerator near Beccles. I believe that there are still unanswered questions about the residual-waste incinerator facility that VC Cooke Ltd proposes to build on the Ellough Industrial Estate.

Suffolk County Council granted permission for the build on a casting vote, and without an Environmental Impact Assessment, in February. VC Cooke still requires an environmental permit from East Suffolk Council to operate and we urge the firm to not make any unrecoverable spending decisions before receiving all the necessary permits.

Local residents are worried about this development and there are clearly concerns that still need to be addressed, so we are pleased that VC Cooke has now agreed to hold a public meeting at Beccles Public Hall from 6pm-8pm on Monday 21 August.

Improving access to private rented housing in East Suffolk



A new scheme has been launched to give residents better access to private rented housing. Approved by Cabinet on 11 July, a new partnership – East Suffolk Lettings – will be created, along with a new Guaranteed Rent Scheme, to increase residents' access to the private rented sector and minimise the use of temporary accommodation.

East Suffolk Lettings will encourage landlords to work with the council by charging a lower rent – at Local Housing Allowance or within 10%. Landlords will be offered a financial incentive based on the

difference in cost between what they would have been able to charge, compared to the lower rate they are charging.

In return, the council will guarantee the rent is paid on time each month and will provide support to the tenant to ensure the tenancy is managed appropriately. Funded through the Homelessness Prevention Grant, received from the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities, the scheme will be offered on a two-year pilot basis and, if successful, will become a permanent service.

Time to think about how we heat our homes

Warm Homes Suffolk is accepting applications to fund improvements to residents' homes, making properties warmer and more efficient for the colder months. Warm Homes Suffolk has new funding available for eligible households, to put towards energy efficient measures such as insulation, solar panels or heat pumps.

The scheme is administered by Suffolk County Council, and delivered by East Suffolk Council, on behalf of all councils in Suffolk. It has been funding home energy efficiency improvements for more than a year but has recently received further funding from the Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero to continue the work.

An average of £18,000 in funding per property is available for homeowners meeting the criteria. Landlords and tenants are also entitled to apply, with qualifying rental properties getting up to two-thirds of costs, as an average grant of up to £12,000.

To find out more about how Warm Homes Suffolk, visit [Warm Homes Suffolk](#) or call the team on 03456 037 686.

App launched for on-demand bus service!



An on-demand bus service providing transport for rural communities is now even easier to book, following the launch of a new app. East Suffolk Council introduced the Katch service in April, working alongside local community transport operator, CATS (Coastal Accessible Transport Service) to provide on-demand transport between Framlingham, Wickham Market, Campsea Ashe and Snape.

The 12-seater accessible Katch minibuss can be booked through a dedicated website, by phone, and now via a new mobile app, '365 Flexiroute', and will operate for 12 months, funded by the East Suffolk Council Community Partnership Board, with the intention of extending the contract if there is sufficient demand.

The service runs from 7.30am-6.30pm Monday to Friday, from 10am-6.30pm on Saturdays, and from 10am-6pm on bank holidays, with stops in Framlingham, Wickham Market, Campsea Ashe and Snape.

Journeys can be booked between 8.30am and 4.30pm on weekdays, a loyalty card is available, while young people will get a 25% discount by presenting an Endeavour Card.

Affordable housing in Lowestoft

East Suffolk Council is celebrating the start of work to build new, sustainable, local authority managed social housing in Lowestoft. A ground-breaking ceremony marked the beginning of construction at the site, in Milton Road East, on Wednesday 13 July. Once complete, the scheme will comprise six two-bedroom social rented homes managed by East Suffolk Council and allocated to eligible applicants on the housing register.



Project managed by Orwell Housing, the development will be built on the site of the former Shaw Trust offices, where Milton Road East meets Police Station Road.

National awards for two East Suffolk green spaces



Two green spaces in East Suffolk have been officially recognised as being among the best in the country, after receiving a Green Flag Award. Both Felixstowe Seafont Gardens and Woods Meadow Country Park in Oulton Broad have been awarded the international quality mark for parks and green spaces.

It is the eighth consecutive year that Felixstowe Seafont Gardens has received the Green Flag award and follows East Suffolk Council's four-year restoration project, launched in 2011, to return the Grade II listed green space to its former glory as part of a town-wide regeneration programme.

Support for further discussions on offshore options

East Suffolk Council recognises the need to deliver renewable infrastructure to help achieve the UK's net zero targets, but this cannot be at any cost.

National Grid Electricity System Operator's Offshore Coordination Phase 1 Final Report (2020) previously identified the significant savings that an integrated approach to the electricity network could secure for consumers in the long term. East Anglia is facing the onslaught of multiple infrastructure projects now, so it is essential that further consideration is given to integrated solutions as a matter of urgency.

Representatives from East Suffolk have previously met with Andrew Bowie MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and other officials to express concerns regarding the impacts of multiple energy projects in East Suffolk. This has enabled the Government to have a greater understanding of the cumulative challenges facing the district and local communities.

We therefore support the current request by community groups to secure further discussions within Government on the potential of integrated offshore options for East Anglia prior to the summer recess.

East Suffolk Walking Challenge returns!

A popular walking challenge is set to return to East Suffolk this summer – with prizes again on offer for taking part. East Suffolk Council has again teamed up with community-based walking app, Go Jauntly, to relaunch the challenge this August with a varied selection of 11 different routes, including the Bungay Town Trail, the Felixstowe Park Loop and the Framlingham Town Tour.



Weekly prize draw winners will receive Go Jauntly premium subscriptions and leisure centre vouchers, while grand prize winners will get a fitness tracker and a pair of VIP tickets for the Tour Britain. For more details, plus full terms and conditions, visit the [Go Jauntly East Suffolk Explorer Walking Challenge page](#).

The initiative is part of the wider Digital Towns programme, which has seen the installation of free public Wi-Fi, digital footfall counters and town marketing platforms, alongside business support, in towns including Felixstowe, Lowestoft, Southwold and Woodbridge.

Suffolk residents urged to accept Food Savvy mission

Households across Suffolk and Norfolk are being urged to sign up for a mission to do their bit to protect the planet and help get the best out of salad and vegetables. Mission Food Savvy is targeting these items in the war on waste as they are some of the most thrown away foods in the two counties.

The summer campaign promotes savvy ways to store salad and vegetables to keep them fresher to be savoured another day; or send them undercover in delicious dishes to make sure nothing goes to waste.

As well as financial savings there are environmental savings too. If everyone in the UK stopped throwing away food for just one day, it would be the same as taking 14,000 cars off the road for a whole year.

New activity park opens in Felixstowe

Development of a new seaside leisure site has reached new heights with the opening of its activity park area, featuring climbing walls, sports equipment and games. The new activity park – open in time for the school holidays – forms part of a wider project to regenerate an area of land between Sea Road and the Promenade, in Felixstowe.



When fully complete, the Seafront Village will also feature 27 traditional-style beach huts, provided by East Suffolk Council, as well as a single-storey accessible hut, built from self-insulating panels and capable of being split into smaller rooms, or accessible beach chalets, for hire.

The area will be entirely re-landscaped, with ramp access and fully accessible public conveniences with changing facilities.

The development forms part of wider investment in the South Seafront area, where the Martello Park has delivered new homes, a play area and new car parking facilities, while East Suffolk Council also invested in the development of an award-winning contemporary café, the refurbishment of two public shelters and improved access linking the pavement along Sea Road and Orford Road to the beachfront.

Concerns over proposed ticket office closure

We have expressed our concerns about proposals to close the ticket office at Lowestoft Station as part of Greater Anglia's proposed closure of 47 of its 54 ticket offices. The proposed closure would require customers to buy tickets from the ticket machine, online or from the conductor onboard the train. Greater Anglia staff would be available at the station between 6.30am and 1.30pm (Monday to Saturday).

The proposed closure of the ticket office at Lowestoft is extremely worrying. We want to encourage even more people to use trains and buses, rather than relying on cars and having a staffed ticket office is hugely important. Ticket office staff provide essential support for those with disabilities and additional needs, as well as providing face-to-face engagement with customers, helping with queries and fares.

Greater Anglia has extended the closing date for public consultation on the proposed closures from 26 July to 1 September. Both I, and the Leader of the Labour group, Cllr Peter Byatt, wrote a letter to local media expressing our views against the closure and our concerns. I have also spoken to all the other leaders of Suffolk's district councils, and we will be issuing a joint letter of concern and objection against the closure.

Fund launched to help reinforce communities

Community groups in East Suffolk are being invited to apply for up to £30,000 in capital grant funding for upgrades and improvements to facilities. East Suffolk Council is accepting applications from local voluntary and social enterprise groups, as well as some small to medium sized businesses, for a £15,000-30,000 share in the newly launched Rural Business and Community Hub Fund (RBCHF).



The fund is part of the Government's wider Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) and aimed at organisations that provide, or wish to provide, a multi-purpose community hub or for-public-benefit facility offering access to a range of quality, cost-effective services. Applicants could include existing village halls, local skills providers, business and co-working spaces, health, wellbeing and mental health providers, sports and recreation providers, and arts, culture and heritage providers. Prospective RBCHF applicants can contact Community Action Suffolk for further support via info@communityactionsuffolk.org.uk. Guidance on applications can be found here [East Suffolk Rural Prosperity Fund](#).

New 'VIP' venue for Felixstowe

East Suffolk's newest Visitor Information Point (VIP) has opened its doors on Felixstowe seafront. The new purpose-built venue, provided by East Suffolk Council after fire destroyed the vacant former building in 2019, offers visitors a range of promotional literature and information relating to the town and the immediate surrounding area.



The Fisherman's Hut will be open seven days a week, weather permitting, from 11am to 3pm, operated by volunteers in support of Visit Felixstowe, the official tourism brand for the town, managed by the Felixstowe Business Improvement District (BID).

Bungay recognised for improving quality of life for people with dementia

Bungay has been awarded special status for its understanding and support for people living with dementia. The town has been recognised as a Dementia Friendly Community by the Alzheimer's Society for 2023 – joining just 40 other Dementia Friendly Communities across the East of England – in recognition of local efforts to improve inclusion and quality of life for people with dementia.



Over the past year, the group has engaged with local businesses and community organisations to provide dementia awareness training and, as a result, 12 people have now become 'dementia friends.' The community was also asked to provide their feedback on current dementia services and share their experiences of living with dementia.

Stay up to date with the latest East Suffolk news!

The Communications Team shares [all media coverage on SharePoint](#), so you can easily stay up to date on all media stories relevant to East Suffolk Council, whether on local, regional or national news outlets, tv, radio, print or online.

We do a lot of great work in East Suffolk, and we want everyone to know! I would therefore like to encourage all Councillors to share their own good news stories with the Communications Team so they can help showcase some of this work, whether this is from projects funded through your Enabling Communities Budget or supporting an initiative which will benefit our local communities.

We keep our communities up to date in a variety of ways and social media has an important role to play. Please follow us and share our posts with your audiences!

Facebook: www.facebook.com/eastsuffolkcouncil; Twitter: <https://twitter.com/EastSuffolk>

If you have any questions or need any help with communications and promotion, you can email the team on communications@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Diary dates

- 7th August at 2pm – Licensing Sub-Committee (Conference Room, Riverside)
- 8th August at 2pm – Planning Committee North (Conference Room, Riverside)
- 15th August at 10am – Licensing Sub-Committee (Lowestoft Meeting Room, Riverside)
- 15th August at 2pm – Licensing Sub-Committee (Lowestoft Meeting Room, Riverside)
- 22nd August at 2pm – Planning Committee South (Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House)
- 24th August at 10am – Licensing Sub-Committee (Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House)