

LEADER'S MONTHLY BULLETIN

January 2025

Welcome to the first edition of my monthly bulletin for 2025, which aims to keep councillors, officers and town and parish councils up to date on recent news stories and any emerging issues from the district.

Caroline



STATUS ACHIEVED

I am very pleased to announce that East Suffolk Council and East Suffolk Services Ltd were both recently awarded the highest status within a scheme which ensures organisations are inclusive to people with disabilities.

Both the Council and East Suffolk Services Ltd have been awarded Disability Confident Leader status following a Disability Confident submission, which was validated by Disability Advice North East Suffolk.

The Disability Confident scheme, accredited by the Department for Work and Pensions, helps employers recruit, retain and train great people. Disability Confident organisations play a leading role in changing attitudes about, and increasing understanding of, disability. There are three levels of the scheme, with Leader status being the highest.

We also encourage other employers in East Suffolk to become Disability Confident and drive positive change.

STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT DEVOLUTION PLANS

In December, we issued the following statement in response to the Government's White Paper on devolution.

It is still very early days and there will be further discussions across Suffolk and within East Suffolk as things become clearer.

"We will need time to consider the full implications of the Government's White Paper, however our view of devolution and the principles of local government reorganisation remains unchanged.

"Any Mayoral Combined Authority or future change needs to come with the financial resources and powers to deliver real change in partnership with Government and must recognise the importance of keeping local government genuinely local and connected to local places.

"We must focus on how proposals in the White Paper benefit the residents of East Suffolk, preserve or strengthen real local democratic accountability, and ensure a close link between residents and the councillors who represent them.

"Any reorganisation should not simply be about the structures and boundaries of councils, but instead should be part of holistic public service reform including other key services such as health, policing, fire, and employment support which should always be delivered locally. It should also seek to minimise impacts on operations, service delivery, residents and staff.

"We will take the time to consider these factors, work across the Council and with staff, to consider the White Paper alongside other policy changes such as the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Government Settlement."



EAST SUFFOLK THROUGH THE LENS

Our popular photo competition, [East Suffolk Through the Lens](#), is back for another year!

With over 350 entries, last year proved that we have some extremely talented photographers here in East Suffolk, and we are looking forward to seeing more this year. Our district is filled with beautiful landscapes and incredible wildlife, all waiting to be captured through the lens.

This year's competition is open to photographers of all ages and experience, with the aim of celebrating East Suffolk's unique appeal.

There are prizes to be won - the overall winner will receive a £100 high street voucher as well as their photo being printed on the cover of the next edition of the East Suffolk magazine.

One under-16 winning entrant will also be chosen to receive a high street voucher worth £75, while three runners-up will each get a high street voucher worth £25.

Entrants are encouraged to capture the essence of the district by photographing the buildings, landscapes, wildlife, people and all that makes East Suffolk amazing.

Entries should be submitted via an East Suffolk Through the Lens online entry form before midnight on Thursday 30 January. Previous entries will not be considered.

There's not long now until the competition closes - so, East Suffolk, get snapping!



OFFERING RESIDENTS A WARM WELCOME

Last month, a network of venues offering residents a warm, safe space to socialise over the winter reopened for the third year.

East Suffolk Council's Warm Welcomes (formerly Warm Rooms) scheme has reopened for the winter, with more than 20 libraries, churches and community hubs providing a warm space and an opportunity to connect with other members of the local community.

Warm Welcomes provide a safe and welcoming space where residents, including people who may be struggling with the cost of heating their homes, can come to meet with others and access information about additional support available.

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME

Numerous organisations across the district provided fun and enriching activities and food as part of a programme of experiences for children and young people over the Christmas holidays.

The HAF programme is overseen by Suffolk County Council and coordinated locally by East Suffolk Council.

Holiday activities are varied and can introduce young people to new experiences and skills, from filmmaking to drama and teamwork to problem solving, as well providing opportunities for physical and social activity. Each funded holiday activity also offers a free meal.

EAST SUFFOLK WARM WELCOMES

YOUTH COUNCIL INAUGURAL MEETING

Our innovative new council entirely comprising young people from across East Suffolk met for the first time last month, ensuring the ideas and concerns of younger people are heard.

In November, 32 young people were elected to the new East Suffolk Youth Council.

Following an induction day on Monday 18 November at which the new Youth Councillors were 'sworn in', the first Youth Council meeting took place at Riverside in Lowestoft on Monday 9 December.



As their first item of business, the Youth Councillors elected a Chair and Vice-Chair. Both positions were hotly contested, but after multiple nominations, speeches and votes, a Chair was elected from St Felix School in Reydon, and a Vice-Chair from Thomas Mills High School in Framlingham.

The Youth Council then turned to their first motion, in which they called upon East Suffolk Council to devote greater resources and attention to youth safety and well-being. With the newly elected Chair presiding ably over discussions, the Youth Councillors emphasised the impacts of social media and the Covid-19 pandemic upon youth, and the need for improved youth activities, services and support.

The Youth Council carried their motion unanimously, and East Suffolk Council must now consider their views. At the November Full Council meeting, elected members unanimously agreed we would discuss any valid motion duly passed by the Youth Council at the next Full Council meeting.

COUNCIL SUPPORTS UNESCO STATUS BID

At a meeting of Full Council in November, we voted to express support for UNESCO World Heritage status to be awarded to coastal wetlands located on a globally important route for migratory waterbirds.

The East Coast Flyway, which runs from the Humber Estuary to the mouth of the Thames and has RSPB Minsmere at its heart, was selected in 2023 as one of five tentative sites nominated for UNESCO World Heritage status by UK Government.

These East Coast wetlands are a winter home to more than one million waterbirds and are a global exemplar of nature conservation management with some leading examples of well-planned adaptation in response to climate change.

The Council has also agreed to work cross-party with other local authorities and relevant stakeholders across the UK and globally to support this application.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GROUP FORMED

A new Community Engagement Group was established last month, to help further enhance and encourage public participation in planning matters.

The group has been launched as part of an ongoing partnership between East Suffolk Council and East Suffolk Planning Alliance (ESPA).

An agreement has now been signed to form a community engagement group to work together with East Suffolk Council as stakeholders in the planning and decision-making process.



NEW GUIDANCE FOR HMO APPLICATIONS

A new planning document has been adopted in East Suffolk to help guide proposals for the [conversion of properties to Houses in Multiple Occupation](#).

East Suffolk Council's Cabinet has adopted a new planning document which provides guidance as to circumstances which could be considered 'exceptional' when owners are proposing to convert properties to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the former Waveney area.

This new guidance note assists in the understanding of policy WLP8.4 of the Waveney Local Plan, which was previously unclear in its wording. The new note provides a list of circumstances which could be considered exceptional when an applicant proposes an HMO conversion.

The document was subject to public consultation during its preparation and the comments received have helped to inform the final document.

ENGAGING WITH RENTERS ACROSS SUFFOLK

Earlier in the year, we asked private tenants in Suffolk to share their experiences of renting homes as part of the ongoing Safe Suffolk Renters project.

Aimed at upholding good standards in the sector, Safe Suffolk Renters involves all five of the county's district and borough councils, working together to improve experiences of the private rented sector for both landlords and tenants.

It worked with national private tenants' organisation, Generation Rent, to engage with residents of all ages who are privately renting, to help Safe Suffolk Renters better understand and evidence some of the various housing issues in the county.

One of the concerns raised around renting was cost – rents are continuing to rise impacting on people's ability to afford to live in Suffolk.

Read more [here](#).

BENCHES RECEIVE AN IMPRESSIVE NEW LOOK

Last month, we announced that we would be faithfully restoring 34 benches in Felixstowe, with help from East Suffolk Services Limited, as part of a renovation programme.

It follows an East Suffolk Council survey into the condition of commemorative benches available for individuals and organisations to sponsor for a period of 10 years.

Each bench will be removed for refurbishment, and adorned with an optional commemorative plaque, upon reservation by an individual or group sponsor.

An East Suffolk museum has already been presented with the first bench to receive an impressive new look as part of a renovation programme.



COMMUNITY GROUP FORMED IN ALDEBURGH

A dedicated group of volunteers will play a key role in boosting biodiversity on a patch of land adopted for public ownership in their community.

Last month we announced that an eight-acre plot, divided by Prevetts Way, at Church Farm, Aldeburgh, would be transferred to East Suffolk Council as part of a planning obligation by housing developers.

It means that the open green space will be maintained by East Suffolk Services Limited in partnership with a newly formed community group.

We held a meeting with local residents to discuss options for the site and agreed the formation of a 'Friends of' group to support management of the space for the enjoyment of the public.

Anyone interested in getting involved in managing the site can contact operations@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

DIARY DATES

Monday 6 January 10.30am	Strategic Planning Committee	East Suffolk House
Tuesday 7 January 6pm	Cabinet	East Suffolk House
Wednesday 8 January 6pm	Melton, Woodbridge and Deben Peninsula Community Partnership	East Suffolk House
Thursday 9 January 10.30am	Licensing Sub-Committee	East Suffolk House
Tuesday 14 January 2pm	Planning Committee North	Riverside
Wednesday 15 January 2pm	Licensing Sub-Committee	East Suffolk House
Monday 20 January 6.30pm	Licensing Committee	East Suffolk House



DIARY DATES

Wednesday 22 January 6.30pm	Full Council	Riverside
Thursday 23 January 4.45pm	Southwold Harbour Management Committee	Stella Peskett Millennium Hall
Thursday 23 January 6pm	Framlingham, Wickham Market, Kelsale, Yoxford and villages Community Partnership	Venue TBC
Friday 24 January 10am	Licensing Sub-Committee	Riverside
Tuesday 14 January 2pm	Planning Committee North	Riverside
Tuesday 28 January 2pm	Planning Committee South	East Suffolk House
Thursday 30 January 2pm	Licensing Sub-Committee	East Suffolk House

