

EAST SUFFOLK COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr Stephen Burroughes – MARCH 2023



ELECTION 2023

With the 'purdah' pre-election period restrictions being in place from March 16, this will be my last monthly report before the election on Thursday 4 May, and indeed my final report as your district councillor. It has been an honour to represent you. Thank you for all your hard work, and I wish you well for the future.

• EAST SUFFOLK COUNCIL BUDGET APPROVED

East Suffolk Council reaffirmed its commitment to investment in local communities by approving a budget of over £30million to fund essential services in 2023/24. The spending plan, to help improve the lives of residents over the coming financial year, was agreed by councillors at February's full council meeting. Additionally, in the five years up to and including 2026/27, a forecast £410m will go towards major projects as part of the overall General Fund Capital Programme, and an additional £83m on housing development and new build schemes, and maintenance of existing housing stock.

More than £287m has been raised from external grants and contributions towards the cost of our General Fund capital project programme. This includes a £24.9m Towns Fund grant to regenerate Lowestoft, driving economic growth and acting as a catalyst for future investment, and rising to a potential £35.9m with the addition of matched funding, while UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Fund grants will support local business, people and skills throughout the district.

A General Fund Revenue Budget of £30.1m for 2023/24 includes £16.37million in council tax, which makes up just over 50% of the money we receive. However, the portion of council tax East Suffolk receives (around 10% of the total bill) will only increase by 2.81%, or £4.95 for the entire year on the annual bill of a Band D property.

• SUFFOLK COUNCILS SECURE £2.2M TO IMPROVE TENANTS' QUALITY OF LIFE

Suffolk's district and borough councils have secured £2.2m of Government funding to improve the standard of private rented homes. The successful joint bid, led by East Suffolk Council, with Babergh, Ipswich, Mid Suffolk and West Suffolk councils, will see funding awarded over two years by the Department of Housing, Levelling Up and Communities, from a share of its £14m Private Rented Sector (PRS) Pathfinder Programme.

The funding will be used to create and support additional roles, offering advice and support to tenants and landlords, and taking enforcement action against those who continue to let poor quality housing. It will also enable the councils to continue working collaboratively, pooling resources to improve the standards of privately rented homes as part of the Suffolk PRS - Empower, Encourage, Enforce project. Focusing on engagement, the project will give landlords, tenants and communities a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Eligible landlords and tenants will also be signposted to available grants to assist with the cost of improving properties.

• INTERNATIONAL CYCLING EVENT'S £600,000 BOOST TO LOCAL ECONOMY

An international cycling event hosted in East Suffolk was worth an estimated £600,000 to the local economy, according to study of visitor numbers and related expenditure.

Approximately 6,000 spectators attended the UCI Masters Cyclo-Cross World Championships between Friday 2 and Sunday 4 December.

The free event was supported by East Suffolk Council and staged at Trinity Park for the second successive year, featuring more than 600 competitors from 20 different nations, riding laps of a 3km circuit of trails and obstacles.

An evaluation report, commissioned by East Suffolk Council and Suffolk Growth Partnership, has since estimated the total net impact of the event on the local economy to be worth £601,850, based on the expenditure of participants, spectators, event organisers, contractors and staff.

As well as Olympians, national champions and some of the best Cyclo-Cross age category riders in the world, the event featured a support programme of open races for local riders of all ages, as well as a Special Olympics Cyclo-Cross event.

Ahead of the main event, schools in the Ipswich and South Suffolk School Games partnership also came together for a morning of cycling activity organised in partnership between East Suffolk Council, Active Suffolk, British Cycling and event organisers, Elmy Cycles.

- **DESIGN TEAM APPOINTED FOR SEAFRONT VISION PROJECT**

A major Lowestoft regeneration project which will see the delivery of the first phase of the London Road, Lowestoft High Street Heritage Action Zone and Seafront Masterplan has taken a step forward with the appointment of its design team. HemingwayDesign, Untitled Practice and Gelling Studio have been appointed as the design team for the first phase of East Suffolk Council's Seafront Vision delivery project.

The Seafront Vision project is one of five transformational regeneration projects which are detailed within the Town Investment Plan, which received £24.9m from the Government's Towns Fund last year.

The project will see the regeneration of the Royal Plain, Royal Green and South Quay Wharf areas, building on the success of the recently repurposed East Point Pavilion.

Improvements will include new public realm, improved biodiversity and green spaces across the areas, improved leisure provision and replacement of the popular fountains in Royal Plain.

Along with the other Towns Fund projects, the Seafront Vision project is expected to be completed by March 2026.

- **APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN FOR COMMUNITY PANTRIES GRANTS**

Community groups, organisations, and town and parish councils are invited to apply for a new grant scheme which will help provide affordable food to East Suffolk residents in need.

Supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), the East Suffolk Pantries Grant Scheme is a three-year programme which aims to fund the initial set up of community pantries across the district, helping people in need to access affordable food in their local community.

The pantries will provide a welcoming space, similar to a shop, where people can pay a subscription of less than £5 per week and receive food worth at least £15 in return. Pantries can also provide additional support, signposting to other local services and help to reduce social isolation.

Grants of up to £4,500 are available and applications close on 15 March.

Pantry providers will become part of the East Suffolk Food Network, bringing together organisations providing both affordable food, and food in times of crisis. The network will be used to share best practice, gain support, and manage access to surplus food to ensure fairness in distribution.

Applications are welcome – here – from community and voluntary groups, organisations and town and parish councils.

- **NEW DEFIBRILLATOR AVAILABLE FOR KESGRAVE COMMUNITY**

A community centre has installed a second life-saving defibrillator, thanks to funding from an East Suffolk councillor.

Stuart Lawson, councillor for Kesgrave ward, donated £2,000 from his Enabling Communities Budget to the Kesgrave War Memorial Community Centre to support the installation of a new defibrillator.

The defibrillator, which can be used to give an electric shock to the heart of someone in cardiac arrest, is located inside Kesgrave Sports Centre, and supports an existing device located on the outside of the Community Centre, off Twelve Acre Approach.

East Suffolk Council's Enabling Communities Budgets support activities delivered by community, voluntary and social enterprise organisations. Distributed equally among the council's 55 members, each ward councillor has a £7,500 Enabling Community Budget to spend on community projects or to develop new projects which tackle community needs in their area.

Previous projects which have benefitted from Enabling Community Budget funding include play areas, village hall refurbishments and equipment, community events and projects supporting people with disabilities.

- **LOCAL YOUNGSTERS INSPIRE NEW-LOOK CASTLE THEMED PLAY AREA**

Work is underway on the refurbishment of a popular play area in Carlton Colville. The Matlock Dale play area is undergoing work as part of a joint improvement programme between East Suffolk Council and Carlton Colville Town Council. Last summer, local youngsters were consulted on the type of play equipment they would like to see installed at the site.

The funding will be used to create and support additional roles, offering advice and support to tenants and landlords, and taking enforcement action against those who continue to let poor quality housing.

It will also enable the councils to continue working collaboratively, pooling resources to improve the standards of privately rented homes as part of the Suffolk PRS - Empower, Encourage, Enforce project.

Focusing on engagement, the project will give landlords, tenants and communities a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Eligible landlords and tenants will also be signposted to available grants to assist with the cost of improving properties.

- **IMPORTED FOOD PRODUCTS SURRENDERED FOLLOWING VEHICLE SPOT CHECK**

Food inspectors from East Suffolk Council helped intercept a quantity of suspected illegally imported meat following a vehicle stop in Lowestoft.

The meat was discovered, along with a quantity of eggs, in the back of a white van travelling from Romania into Great Britain, via the Port of Dover.

The discovery was made during a multi-agency spot check of vehicles, in Lowestoft, on Friday 3 February. East Suffolk Council's Food and Safety team investigated the contents of the vehicle following a request for assistance from Suffolk County Council Trading Standards colleagues.

The van was found to contain mainly pork, eggs and other food, which the occupants of the vehicle claimed was for personal consumption. It was also found to contain weighing scales and a refrigerator.

Although East Suffolk's officers were prepared to use powers to seize the meat, the occupants of the vehicle agreed to voluntarily surrender all of the products that were taken to an incineration plant for safe destruction.

Since September, strict controls restricting the movement of pork and pork products into Great Britain to help safeguard Britain's pigs from the threat of African swine fever.

It is also against the law to bring pork or pork products weighing over two kilograms into Great Britain unless they are produced to the EU's commercial standards.

- **PITCH PERFECT...WITH HELP OF ENABLING COMMUNITIES BUDGET FUNDING**

A group of East Suffolk councillors have provided grant funding to help protect the playing surface at a local football club. The four Lowestoft councillors each contributed Enabling Communities Budget funding towards the maintenance of grounds equipment belonging to Kirkley and Pakefield FC.

The long-established, grassroots club provides a venue for more than 550 players on some 25 youth teams and six adult teams, supported by volunteer coaches, managers and maintenance crews.

Kirkley and Pakefield Football Club is set over a 10-acre site, which accommodates five youth pitches, two adult pitches and two artificial turf pitch (ATP) areas. The maintenance of these is the sole responsibility of dedicated volunteers, with a weekly cycle involving mowing and aerating the turf, marking of the pitches and brushing of the ATPs to ensure they are in tip-top condition for longer.

Cllr Stephen Burroughes

Member for the Kelsale & Yoxford Ward

Cabinet Member for Customer Services, ICT & Commercial Partnerships