
November 2022 District Councillor report

Depden Parish Council

Message from Cllr John Griffiths, Leader West Suffolk Council

Following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the national period of mourning the Council has continued to support our communities. This has also included an army of volunteers who helped us respectfully follow Royal Parks in removing memorials and separate the flowers out for composting to be used in West Suffolk. Please watch this video from our Chair thanking all those who helped and our communities.

Thank You <https://youtu.be/wHhDhgNjB2s>



As a reminder of our communities coming together during that time here is a film of towns across West Suffolk making the Proclamation of Accension. <https://youtu.be/WPt9PrDfbQE>



Suffolk proposes already-planned developments for Investment Zone status (westsuffolk.gov.uk)

Suffolk County Council, in partnership with the district and borough councils, including West Suffolk has submitted an Investment Zone expression of interest to Government.

This is based around sites which are already in existing local plans or have otherwise been identified for development. They also meet the Government's criteria and ambitions for growth.

The proposal will seek Investment Zone status for sites along Suffolk's key transport corridors of the A14, A12 and A11 and near the gateways to the county in Lowestoft, Sudbury and Mildenhall. No new greenfield sites and no new sites adjacent to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have been brought forward.

The Government launched the process in early October to invite councils to submit their bids by 14th October. Since then, Suffolk Councils have been working in partnership with landowners, the LEP, Chamber of Commerce and key local stakeholders to identify sites that meet the Government's criteria. All the sites submitted in this bid are supported by Suffolk's MPs.

The 12 sites, which will provide a mix of commercial and residential development, include in West Suffolk the Western Gateway Cluster of:

- Western Gateway Cluster
- Suffolk Business Park
- West Mildenhall
- Haverhill town centre

Cllr John Griffiths, Leader of West Suffolk Council, said: "The package of sites, including those in West Suffolk, meet the Government's ambitions and criteria for Investment Zones which are focused at accelerating planned growth. Fundamentally these proposals demonstrate that we are an area that can deliver on the national growth policy and West Suffolk is a great location for business.

"These Investment Zone proposals are going forward as they meet the Government's guidance. But at the same time, we of course continue to pursue the delivery of a pipeline of additional initiatives and sites in West Suffolk that will help meet our strategic aims of economic prosperity and wellbeing for our communities.

"Once again we are taking every opportunity to further grow our local economy, including creating the right business environment to encourage investment, skills, infrastructure improvements, jobs and wider benefits for our communities as well as best value for our own assets."



National award for innovative Hub helping improve residents' lives ([westsuffolk.gov.uk](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk))

Multi award winning Mildenhall Hub which is helping improve education, health, and leisure participation, benefitting the lives of West Suffolk residents, has scooped another prestigious national award.

The Hub has been named project of the year in the Government Property Awards beating a shortlist that included other major national initiatives. The Hub is an exemplar of the Government's One Public Estate programme, demonstrating how the public estate can be a catalyst for place-shaping and better health, wellbeing and education.

In addition, the building, which is powered with an array of environmental features, has also been named best regional winner for best public or community building in the LABC (Local Authority Building Control) Building Excellence awards. It will now go through to the national finals in January.

The Hub brings together a new school, new gym, fitness studios and 3G pitch, swimming pools and sports hall, a new town library, health centre, children's centre, Citizens Advice West Suffolk and job centre. The Hub in Sheldrick Way also includes office space used by the NHS, Suffolk Police, Suffolk County Council and West Suffolk Council.

And in its first year the Hub has seen success for the local residents it serves.

Mildenhall College Academy has seen exam results improve on pre-Covid levels, with principal Nicola Hood stating part of this was down to students and staff being 'lifted' by the investment in the building and resources available to them.

Abbecroft Leisure has seen its membership double since opening at the Hub with over 1,650 members.

And its swim scheme has seen a huge increase growing to more than 880 people, an increase of nearly 80 per cent.

Behind the numbers, the Hub is making a difference to people's lives, linking up services such as the NHS with leisure and library services to benefit patient care. A cardiac rehabilitation programme means patients benefit from using the onsite leisure facilities with a purpose designed programme. Additional clinic rooms have meant more health services for both adults and children are now provided more locally, saving journeys to hospitals.

And children attending the speech and language sessions also benefit by being able to go straight to the library to choose books.

The number of people signed up and regularly using their library card at Mildenhall, compared to before the pandemic, has increased by nearly 80 per cent and the amount of books and other media its loans out has also gone up by more than 50 per cent.

You can watch a film from partners about the Hub on the Council's social media

https://twitter.com/West_Suffolk/status/1580863543150522368?s=20&t=zhYNFW2ecvfMVR9I7enzw



[Mildenhall skatepark open for action \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk)

Work on the new skatepark at St John's Recreation Ground, Mildenhall is complete, bringing the overall update of the new £100,000 improvement to facilities closer to an end.

The new free-flowing concrete structure replaces outdated ramps on the opposite side of the path, which were retained for use during construction, but will soon be removed.

Local young people collaborated in the design process, which was led by skatepark specialist Canvas. The project has been funded by West Suffolk Council's Community Asset Renewal Fund.

Here's a short film on the new park

https://twitter.com/West_Suffolk/status/1577290618338005003?s=20&t=yfsEUv5liwIZRbDKJHQPOQ



[Campaign launched to improve metal packaging recycling rates across Suffolk - Suffolk Recycling](#)

A new initiative encouraging households to recycle food and drink cans, aluminium foil and trays, empty aerosols and metal screw caps has been rolled out by the Suffolk Waste Partnership.

'MetalMatters' will see residents targeted with educational messages via a communications campaign comprising social media and outdoor advertising activities.

Expected to reach more than 350,000 households, the programme will run for a six-week period, .

The Suffolk Waste Partnership, which West Suffolk is part of, is proud to support the MetalMatters, which is run by Alupro, the Aluminium Packaging Recycling Organisation.

Designed to improve metal packaging recycling rates, the programme has reached more than seven million households nationwide since its launch in 2012.

Please feel free to encourage people to recycle more and take part in this campaign.



Warm Homes Suffolk

This initiative was set up by councils in Suffolk, including West Suffolk Council, in 2021, to help households implement measures that reduce their fuel bills and also reduce carbon footprints, helping the county towards its target of Net Zero by 2030. Funding comes from the department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy as part of its aim to upgrade the energy efficiency of properties across the UK.

Below are two recent examples of how the campaign is helping residents.

Are you worried about heat loss and winter bills in your home? (westsuffolk.gov.uk)

Residents in low income, low energy efficient homes, concerned about the impact of energy bills this winter, are being encouraged to see if they qualify for free help.

Households with low energy performance ratings and whose household income is less than £30,000 may qualify for the work which includes improving insulation so that residents don't need to use their heating as often or for as long to stay warm.

The work, which is subject to Government criteria, is being targeted at people who own their home or are paying a mortgage. Tenants who are in a private rented home can also qualify but their landlord would need to pay for part of the work. Housing association tenants should contact their landlord to see if they qualify for improvements.

West Suffolk Council has already completed more than £1.5m of energy efficiency improvements to around 150 homes.

We want to deliver improvements to another 150 by the end of March when the current phase of Government funding is due to end. A West Suffolk survey of those that had the improvements, found that 97 per cent of respondents said their home now stayed warmer for longer. You can hear from some of the residents who have already benefitted at:

How we are helping residents so they can stay warm while using less heating this winter - YouTube

Residents can register to be considered at **Warm Homes Suffolk**

The council has also set up a cost-of-living webpage [at https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/cost-of-living](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/cost-of-living) which it will update with helpful information and advice.



New Suffolk team will help more homes be energy efficient and cut bills (westsuffolk.gov.uk)

Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL), including West Suffolk Council, unanimously agreed funding to create a new Fuel Poverty Retrofit Team, helping those most affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

This winter, Warm Homes Suffolk extends its support further with the addition of the Fuel Poverty Retrofit Team: supporting residents in energy-inefficient homes, struggling most to afford rising energy bills.

More than 62,000 properties in the county are thought to have the worst Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) of E, F or G. And an estimated 28% of homes - 95,000 households – are in fuel poverty, almost double the number in 2019.

SPSL pledged £366,000 to create the new team to tackle the challenges, with a further £390,000 of funding underwritten. Alongside existing funding, the team will cost £1,296,000 over three years. The projected value of the work completed is set to be £50m, with combined potential savings for householders of nearly £4.8m.

Measures could include the installation of insulation, fitting air source heat pumps and replacing single glazing.



Why it is so important that landlords and the Council work together (westsuffolk.gov.uk)

With the cost-of-living crisis bringing challenges to households, the Council's work to support landlords and their tenants, has never been so important.

Guaranteed Rent and tenancy support, both of which are offered through West Suffolk Council, can give landlord the confidence to let and keep tenants.

A free to attend West Suffolk Landlord's Forum was held in October. There landlords were given the opportunity to not only find out more about how to better protect themselves and their tenants, but also hear from industry expert, TV's Paul Shamplina.

The landlord's forum, was open to all landlords in West Suffolk, and discussed the Renters Reform Bill as well as the impact it will have on tenants and landlords.

The forum is hosted by the West Suffolk Lettings Partnership, part of West Suffolk Council, which is working with landlords to protect their interests while also ensuring residents across West Suffolk have a place to live.

Those who were unable to attend can find out more about the guaranteed rent and tenancy support provided by West Suffolk Lettings Partnership at www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/privatehousing/wslp.cfm. You can also contact the lettings partnership by emailing landlords@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Business Festival

The twelfth West Suffolk Business Festival was an action packed two weeks showcasing the best of the west. Cllr John Griffiths opened the festival at the MENTA Business Showcase hosted by @Inc in Bury St Edmunds and he also gave a speech at the West Suffolk Manufacturing Group session during the week - highlighting our investment in a much needed incubator site for the growing sector.

The council was involved with a variety of activities throughout the festival, including the Skills Escalator Days at West Suffolk College, and Cllr Glossop speaking at the Sizewell C Supply Chain and Supper event.

The Bury Free Press Business Awards signalled the end of a great two weeks of business networking across the district. The evening celebrated many businesses and their accomplishments in West Suffolk.

This event is supported by West Suffolk Council as part of our work to encourage the growth of local businesses and promote them which in turn supports the local economy.

The West Suffolk Business Festival is delivered jointly by partners from a broad range of business support organisations and we are proud to put together a diverse schedule of events that looks to the future and towards business growth and opportunity.

West Suffolk Council sponsor the Investing in West Suffolk Award which was won by Cameron Ventures Group, Mildenhall, a family owned hotel group which serves the East of England. Three Eggs Training Ltd and Stellar Catering Ltd were shortlisted for the award.

Cllr Griffiths used his closing speech to thank partners and to launch the Location For website Welcome to The Location For Business website which highlights the unique position West Suffolk is in and the opportunities that can be offered to businesses.

Newmarket Jobs and Skills Fair [Newmarket to host jobs and skills fair \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk)

On Tuesday 18 October Newmarket hosted its second successful Jobs and Skills Fair this year.

West Suffolk Council and the Department for Work and Pensions collaborated on the event to help match jobseekers with employers as well as training providers in the local area.

There were 24 stands, and over 100 jobseekers attended to see what opportunities were available to them.

BBC Look East featured the fair on their evening news broadcast.

West Suffolk College and West Suffolk Council collaborate to create careers event for primary schools

Some 350 youngsters from 12 educational establishments took part in one of the only careers events for primary schools in the country.

The 'Skills Escalator Days', timed to coincide with the West Suffolk Business Festival, saw a variety of industries create interactive sessions to give an insight into a range of different job opportunities. The event took place over two days at West Suffolk College in Bury St Edmunds and built on the success of a similar initiative in Haverhill.

Youngsters aged between four and eight got a chance to look into the world of employment from augmented reality to emergency services..

This occasion was organised by the College in partnership with West Suffolk Council and supported by a range of organisations that included BT, Morgan Sindall Construction, the RAF, Suffolk Police, the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, Urban XR and others.

In addition sessions took place at Edmunds, the College restaurant, as part of a campaign called Choose Hospitality. This aims to inspire more young people to consider careers in pubs, hotels and restaurants.

The event also encompassed "BUILDTastic", a West Suffolk College collaboration with the New Anglia LEP Building Growth Fund to shine a light on careers in construction.

Skills Escalator Days are the brainchild of Victoria Fiebelkorn, Skills Escalator Lead from West Suffolk College. She said: "The Skills Escalator is all about creating a highly capable and prepared future workforce to support our local economy – this event provides practical career related learning, the effect of this on the decisions, aspirations and attitudes of primary aged children has been widely documented. To the best of my knowledge Skills Escalator Days are the only event based around careers for this age group in the country."

The Skills Escalator Days will be moving on to other parts of the region throughout the 2022/23 academic year with future sessions planned in Haverhill, Ipswich and Sudbury.



Junior Chef competition winners (westsuffolk.gov.uk)

The Junior Chef competition, hosted by West Suffolk College in partnership with West Suffolk Council, has been a culinary success.

There were 21 impressive entries from children aged 10-15 years, who battled to win a funded place on the exciting eight-week cookery course.

The event was made possible by funding from Suffolk Growth and is part of the Choose Hospitality project focused on changing perceptions of the hospitality sector and visitor economy in West Suffolk.



Emergency charity dental clinics return to Suffolk (westsuffolk.gov.uk)

Emergency dental clinics for residents of Haverhill who are not registered with a dentist and are suffering the misery of toothache have been taking part in the town.

Dentaid, the dental charity, provided the service for people with severe dental pain and no other access to treatment. Volunteer dentists and dental nurses were on the charity's mobile dental unit offering free oral cancer screening, dental health advice, fillings and extractions.

The clinics took place in Haverhill Market Square. This is Dentaid's fourth visit to Suffolk. The charity previously ran four clinics in Bury St Edmunds and two in Leiston, where hundreds of people in dental pain waited up to six hours to be seen. The charity is returning at the request of local councillors with the use of their locality budgets after they identified a lack of access to dental care as a priority for their community.



First taxi fees and charges increase for seven years agreed for April (westsuffolk.gov.uk)

Next April will see the first increase in seven years to the licensing fees and charges the taxi and private hire trade pay in West Suffolk, come into effect.

The new fees and charges are the result of increased work and costs from the national changes in Government guidance that West Suffolk Council must follow. This includes new HM Revenue and Customs tax conditionality checks introduced in April this year and Department For Transport guidance that has increased driver DBS checks from every three years to every six months.

West Suffolk Council's Cabinet agreed to the increase, the first since 2015/16, which will now come into effect from 3 April next year.

Fire Service training Exercise – Bury St Edmunds Multi-Storey Car park (westsuffolk.gov.uk)

West Suffolk Council is supporting Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service in carrying out tall building training exercises in the stairwell at the multi-storey car park in Bury St Edmunds.

As part of the exercise, the fire service will be using artificial smoke within the stairwell. They will prevent car park users from accessing this stairwell during the exercise. Car park users can still access the car park during this time using the stairwell on the cinema side of the building.

The service held their first exercise between 6pm and 10pm Thursday 20 October and have two further planned Thursday 27 October and Monday 28 November, again taking place in the evening.

Artificial smoke is being used within the stairwell and the public have been warned they may see it but not to be alarmed. During these times car park users will be prevented from using this stairwell can still access the car park using the stairwell on the cinema side of the building.

Company fined after warehouse accident leaves worker injured (westsuffolk.gov.uk)

A Bury St Edmunds company has been ordered to pay nearly £48,000 after an accident which left a worker with a compound fracture to one of his legs.

Norish Ltd of Northern Way, Bury St Edmunds pleaded guilty to a single charge of breaching the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 at a hearing in September.

West Suffolk Council's Environmental Health team investigated and prosecuted the company. Speaking afterwards, a Council spokesperson said: "The case highlights the importance of having safe systems of work and adequate risk assessments in place."

Chelmsford Magistrates Court heard how the incident happened in the company's warehouse in 2019. An agency worker was talking to a colleague when he stepped back into the path of a forklift truck which struck him and then ran over his leg. Following the accident, he was unable to walk for three months and was off work for 11 months.

The hearing was told that the company has since put in measures to prevent similar accidents from occurring again. Norish Ltd was fined £34,000 by Chelmsford Magistrates Court and ordered to pay another £13,810.19 in costs. The company must also pay a victim surcharge of £170.

Dog owners warned to clean up after graves fouled in cemetery (westsuffolk.gov.uk)

Dog owners are being asked to clear up after their pets at Bury St Edmunds cemetery or face prosecution.

The problem of dog fouling of the site has been on the rise causing distress for those visiting their loved ones to find dog mess on the graves themselves.

Visitors are also being asked to help catch the culprits by providing information in confidence that aid investigations.

Signs at the cemetery gates, which is looked after by West Suffolk Council, ask those visiting with dogs, to keep them on a short lead and to clear up after them.

All open spaces in the district are covered by Public Space Protection Orders, which makes it an offence to allow dog fouling. The penalty can be £1000.

Mike Chester



District Councillor for the Chedburgh and Chevington Ward

Chair of West Suffolk District Council