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Suffolk Coastal welcomes port expansion decision



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01 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal has welcomed the announcement that the modernisation and expansion of the Port of Felixstowe has been given the official go-ahead by the Government after a lengthy inquiry led by two planning inspectors.

The decision, confirmed today (Wednesday) by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, will unlock a multi-million pound investment at the Port and in the infrastructure serving it, while safeguarding existing jobs and creating about 1400 new jobs in the local economy.

"This long-awaited decision should safeguard Felixstowe's status as being one of the most important Ports in Europe, a vital gateway to local and national prosperity," said Cllr John Perry, Cabinet Member for the Economy.

"While the announcement will be a significant jobs boost for our district, I am also pleased that our efforts have largely been successful to ensure that the impact of the expansion on residents and the environment will be minimised.

"The commitment to an improved rail network to encourage more lorries off our roads is commendable, as are the proposals for an acoustic barrier along the A14 in the Trimley area. I also welcome the support and funding being provided for improved visitor facilities at the Landguard viewing area and for management of the Landguard peninsula," added Cllr Perry.

The application by Hutchison Ports (UK) Ltd was the subject of a public inquiry headed by Michael Ellison, an Inspector appointed by the First Secretary of State, after the applicants appealed when Suffolk Coastal had not made a decision on the application within the official prescribed time-limit. However, this move was supported at the time by all sides as it brought forward the public inquiry and so resulted in a speedier decision.

"I welcome the applicants readiness to commit significant funding to maintain and enhance the status of Felixstowe. The Port has been at the heart of this district, and indeed the country, for many years and it has a proud history of adapting and modernising.

"Officers and councillors have worked hard to achieve a development that will bring the maximum benefits to both the port and our district. I would like to thank the Port for working with us to successfully reach agreement on the way ahead that has now been given official Government approval," added Cllr Perry.

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Government decision on Seafront plans welcomed



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02 Mar 2006

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal has welcomed the announcement that the Government has fully supported the Council's planning go-ahead for the multi-million pound regeneration of a derelict site in Felixstowe.

The leisure-focussed scheme had gained unanimous all-party approval in December from Suffolk Coastal's South Area Development Control Sub-Committee for the revised plans for the South Seafront development that would result in a maritime park, car parking and other leisure facilities being built, funded by 158 new homes.

"The letter makes it clear that the Secretary of State has carefully considered all the issues, particularly the planning ones, related to this application and our decision, and that he thinks it is appropriate that this Council has the final say, rather than the Government," said Cllr Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member leading on the South Seafront project.

"This is welcome news as it not only reinforces the unanimous all-party decision reached on this application three months ago, but it confirms that all aspects of the proposals were properly considered before our Sub-Committee came to its conclusion", added Cllr Leighton.

In the letter from the Government Office for the East of England, the main issues considered by the Secretary of State in reaching his decision are spelt out. These included 'his policies to make more efficient use of land (PPG 3: housing); for the protection of buildings listed for their special architectural interest and their settings (PPG 15: planning and historic environment); that the tourism industry should flourish in response to the market while respecting the environment which attracts visitors but also has far wider enduring value (PPG 21: tourism); to ensure that development within areas vulnerable to flooding be protected to an appropriate minimum standard taking account of the likely climate change (PPG 25: development and flood risk); and the development plan for the area which is the Suffolk Structure Plan 2001 and the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (1st Alteration) 2001.'

"This is an important step forward for this project although its immediate future is now largely in the hands of another Government department. This Council is pressing the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to fund urgently needed coast and flood defence works in South Felixstowe to prevent potential flooding of 1,616 existing homes, and many local businesses including the Port of Felixstowe.

"The park, with its maritime theme, and the high-quality residential development, promises to be a multi-million pound addition that would be central to the much-needed regeneration of the resort. There has been a long and vigorous debate but I hope that all sides, including this Council, the Town Council and the community, can now work together to get the very best from this exciting project.

"We are now closer to being able to replace an increasingly ugly eye-sore with some exciting new leisure facilities aimed at all the family. We would also secure the future and restoration of the centre-piece Martello Tower, and gain new housing, much of which would be suitable for first-time buyers, and some of which would be available for rent to our residents," added Cllr

Leighton.

The application specifically addressed the reasons cited for refusal last time, taking account of consultation and including more leisure and green space than before, with a bigger and better choice of play equipment, a refreshment kiosk, and new modern toilets. There will also be 262 additional car-parking spaces that surveys show will be sufficient to meet demand.

The play equipment would be at the heart of the scheme, offering a wide range of entertainment, with an adventure trail, multi-play slides and climbing rocks for juniors and toddlers, an infant play area including see-saws, and springing items, plus a more adventurous 'spacenet' for more active play. There would also be an eight pad water splash feature to help build on the maritime theme of the park.

An Ancient Monument Consent has already been gained by Bloor Homes so the unsightly garages can be removed from next to the Martello Tower. The Consent will also lead to an archaeological examination of the historic moat around the tower, and the former Royal Observer Corps bunker will be preserved, as recommended by English Heritage.

The plans also allow for the demolition of the Herman De Stern building as it was seen as being too expensive to renovate and re-use, even before a fire seriously damaged it.

Just under one-third of the site is planned to be used to build 158 homes, 51 fewer than previously proposed, mostly in three-storey terraces, with 16 homes of the same design available for rent from a housing association. Most of the homes for sale will be two-bedroom and will hopefully prove attractive to local first-time buyers.

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New year could bring benefits to Aldeburgh



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06 Jan 2006

Archived press release.

People living in and around Aldeburgh should resolve to get along to the town's Fairfield Community Centre on Thursday, January 19 when a host of experts will be on hand to give advice about benefits and who are entitled to them.

Suffolk Coastal's housing benefits team have linked up with the Fairfield Community Centre in Fairfield Road and the Aldeburgh Gazette to put on the free advice session between 10am and 3pm.

"This is an excellent opportunity for people to get free advice that could see them leaving much richer in terms of the information they gain or the benefits that they could be officially entitled to," said Cllr Chris Slemmings, Cabinet Member for Housing.

"Our benefits team will be on hand to give advice on how to claim help to pay Council Tax or rent, and will do on-the-spot quotations of how much they could receive.

"There are still many people, especially among our elderly population, who do not know exactly what they are entitled to claim. This event is part of our on-going campaign to encourage take-up of benefits so that those who officially need this extra financial support are getting it," added Cllr Slemmings.

There will also be information about bus and rail passes, the different options on offer to pay Council Tax, and helpful advice on opening a personal bank account. As well as Suffolk Coastal, representatives from Job Centre Plus and the Pension Service will also be on hand, plus the local Citizens Advice Bureau and Suffolk Fire Service.

"This latest event was prompted by the Aldeburgh Gazette and made possible by Rita Fryer at Fairfield and I would thank them for their support. For those of our residents who live near to Ipswich I would also point out that our benefits team is at the Looking After Your Money event at Endeavour House on Wednesday, January 11 from 12.30pm to 6pm," added Cllr Slemmings.

If you cannot make either of these events but want to find out more about help to pay rent or Council Tax, contact Suffolk Coastal's benefits team on 01394 444838.



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Make sure your catalogue gets into the recycling habit



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06 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

Residents in Suffolk Coastal are being urged to make sure that the New Year crop of holiday brochures and store catalogues makes its way into the Council's fortnightly collection of waste paper.

Thanks to the efforts of Suffolk Coastal's residents, more paper than ever is being recycled in the district and diverted away from landfill, with a record amount of 5,400 tonnes collected during 2005.

"I would like to remind all our residents that it is not just newspapers, magazines, letters, junk mail, paper bags and wrapping paper that can be recycled in our green crates that we collect from every home every fortnight – brochures, directories and catalogues can also be put out for recycling," said Cllr Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment, natural and built.

"It seems that companies are issuing new catalogues and brochures almost every other month, but there is no problem disposing of the old ones as residents can just pop them into the green crate with all the other paper.

"Our residents have really got into the recycling habit in a big way, with around 35 per cent of household waste currently being diverted away from landfill and being re-used, with an amazing 5,400 tonnes of paper collected in the last 12 months. This Council is committed to making it even easier for everyone to recycle because it will cost the earth if we do not all make an even bigger effort to cut down on waste," added Councillor Nunn.

It has been estimated that if current recycling rates are not increased, then by 2019 the cost of disposing of household waste in the district will have risen to a staggering £9 million a year because of the impact of Government policies to encourage waste-reduction, including the landfill tax.

Every household in the district now has a green crate for paper recycling, plus a brown bin for garden waste. Anyone wanting further information on recycling can contact Suffolk Coastal's recycling team on 01394 444000.

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Bargains on offer for would-be composters



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07 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

Residents who want to help the environment and their own pockets can join the thousands in Suffolk Coastal who have already bought their own compost bin.

Suffolk Coastal has linked up with the Government-funded Waste Resource Action Programme (WRAP) to offer compost bins at a bargain rate, with prices beginning from only £4 to have one, including free delivery.

“Since last March, over 1,700 compost bins were bought by our local residents through our partnership with WRAP, and we estimate that well over 11,000 bins have become features of this district’s gardens since we started promoting home composting,” said Cllr Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment – natural and built.

“The enthusiasm among our green residents has not really been affected by the fact that we now collect garden waste from every home in the district. Many people like having their own compost bin because they know it is their own personal free source of environmentally-friendly soil improver.

“It is also the perfect place for all those fruit and vegetable peelings, coffee grounds and tea bags that we cannot currently collect from homes. It is not that unusual for people to have more than the one compost bin and this latest special offer is the ideal chance to either start getting into the composting habit or to buy an additional one to double the goodness that you are creating in your own back garden,” added Cllr Nunn.

A 220 litre bin costs only £4, a 330 litre £6, while the giant 700 litre is £20. All prices include free delivery and a free kitchen caddy to store up those vegetable cuttings before adding them to the compost bin. Call 0845 077 0759 to order one now.

“These prices are a saving of up to £86 off the recommended prices so they really are a bargain, while helping people get free compost from their own garden. It also helps us all save money while protecting the environment. The more residents can divert from landfill sites the less money their councils have to pay in landfill taxes, so getting into the recycling habit and becoming a composter really does save everyone the earth,” added Cllr Nunn.

This promotional offer is just the latest initiative by Suffolk Coastal which has seen its partnership with residents result in 35 per cent of household waste being recycled. You can also find useful tips on composting on the Council’s website

www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourhome/waste/



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New budget will protect services and residents



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08 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

The Council's budget for the coming year recommended by last night's (Tuesday) Cabinet meeting is one that has successfully bridged a £1 million gap while protecting services and residents.

The final decision rests with a full meeting of the Council on Thursday, February 23, when the recommendation will be for a £13.9 million budget financed by a £132.03 Council Tax for Band D homes. This decision will be informed by an independent review of the spending plans by the Council's main scrutiny Committee.

"Thanks to our efforts in identifying new efficiencies and additional income of £1 million we will be able to hold our Council Tax to an increase of 4.94 per cent and offer even better services in areas seen as important by those who took part in our budget consultation. This is despite largely external pressures forcing our costs up by £1.6 million and the Government's continuing failure to pay its fair share for funding our services to local residents," said Cllr Ray Herring, Leader of the Council.

The proposed budget has been drawn up in line with the Council's main priorities. These have been confirmed by the results of extensive public consultation. It includes an additional £80,000 to help minimise the effects of coastal erosion, over £200,000 towards the phased introduction of an improved recycling service, and the new free bus travel scheme for those aged 60 and over.

"This latest package will bring the amount of efficiencies and additional income achieved by Suffolk Coastal since 2001 to over £6 million. We have also kept our Council Tax to single digit increases over the last ten years and well below the national average.

"I think this illustrates what can be achieved by good financial management and I would like to thank all those who have played their part, including our staff and residents, in identifying where we could make ourselves more efficient.

"Despite the external factors that continue to force up our costs, and the ongoing failure by the Government to properly fund rural areas like ours, we have been able to fund improvements in those services that need it most. The harsh financial reality is that we cannot do everything we want at once and we also need to make a further £2million of savings in the next two years," added Cllr Herring.

Among the other proposed service improvements are a renewed commitment to safer communities including a substance misuse officer, support to encourage local sports partnerships, initiatives to help stop people becoming homeless, an additional assistant ranger to support the countryside and extra support to maintain the excellent improvements in planning services. The Council is also playing its part with its partners across Suffolk to meet the demands of the Local Area Agreements, another Government initiative.

Allowing for the grant-aided introduction of the new free bus pass for those aged 60 and over, the Council's spending is set to rise by 5.3 per cent to £13.9 million. The increases include pay and price inflation of £692,000, additional statutory requirements of £414,000, and improved services worth £559,000.

“Once again, by planning ahead and reviewing all our services, we have managed to find our £1m of efficiencies and income by suggesting measures that will in the main have only an insignificant impact on our residents.

“We have spent months trying to get the balance right between protecting services, introducing improvements where they are both wanted and needed, and keeping our Council Tax rise as low as possible. I think this budget achieves that and I hope that it is supported on February 23,” added Cllr Herring.

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Spotlight shines on new managers of Spa Pavilion



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08 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

A new management company is set to take centre stage at Suffolk Coastal's Spa Pavilion Theatre from this June to take over the running of the Council-owned facility from Clear Channel.

Last night's (Tuesday) Cabinet meeting gave its go-ahead to agree a ten-year contract with Openwide International after an exhaustive and lengthy process to agree who should run the Felixstowe venue.

"It is ten years since we first brought in an experienced theatrical management company to develop the Spa and the contract was due for renewal. Clear Channel last year withdrew from the contest but I am pleased to say we have agreed a worthy replacement," said Cllr Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member responsible for theatre and the arts.

"Openwide International met our tough selection criteria with its background of proven experience and financial clout, and a programme to develop the Spa as both a performance venue and a place to meet and eat.

"The Spa is a significant regional arts venue that contributes to the attractiveness of Suffolk Coastal, and in particular Felixstowe, as a visitor destination and with Openwide International on board I expect it to go from strength to strength, building on the success of the last 10 years, and putting our theatre firmly in the spotlight," added Cllr Leighton.

Openwide International has successfully run the Pavilion Pier in Cromer since 2001 where it has developed a series of successful summer shows, plus boosted the catering opportunities as an added attraction to the theatre. The agreement with the Council will mean that the terms and conditions of current Clear Channel employees will also be protected.

In its successful bid for the contract, Openwide International stated that it believes that 'the community is at the heart of the theatre' and that it will both work with the community and seek to increase community involvement.

It plans to offer drama/plays, youth drama, children's shows, classical/orchestral music, dance, comedy and light entertainment, plus a summer season aimed at attracting residents and tourists, plus an ongoing commitment to amateur performances. In addition it also wants to offer specialist weekends, perhaps with a folk or blues music theme.

"The Spa is a vital part of the arts provision in the district and it was therefore essential that we were able to agree a partnership with someone with a proven theatrical and financial track record and Openwide International emerged from a field that had four strong candidates.

"A ten-year partnership gives the new managers the necessary stability to plan and develop their programmes. We will be backing them with an annual subsidy of around £200,000 so that they can provide entertaining and wide-ranging shows that will attract all parts of our community. We think that is a worthwhile investment as the Spa plays such an important role in our district.

"The good news for everyone is that not only are we expecting an even more successful future for the Spa, but the Council has also agreed a profit-sharing arrangement whereby its annual

payment to the company will be off-set if it does really well in future years,” added Cllr Leighton.

The Spa Pavilion currently attracts tens of thousands of people each year to its shows that are provided by local amateur groups as well as professional entertainers. The Council expects these numbers to increase under the new management. The Cabinet decision is subject to call-in until February 16.

In December, the current managers said: “Clear Channel Entertainment, who have enjoyed a positive and successful working relationship with Suffolk Coastal District Council during the ten years they have managed the Spa Pavilion on behalf of the Council, have not submitted a proposal to renew that contract. They wish the venue and its community well for the future.”



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Strategy to help shape the future of the arts



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08 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

An ambitious strategy and action plan that aims to help support and promote the arts in the district has been given the backing of Suffolk Coastal's Cabinet.

This is the second arts strategy for the district, and builds on the successes of the first one that covered the years 2002-2005. This updated strategy puts the focus squarely on the role that the arts can have in adding value to local communities.

"Developing the arts is a major priority for Suffolk Coastal as it can result in a better quality of life and be a boost to the local economy. The arts strategy is the key to unlocking the potential in the district and recognises that the Council can play a positive role in encouraging the further blossoming of the arts in our communities," said Cllr Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

"There is a real wealth of talent and activity in our district, with people of all ages involved in activities such as music, drama, poetry, arts and crafts. Since 2002 we have been working with arts groups active in our area, to find out what their needs are, how they can work together and share their knowledge and resources.

"We have had real successes like the Digital Film Network that is bringing the movies to rural locations, the much-praised Suffolk Coastal in Concert that involved amateur musicians playing alongside seasoned professionals at Snape Maltings, and lots of young people have plugged into the Amplifier project. We want to achieve even more in the next three years," added Cllr Leighton.

Among the targets set in the new strategy is an advice and information service about what's on offer locally in the arts, initiatives aimed specifically at younger children, teenagers and older people, as well as rural areas.

It is estimated that the arts strategy and the work of the Council's arts officer has succeeded in bringing in over £30,000 a year additional funding for the district. The latest strategy can be viewed on the Council's website at <http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourcouncil/policies/> and anyone wanting to find out more can contact Suffolk Coastal's Arts and Heritage Development Officer, Rachel Nightingale on 01394 444294 or email rachel.nightingale@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

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Town Council to take over Leiston toilets



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08 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

A block of public toilets in Leiston will stay open after successful talks between Leiston Town Council and Suffolk Coastal about transferring the management of them.

Last year Suffolk Coastal announced, after a detailed review of public conveniences, that its Dinsdale Road block in Leiston was one of seven across the district that could no longer be funded by the district council.

“This Council has invested nearly £550,000 since 2001, and another £126,000 this financial year, to modernise our public conveniences, but the harsh financial reality is that the Government’s failure to properly fund our services means we have to reduce our expenditure on discretionary services,” said Cllr Sherrie Green, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

“After an in-depth review, we agreed that Dinsdale Road was one of those that could no longer be funded as they are not being used often enough to really be value for money, or they require major refurbishments in the near future. Leiston Town Council thinks there still is a local demand for such a service and I am pleased that it has now agreed to take on the responsibility for the next three years for this block,” added Cllr Green.

Suffolk Coastal will transfer the Dinsdale Road toilets to the Town Council and give it the £8,000 that demolition would have cost the district council.

“We were not keen to see the loss of toilets in our town which even if they are not quite up to modern standards are still a facility which we think would be badly missed. For that reason, we are ready to step in and take on the management of this service for the next three years,” said Cllr Bill Howard, Chairman of Leiston Town Council.

“The transfer of £8,000 to us from Suffolk Coastal will soften the financial impact but there will inevitably be some additional costs that we will have to meet from our funds. However, we think that this is an important enough service for local people for the Town Council to step in and save it,” added Cllr Howard.

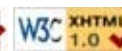
As part of Suffolk Coastal’s modernisation programme, over the coming months toilet blocks at Sizewell Road, Leiston, Framlingham’s Crown and Anchor Lane, and Bawdsey Ferry will be upgraded. It was recently agreed that a new toilet block would also be built for the Woodbridge Riverside area. Current proposals for the South Seafront and the Landguard Fort Visitor Centre both include more public conveniences for Felixstowe.

Felixstowe Town Council is investigating whether or not to take over the Walton toilets by carrying out a survey of usage overnight. However in the meantime Suffolk Coastal are closing them due to running costs and the needs for repairs. These toilets will now be closed on February 20.

Suffolk Coastal first wrote to Felixstowe Town Council in July last year and there have been subsequent correspondence and meetings but Felixstowe made it clear last month that it could not reach a decision until April.

“Since last year when we announced our review of toilets, we have had successful discussions with two Town Councils to transfer the management of their toilets to them, but Felixstowe Town Council has not yet come to a decision. Because of our tough financial constraints we are unable to wait any longer and so these toilets in Walton that are hardly used will close later this month. It could still be that they could yet reopen if the Town Council does agree to take them over,” added Cllr Green.

The toilets in Walton High Street are owned by a brewery and are rented by Suffolk Coastal at a nominal sum. The usage of the toilets was surveyed by the Council when it carried out its review and was found to be so low as to not make it value for money to keep them open.



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Woodbridge set for improved station car parks



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08 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

A new-improved parking area around Woodbridge Station is set to be delivered as part of Suffolk Coastal's ongoing enhancement programme that has seen nearly £900,000 invested in better facilities around the district in the last two years.

Plans have previously been delayed because of factors outside of the Council's direct control, including problems with land ownership, but last night's (Tuesday) Cabinet heard the work should now be able to proceed.

"It is a shame that there have been delays on this project but it has meant that we have now been able to agree a much more comprehensive development that will produce more parking spaces, be far more visually attractive and much safer for everyone," said Cllr Andy Smith, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for the Environment, natural and built.

"What we can now proceed with will mean a revised layout for the Station and Station Road car parks, which will include for the first time much-needed space for buses to serve customers at the station. It will also be much better for pedestrians and will create at least an extra 12 car parking spaces.

"This is a partnership initiative which has seen us work closely with the private sector, Network Rail and One Railway and will also see a significant financial input from Suffolk County Council. The work should be underway in the next few months and I am sure it will present a much-improved welcome to rail travellers, visitors and residents alike," added Cllr Smith.

The overall development of the surrounding area will also see the building of a new set of public toilets, the resiting of the existing recycling facilities, and it is expected to include a skateboard park.

Suffolk Coastal will be putting nearly £50,000 towards the Woodbridge Station car park scheme, with a further £134,000 set aside by County and further contributions from private developers and Network Rail.

"Since July 2004, this Council has agreed to spend over £275,000 on car parking improvements across the district. That commitment has helped achieve £1 million worth of investment thanks to the support of our partners who have included the County Council, the East of England Development Agency, English Heritage and town and parish councils.

"We recognise the importance of having safe and attractive car parking to serve our town centres and tourist areas. I would hope that people would recognise that our car parks are much-improved and remain good value for money comparatively," added Cllr Smith.

Improvements since July 2004 have been completed at Dennington, Felixstowe Pier Bight, Leiston Town Centre, Saxmundham Town Centre, Wickham Market at The Hill, Hamblin Road and Ferry Quay/Quay Street, Woodbridge. In addition to Woodbridge Station, work is also planned at Peasenhall.



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On your marks for new sporting partnership



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11 Jan 2006

Archived press release.

Anyone involved in local sports can play their part in helping set up a new sporting partnership that could help attract more money and facilities for the district.

Suffolk Coastal is one of ten areas that have been selected by Sport England to launch a new way of encouraging the growth of sporting opportunities and giving local people a louder voice in the way that national resources are allocated.

“The importance of sport is being increasingly recognised, whether for its commercial and career opportunities, its role as a promoter of health and fitness, or as an important diversion for the energies of young people,” said Cllr Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

“Sport England has recognised the need to build stronger local partnerships to ensure that at grass-roots level there are sporting opportunities for all. To do this, it will be setting up Community Sports Networks (CSNs), and this Council is pleased to play its part.

“We now want representatives of local sports clubs, volunteers, and organisations to come along to one of three special open meetings we are hosting over the next few weeks. It will be a chance to find out much more about CSNs, how they can get involved and what are the potential benefits for their club and their district,” added Cllr Leighton.

Sports England is the organisation committed to creating opportunities for people to start, stay and succeed in sport. It provides the strategic lead for sport in England and is responsible for delivering the Government’s sporting objectives.

What it now hopes to establish, with the support of the Council, is a series of CSNs across the country which in the east of England it is piloting in ten districts, including Suffolk Coastal and Forest Heath.

The CSNs will aim for the first time to pull together all the sports organisations in the district and link them with voluntary, private and public sector bodies

“Those involved in sports spread across all parts of our district and we want to bring them together so they can share their knowledge and expertise. The role of sport in initiatives like reducing crime and disorder or improving health and fitness has been recognised by the Government with linked funding.

“By getting everyone to help draw up a districtwide community sport plan that reflects local needs it may be that our CSN can open the door to new funding by linking their activities more directly to national targets.

“It has been estimated that an additional £450 million is being put into sports-linked initiatives by the Government and I want our district through its own CSN to get in and claims its rightful share,” added Cllr Leighton.

The three meetings all start at 7pm and are at Felixstowe Leisure Centre on Wednesday, January 25, at Woodbridge Community Centre, Thursday, January 26 and at Thomas Mills High

School, Framlingham on Thursday, February 2.

Invitations have been sent to local sports clubs and organisations but anyone who has not received one and is interested in attending, or just wants more information about CSNs, can contact Sarah Shinnie, Suffolk Coastal's Active Communities Officer 01394 444652 or email sarah.shinnie@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

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Ban set to tackle rowdy drinkers in Felixstowe



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12 Jan 2006

Archived press release.

People have three more weeks to give their views on a proposal that will give local police the powers they need to stop people drinking in public parts of Felixstowe that have been plagued by bad behaviour linked to alcohol.

Felixstowe Town Council has led the initiative to bring in designation orders to tackle the problem of alcohol-related incidents in its town, a move that is backed by the Suffolk Coastal Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

“Public notices have been issued making clear our intention to introduce bans in parts of Felixstowe and we are asking people to give us their views on the proposals,” said Cllr Sherrie Green, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

“These designation orders would give the local police the additional powers they need to deal with drink-related incidents in key parts of Felixstowe that they and the Town Council have identified.

“This is not a ban on everyone drinking in these places but will mean that the police would have the authority to take action against anyone acting in an antisocial manner. The aim is to give the resort a more friendly and welcoming environment and to improve the quality of life of those living in and visiting the town,” added Cllr Green.

If the ban is given the go-ahead, signs would be erected warning people that they are in a designated zone and that if they continue to drink alcohol and behave in an antisocial manner they risk being fined up to £500 and being arrested if they fail to surrender their intoxicating liquor. Similar drinking bans were introduced last year to parts of the town centres in Woodbridge and Leiston.

Between September 2004 and October 2005 there were 554 alcohol-related offences recorded by the police in Felixstowe. The statistics show that over one quarter of all crimes recorded in Felixstowe were alcohol-related, with this being at the root of nearly half of all incidents of violence against the person, and a third of criminal damage and theft from motor cars.

“I would like to put all of this in context as this district is officially one of the safest in terms of crime in the country and Felixstowe compares very well with other similar towns. But alcohol is at the root of 27.8 per cent of the resort’s crimes, which make up about one-fourteenth of the entire district’s recorded crime. Giving this extra power to the police could have a really significant impact on making both Felixstowe and this district even safer.

“Banning drinking in public places will greatly assist the police in dealing with antisocial problems caused by the consumption of alcohol. The new licensing laws may mean that it is easier than ever to drink, but that does not offer an excuse for bad behaviour. This Council supports designation orders like these and partnership campaigns like Operation Nightsafe which are aimed at encouraging sensible drinking and better behaviour,” added Cllr Green.

Anyone who would like to give their opinion on the proposed order can write by February 3 to the Community Safety Officer, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Melton Hill, Woodbridge IP12 1AU

or email community.safety@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

The proposed designated areas in Felixstowe are:-

- a) The Gardens, Promenade, Seafront and foreshore from Orford Road to Cobbolds Point and bordered by and including Sea Road, Undercliff Road West, Hamilton Gardens, Bath Hill and Undercliff Road East, the Convalescent Hill, Pier Bight, Spa Pavilion Car Parks and Wolsey Steps.
- b) Hamilton Road from Bent Hill up to St Andrews Road including the area around the Triangle.
- c) Undercliff Road West from Sea Road to Ordnance Roundabout including Snow Hill Steps and Pram Hill Walk.
- d) Cavendish Park North and South including the proposed Cavendish Park Skateboard Area.
- e) Orwell High School All Weather Sports Area (to be constructed) and surrounding playing fields and parking areas.
- f) Felixstowe Cemetery, including the proposed Cemetery extension on the adjacent allotment land and Cemetery Path.
- g) The car parks at Crescent Road, The Grove, Ranelagh Road, Golf Road, Brackenbury Fort, Highfield Road, Manor Terrace, and Arwela Road.
- h) The following open spaces; Adastral Close, Langer Park, Allenby Park, Coronation Playing Field, Dellwood Avenue Recreation Ground, Brackenbury Cliff known as "the Dip", Eastwood Ho!, Walton Recreation Ground, Gosford Way and The Grove.
- i) High Road West and High Street, Walton between Garrison Lane and the bridge over Port of Felixstowe Road.
- j) Brackenbury Sports Centre.

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Good neighbours are now more than good friends

[Listen to the text on this page](#)

17 Jan 2006

Archived press release.

With help from Suffolk ACRE and grant aid from the Suffolk Coastal Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership the district's first Good Neighbour Scheme is now up and running in Waldringfield.

The scheme, run by a team of village volunteers, offers help with collecting pensions and prescriptions, and minor domestic repairs including checking smoke alarms and changing light bulbs for people who cannot reach in safety.

The volunteers also help with lifts, filling in forms and with pets, especially when a pet owner has to go into hospital for a short time. They are also available to befriend the elderly, the lonely and the bereaved and anyone who is new to the village and would like to know more about the area.

"I am very pleased that the Council working with Suffolk ACRE and the volunteers from Waldringfield has been able to get this scheme off the ground. The £500 grant was used to pay for insurance, initial running costs, a mobile phone and the necessary Criminal Records Bureau checks on the volunteers," said Councillor Sherrie Green, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

"This is the first Good Neighbour Scheme in Suffolk Coastal, but Suffolk ACRE is currently working with two other communities, Cookley & Walpole and Aldringham cum Thorpe with a view to establishing similar schemes," continued Councillor Green.

Waldringfield Good Neighbours is the ninth such scheme to be launched in Suffolk and any resident of the village requiring help can telephone the scheme on 07774 595575.

Gavin Hodge, Suffolk ACRE's Good Neighbour Scheme Co-ordinator said "I am delighted that Waldringfield has joined the Suffolk network of Good Neighbours Schemes and my thanks go to the 25 volunteers who have stepped forward to help. I would also like to thank Suffolk Coastal for providing the start-up funds. I am hopeful that this particular scheme will, one day, embrace the neighbouring parishes of Newbourne and Hemley."

Villages in Suffolk Coastal who are interested in setting up a Good Neighbour Scheme should contact Gavin Hodge on 01473 242538 or by email to gavin.hodge@suffolkacre.org.uk or write to him at Suffolk ACRE, Suffolk House, 2 Wharfedale Road, Ipswich, IP1 4JP.

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Who will be Suffolk Coastal's village of the year?



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16 Jan 2006

Archived press release.

Local villages with an electoral population between 501 – 3,000 can apply for the prestigious title of Village of the Year 2006, a competition that puts more emphasis on recognising community spirit than chocolate box looks.

Three judges will award points based on five categories measuring community spirit, the parish council, protecting the natural environment, general appearance of the village, and special activities that win over the judges.

“The best village in Suffolk Coastal will win a £200 cheque, a certificate and a silver cup, with the chance to battle against the best villages across the county for the Suffolk award,” said Cllr Stephen Burroughes, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs.

“This event is organised by the Suffolk Association of Local Councils in partnership with Suffolk’s district and county councils and is about recognising those villages that are well-balanced, enterprising and caring with a rich community life.

“We want to put the spotlight on those villages that are offering something for all parts of their community, who have an active and listening parish council, and who are actively improving and protecting their environment as well as their area’s appearance. I am sure there are some shining examples in our district and it would be nice to highlight their efforts so others can perhaps learn from their good ideas,” added Cllr Burroughes.

There’s also a second prize of a £125 cheque and a certificate, plus a £75 cheque and certificate for the village that clinches third place.

Application forms must be returned to Suffolk Coastal by May 1 and they can be obtained from Gwen Gibbs by calling 01394 444510 or by emailing gwen.gibbs@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

The competition is part of a national one sponsored by Calor Gas, with the winners from the district being entered into a countywide contest with a chance of going on to do battle with the best from across England.

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University campus roadshow visits Felixstowe



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17 Jan 2006

Archived press release.

People living in Suffolk Coastal will be able to find out more about the progress of the plans for University Campus Suffolk (UCS) at an event in March to be hosted by the Council.

As part of their programme of events across the county the UCS roadshow will be at Felixstowe Leisure Centre on Tuesday, March 7 starting at 7pm.

Speakers from the project will be talking about how the development will benefit the Suffolk Coastal area, what and where people can study and how the university will bring an estimated £50 million boost to Suffolk's economy every year. Members of the public will also have the chance to question the UCS team.

"This is an opportunity for people living in Suffolk Coastal to find out more about the timetable for the development, when the first students will start their studies, and how the district will profit from UCS and its local learning centres. I hope that as many people as possible will go along to the roadshow to hear about this exciting project," said Councillor John Perry, Cabinet Member for Economy.

Earlier that day local business representatives in the district will have their chance to learn more about the project at a Breakfast Briefing hosted by BT Exact and held at Aadastral Park.

People wanting more information about the UCS project and their programme of roadshows can log on to their website www.ucs.ac.uk



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Be ready for changes to recycling services



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24 Jan 2006

Archived press release.

Around 12,000 homes across the Suffolk Coastal district are being reminded to check their recycling calendars as next week sees a significant alteration being made as the first stage in a year of major service improvements.

Over one-fifth of the homes in the district that receive the fortnightly garden waste recycling service, Coastal Ploughback, will find that their collection week will have changed from Monday, January 30.

“While for most residents there will be no change in the collection week for garden waste, some homes will find that their garden waste collection date is a week later than normal, and others will find it is a week earlier than before. I would apologise for any inconvenience that this causes but we have had to make these changes to our normal rounds in readiness for a new improved service that we will launch later this year,” said Cllr Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment – natural and built.

“Five thousand homes in June, followed by a further 5,000 in September, will have the chance to recycle much more from their own home, with the introduction of a service that will collect their cans, plastic bottles, and cardboard, as well as paper.

“This new ‘home green banking service’ will make it much easier for people to get into the recycling habit without having to make so many journeys to their local recycling banks. I know there is a demand for even better recycling services, especially of plastics, and this will be the first step towards providing this to all homes in our district,” added Cllr Nunn.

While only some homes are having their garden waste collection weeks changed from next week, the Council is urging every home to put out their items for collection, whether recycling or rubbish, by 7.30am on their designated day.

The changes to the recycling rounds next week will impact on all the recycling and refuse collections made by Suffolk Coastal Services on behalf of the Council. Changes to the collection teams’ routes have been necessary to maximise round efficiencies, and teams are likely to be calling at different times than normal so residents are requested to put out their black sacks, green crates or brown wheelie bins by no later than 7.30am.

“I would urge people to check their calendar to make sure what the right week is for them – their collection day will not have changed, but their week might have. If they have any doubts they can call 01394 444000 and our customer care team can give the exact details.

“Suffolk Coastal residents have shown their commitment to recycling by already taking about 35 per cent of their rubbish out of their black sacks, which is well above the national average. But it will literally cost the earth if they do not do even better, as the increase in the bill for landfilling black sacks will rise by £9 million by 2019 in this district, and that does not include the continuing damage to the environment.

“That is why we are working hard to make it even easier to recycle, even though it requires some significant investments at a time when our finances are very restricted. As well as the

expanded 'home banking service' coming this summer, we also expect by June to offer a much-improved garden waste service so everyone will be able to recycle all their kitchen waste," added Cllr Nunn.

At present, Suffolk Coastal offers a fortnightly collection service to every home for garden waste and paper. In addition there are over 230 mini-recycling centres across the district with banks for paper, cans, glass and textiles.

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Budget pressures are forcing rise in car parking charges



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25 Jan 2006

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal is writing to the district's town councils and chambers of trade to explain why it feels it is being forced to introduce limited increases in the cost of parking in its car parks.

January's Cabinet meeting agreed in principle a range of price changes to fund a £250,000 investment in kerbside recycling that will mean a better service for thousands of residents and help save millions of pounds.

"We have had to produce a budget that is hit by the continuing failure of central Government to properly fund our local services and the urgent need to invest heavily in recycling services to both meet Government targets and ward off a potentially massive bill for our residents," said Cllr Andy Smith, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for car parks.

"Thanks to the support of our residents, we are currently recycling around 35 per cent of household waste, but if this figure does not increase, then by 2019, it is estimated that the annual cost of disposing of the remaining waste into landfill sites will be £9 million, compared to our current annual income from Council Tax of £6 million!

"This is an improved service we know our residents want and we must take action now to make it easier to recycle as it also makes stark financial sense. But the only way we can fund this in our current financial circumstances is by increasing our income from car parking. Without a fairer share of funding from the Government this Council can only balance its budget through increased efficiencies and raising its income," added Cllr Smith.

It will still be cheaper in the Council's car parks than in neighbouring areas. The bulk of the district's short-stay car parks are set to see an increase of either 10 or 20 pence on the cost of parking for up to two hours, meaning that it will now cost 70 pence to park for two hours in the town centre car parks aimed at shoppers in Felixstowe, Woodbridge, Saxmundham and Leiston.

Suffolk Coastal has been battling over recent months to fill a million-pound gap in its budget for the coming financial year, and has already identified £500,000 of additional efficiencies and income.

"Our commitment to local town centres remains as high as ever, and I would point to the fact that the vast majority of income from those car parks will continue to be spent on maintaining their appearance, and also their role as a key facility for the continuing health of our Town Centres and Tourist Trade," added Cllr Smith.

The Council has written to Town Councils and local Chambers of Trade to explain the thinking behind the proposed limited rises in car parking that is set to come into force in April.

Since 2001, Suffolk Coastal has managed to save around £5 million out of an annual budget of under £13 million, and recent Government figures have shown that the Council had achieved the eighth highest savings among non-urban district councils in the country.





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Volunteers are hedging their best in Saxmundham



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26 Jan 2006

Archived press release.

This Saturday (January 28) a group of local volunteer residents will be out in force to plant a 70 metre long hedge off Brook Farm Road in an exercise backed by Suffolk Coastal's landscape and countryside officers.

This initiative will put some extra greenery alongside a recently completed housing estate on land close to Saxmundham Primary School. The native hedge will line the footpath to Carlton Park boundary wood, which is already managed by the Council; it will provide a good wildlife habitat linking the estate with the woodland. Some new trees are to be planted in a cleared area of woodland too.

"This excellent example of the community working with their district council to put something positive back into their local environment should be applauded and I would like to thank all of those who will give up time on the day to get involved," said Cllr Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

"Over the years, the Council has encouraged local communities to support the environment with the Parish Tree scheme operating for nearly thirty years and resulting in hundreds of native trees and hedges being planted in public areas.

"Anyone who would like some advice or find out what help is on offer to keep this district as green as possible can contact our landscape officer Anne Westover on 01394 444420 for more information," added Cllr Leighton.

The planting is expected to begin at about 10.30am on Saturday, weather permitting.



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Love is in the air and it could be green



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09 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

This is the time of year when love is in the air and romantics in the district send tokens to their nearest and dearest, but it can also be a time to show consideration to the environment by opting for alternative ways of making loved ones feel special.

“It is estimated that over 12 million Valentine cards will be sent this year, but with more and more people using technology a text message or a special Valentine’s e-card could be a greener, more personal way to send that special message,” said Councillor Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment – natural and built.

“For those who prefer to send cards, there are charity cards where the profits go to a good cause, or cards that have been produced from recycled materials. Try to avoid over-packaged ones and remember that greetings cards can be recycled in the green crate provided by the Council for paper recycling.

“When it comes to gifts, although there is nothing wrong with chocolates, why not think about something different such as naming a star after your loved one or dedicating a tree to a special friend and help the Woodland Trust restore the UK’s native woodland heritage (www.woodlandtrust.org.uk).

“Flowers are often given as an expression of love, or a romantic meal prepared at home. It is still possible to think green by home composting the fruit and vegetable peelings, putting flowers into the brown bin for garden waste and by taking the empty champagne bottle or bottles to the nearest bottle bank,” continued Councillor Nunn.

Anyone wanting information on recycling can contact Suffolk Coastal’s recycling team on 01394 444000.



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Services still getting better at Suffolk Coastal



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09 Feb 2006

The latest analysis of the performance of some of the key services provided by Suffolk Coastal has shown a continued improvement in the way they are being delivered, with planning and housing benefits showing significant gains.

This week (Tuesday), Cabinet received the latest quarterly performance and financial report that puts the spotlight on how the Council is delivering on services.

“We are achieving some important successes in key services and these have been consistently delivered throughout the year. Even though we have had to find efficiencies in order to balance our books the facts show that we have not done this at the cost of quality,” said Cllr Ray Herring, Leader of the Council.

“There has been a consistent improvement in how we are dealing with planning applications and in the three different categories we are either excellent or very close to being excellent. Our average speed of dealing with applications has improved by over two weeks since last year.

“We have also regularly achieved first class results in dealing with the average time on processing changes in benefits cases throughout the year which underlines our commitment to ensuring that our improvements are not one-offs,” added Cllr Herring.

Other figures in the report show that sickness absence has been at record low levels, and that the target of 65 new affordable homes being built this year should be exceeded by 16. Time spent by homeless families in hostel accommodation has dropped to less than four weeks, the Council is easily beating the Government target of having no families in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than six weeks.

“Overall, this Council is moving in the right direction to provide the quality of service delivery that our residents rightly expect and I am very pleased that despite our continuing financial pressures, our staff have been meeting even higher standards. There is no complacency as we know there are still areas where we can do better but all the signs are extremely positive,” added Cllr Herring.

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Taste the tee for free



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10 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

Three of the district's golf clubs are offering free taster and coaching sessions to encourage more people to take up the sport.

The English Golf Union (EGU) and English Ladies' Golf Association (ELGA) have developed several initiatives to help people get into golf and part of their development plan is to introduce junior and adult beginners to the game through free taster and coaching sessions.

"Golf gets people out into the fresh air in pleasant surroundings and is an excellent way of exercising. It is a good all-round sport which can be played by people of all ages either alone or in groups and at different levels and I am pleased that efforts are being made to attract newcomers to the sport," said Councillor Rae Leighton, Cabinet Members for Community Well-Being.

"Three of our clubs are participating in this national initiative with juniors being offered their own coaching sessions at Thorpeness Golf Club and I would encourage anyone wishing to experience golf for the first time to take up this opportunity. You will not need clubs or balls as these will be provided free of charge," continued Councillor Leighton.

Thorpeness Golf Club, Leiston is running free golf coaching taster sessions for juniors every Saturday from 10am-12noon commencing March through to December 2006. For further information and to book a free lesson telephone 01728 454926 and quote 'Free Golf Coaching'.

Adults should contact either Seckford Golf Club, Woodbridge which is offering coaching taster sessions every Friday throughout the year – telephone 01394 388000 or Ufford Park Golf Club, Woodbridge where taster sessions will be available every weekend in May – telephone 01394 382836 or 01394 383555 for further information.

After the coaching session all participants will be given information on a variety of initiatives aimed at continuing involvement in golf, including the Membership Vacancies database that enables golfers to search for available vacancies.

For more information on the "Get into Golf" initiative visit www.getintogolf.org

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Call for minister to intervene on health cuts



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14 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal is calling on the Health Minister Patricia Hewitt to personally intervene and put on hold the proposed changes in local health services that have now been agreed by the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in the county.

The PCTs' decision can be referred to the Minister by Suffolk County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee, if it believes the proposals are not in the interest of the health service in its area, or if there are concerns about the extent to which stakeholders and the wider public have been consulted on any proposals, or where there has been inadequate consultation with its Health committee.

"This Council has been clear in its concerns about the impact that the proposed changes in local health services would have on our residents and I have strongly lobbied the Government to give our PCT more time to address the overspend," said Cllr Sherrie Green, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

"Tomorrow we will further examine what the actual effects could be on local services. In the meantime, this Council is strongly urging County's Health Scrutiny Committee on February 28 to refer the PCT proposals officially to the Health Minister because of concerns over the impact on health care services," added Cllr Green.

The members of the County Committee have the powers of referring the PCTs' package of changes to local health services, if they believe that these changes to health provision are endangering the public.

The newly published Government consultation document, 'Our health, our care, our say: a new direction for community services', offers a ray of hope according to Cllr Green.

The document recognises that some community hospitals are under threat of closure but states 'we are clear that community facilities should not be lost in response to short-term budgetary pressures that are not related to the community facility itself.

'Indeed, this White Paper lays out a vision for the future in which we are likely to see far more expanded intermediate care. Therefore PCTs taking current decisions about the future of community hospitals will be required to demonstrate to their strategic health authority (SHA) that they have consulted locally and have considered options such as developing new pathways, new partnerships and new ownership possibilities. SHAs will then test PCT community hospital proposals against the principles of this White Paper.'

"People across Suffolk feel anger that their strongly-aired views do not appear to have made significant differences to the final decisions of their PCTs. While it may be argued by health chiefs that their consultation process was not intended to be a formal referendum on the way that health services are provided in future, I now question whether the PCTs' decisions reflect the future direction as set out in the White Paper.

"The Government is also offering the chance for PCTs to work with councils to bid for capital support for reinvestment in 'the new generation of community hospitals and smaller facilities

offering local, integrated health and social care services'. I cannot see that the PCTs have yet taken account of this new opportunity.

"The brutal reality remains that the PCTs have to make harsh decisions about services over the next year or so, as long as they are instructed by the Government to make their finances balance by March 2007. The Health Minister, Patricia Hewitt, has the power to put a restraint on these massive changes to local health provision and give the PCTs an extra year or two breathing space to find the money, or to instruct the SHA to allow them to write off the expenditure altogether," added Cllr Green.

A meeting of the Community Well-being and Rural Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee tomorrow (February 15) will hear first-hand how the changes will be introduced, and about their potential impact on local voluntary groups. Suffolk Coastal's meeting will see Martin Royal, project director for Suffolk East PCTs and colleagues, explaining how the changes may affect this district, while Sue Allison director of family care services from Suffolk Carers will give a view on how it impact upon the voluntary sector.

The Council has previously highlighted claims that the voluntary sector would need a great deal of preparatory time if it was going to be ready to provide the replacement community support that was taken for granted in the PCT proposals.

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Concealed accounts are no benefit to guilty fraudster



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14 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

A Rushmere woman was last week fined £2,550 after she was found guilty of six offences of dishonestly failing to declare bank accounts to Suffolk Coastal District Council when jointly applying for Council Tax benefit with her husband.

Beverley Sirin, 45, of Fellbrigg Avenue, Rushmere St Andrew pleaded guilty at the Magistrates Court in Ipswich on February 6 to the six offences that occurred between February 2001 to September 2003. It was said by her solicitors that difficult family circumstances had forced her to act in the way she did.

“The majority of the accounts had been opened in her maiden name during the period when she was claiming benefit and totalled more than £16,000. The court heard that Mrs Sirin had attempted to conceal these bank accounts from her husband as well as the Council,” said Cllr Chris Slemmings, Cabinet Member for Housing.

Mrs Sirin was fined £300, £350, £400, £450, £500 and £550 respectively for each offence, making a grand total of £2,550, and was ordered to pay £75 costs within seven days.

“Because of her dishonest claims, she was overpaid £2,042.93 in Council Tax Benefit, which she repaid immediately after being interviewed by Officers from our Counter Fraud Unit.

“These offences came to light thanks to one of our regular data matching exercises with the Department for Work and Pensions and other agencies. It should act as a warning to others that if they try to cheat the system they will be caught.

“With our new partnerships and systems, we are now finding mistaken claims and payments more quickly and more accurately. Where these errors are found to be due to fraud or deception we will always take the appropriate action, including going to the Courts,” added Cllr Slemmings.

Anyone receiving benefits should notify the Council on 01394 444838 if there is any change in their circumstances – this can sometimes mean that they receive more, rather than less, benefit. The Council’s Fraud Hotline for residents to call confidentially and report suspected benefit frauds is 01394 444444, available 24-hours a day, or they can email fraud.investigation@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

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Insulate your home and get a council tax rebate



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15 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal has linked up with British Gas to offer homes across the district a chance to get their walls insulated and gain a £50 rebate off their Council Tax.

The Council has written to every home in the district advising them of this special offer of which it hopes as many people as possible will take advantage.

“This is an excellent opportunity for our residents to not only cut their heating bills and help the environment by using less fuel, but also save themselves £50 off their Council Tax in the coming year,” said Cllr Chris Slemmings, Cabinet Member for Housing.

“British Gas is able to offer subsidised home insulation for cavity wall insulation to all private households and you do not have to be one of their customers to qualify for this scheme.

“Anyone signing up to the offer before April 30 will receive a £50 Council Tax rebate paid by British Gas. The average price for insulating the walls of a three- bed semi-detached property is £175 but the annual savings could be around £100, so it really is an investment that will pay dividends this year and for years to come,” added Cllr Slemmings.

It is estimated that the savings for detached four-bedroom homes could be as high as £180 a year. All that anyone interested in the scheme has to do is arrange for a free, no-obligation home energy audit when details of the cost of the subsidised scheme will be given, as well as energy efficient lightbulbs worth more than £20.

Fiona Gould, Business Development Manager for British Gas said: “We are delighted that Suffolk Coastal has come on board with our Council Cashback scheme. Previous experience has shown us that rewarding homeowners for energy saving is the right way to motivate middle households not on benefit to reduce energy waste.”

Anyone wanting to sign up for a free survey or to find out more information can call 0845 971 7731 quoting Reference SCCT. Please note that conditions apply and that retrospective applications cannot be considered. Lines are open 8am – 8pm Mon – Fri and 8am – 1pm Sat. For more information about other energy efficiency schemes contact the Energy Saving Trust Anglia Centre on 0800 512012.



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Support for affordable homes in Walberswick



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16 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal's Cabinet has given the go-ahead to the transfer of a small plot of Council-owned land in Adams Lane, Walberswick so that four homes for rent can be built by Orwell Housing Association.

The proposed homes have already gained planning permission from the Council and the scheme will proceed now the landownership has been agreed by Cabinet.

"We know that in many parts of the district there is a need for affordable housing for our local people and I am pleased to be working in partnership with Orwell Housing Association to make the position a little better in Walberswick," said Cllr Chris Slemmings, Cabinet Member for Housing.

"This Council is committed to doing what it can to tackle the shortage of affordable housing in the district and to ensure that this scheme can proceed we are disposing of this land to Orwell at nil cost.

"It is no secret that this Council does face severe financial pressures, and this land could have been sold on the open market to raise us some much-needed money, but we have a duty to our residents to also tackle the housing crisis which has real human and financial costs to local people and indeed to this Council through its homelessness budget," added Cllr Slemmings.

The site is next to homes built in the late 1980s on land provided then by the Council. Those homes are already managed by Orwell, and the housing association has gained the backing of the Housing Corporation to build the four new homes.



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Call for government cash to avoid flooding disaster



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20 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal has written to the Government calling for £5 million to prevent potentially disastrous floods that could affect over 1,600 homes, businesses and the Port of Felixstowe.

A detailed case sent to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) warns that major damage could be caused to commercial, residential and tourist areas if flood and coast protection works planned for this summer are not funded by the Government, as previously expected.

"This Council, with the support of the Environment Agency and regional DEFRA staff, has been planning a much-needed groyne replacement scheme at the southern end of Felixstowe. The current defences are derelict and we were ready to replace them this May. Government guidelines and announcements over a long period had clearly indicated that funding would be available," said Councillor Andy Smith, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for coast protection.

"However, in December the Government announced that its budgets were fully committed so it could not fund any new schemes in 2006/07 – the first time ever that no funds were available. We are now warning the Government that it would be enormously expensive, and well beyond this Council's means, to put in any major short-term measures to safeguard this area until the national funds are available.

"We are urging the Government to treat our scheme on its merits and recognise that it is an urgent special case. The harsh reality is that the current state of the sea defences is such that there is a major risk that they could not withstand a serious storm without damage. That could in turn lead to damage to the flood wall and there could be flooding that at its worst would affect 1,616 homes, numerous businesses including the Port of Felixstowe, caravan parks and a school. I hope very much that the Government will consider the facts and make available the £5 million that is so urgently needed," added Cllr Smith.

The overall scheme for South Felixstowe should cost £10 million, shared between the Council and the Environment Agency, who had funding in place to start its part of the work. However, following the Government's decision, the Agency has revealed that it has at present withdrawn its funds for the coming year.

In a letter to DEFRA, the Council's Chief Executive, Stephen Baker, asks the Minister of State, Elliot Morley, to make an exception. 'I appreciate the significance and difficulty of the request that I am making, but I believe the costs and risks to the public and the national interest justify an exceptional decision', writes Mr Baker.

A detailed report sent with the letter summarises the situation, explaining that beach levels have fallen considerably so exposing the sea wall to wave attack and reducing the flood and erosion protection to Felixstowe. It also explains that the financial benefits of carrying out the scheme would be to protect over £400 million worth of property.

The low beach levels are resulting in more stress on the sea wall, and if current trends continue the Council warns that parts of the sea wall are at severe risk of at least partial collapse, most likely around the Shore Break café. This could then threaten the foundations, and so the stability,

of the vital flood wall maintained by the Environment Agency, which protects the low-lying parts of the town from flooding.

The report also states that if the new works do not proceed, the Council will have to consider whether conditions become so hazardous to the public that the beach or promenade must be closed - 'the result of indefinite continuous closure is likely to be catastrophic to the town and the district'. It also warns of the national impact of a closure of the Port as a result of tidal flooding.



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Council agrees budget to protect services and residents



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24 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

The drive for more efficiencies has helped Suffolk Coastal successfully bridge a £1 million budget gap, keep its Council Tax rise to less than 12 pence a week for the average home, and protect services and residents.

Last night's (Thursday) full meeting of the Council agreed to a £13.9 million budget financed by a £132.03 Council Tax for Band D homes, a rise of 4.9 per cent.

"Substantial efforts in identifying new efficiencies and additional income of £1 million have succeeded in keeping our Council Tax increase to less than 12 pence a week for Band D homes, while offering even better services in areas seen as important by those who took part in our budget consultation," said Cllr Ray Herring Leader of the Council.

"This is a considerable achievement as largely external pressures are forcing our costs up by £1.6 million, along with the Government's continuing failure to pay its fair share for funding our services to local residents.

"Our commitment to value for money and efficiencies can be shown by the fact that we will have generated over £6 million of efficiencies and additional income since 2000, while keeping our Council Tax rises to single digits over the last ten years. Our bill will remain firmly in the lowest third among councils across the country," added Cllr Herring.

The new budget was drawn up in line with the Council's main priorities which were confirmed by the results of extensive public consultation. It includes an additional £80,000 to help minimise the effects of coastal erosion, over £200,000 towards the phased introduction of an improved recycling service, and the new free bus travel scheme for those aged 60 and over.

"By the combination of sound forward financial planning and a thorough review of all that this Council does, we have got the balance right between protecting services, introducing improvements where they are both wanted and needed, and keeping our Council Tax rise as low as possible.

"Despite the external factors that continue to force up our costs, and the ongoing failure by the Government to properly fund rural districts like ours, we have been able to fund improvements in those services that need it most. The harsh financial reality is that we cannot do everything we want at once and we also need to make a further £2million of savings between 2007 and 2009," added Cllr Herring.

Among the other proposed service improvements are a renewed commitment to safer communities including a substance misuse officer, support to encourage local sports partnerships, initiatives to help stop people becoming homeless, an additional assistant ranger to support the countryside and extra support to maintain the excellent improvements in planning services. The Council is also playing its part with its partners across Suffolk to meet the demands of the Local Area Agreements, another Government initiative.

Allowing for the grant-aided introduction of the new free bus pass for those aged 60 and over, the Council's spending will rise by 5.3 per cent to £13.9 million. The increases include pay and price inflation of £692,000, additional statutory requirements of £414,000, and improved services worth £559,000.

The full Council Tax figures for Suffolk Coastal are as follows:

Band	Suffolk County Council	Suffolk Police Authority	Suffolk Coastal District	Total Per week	Total Per year
A	660.42	87.24	88.02	16.07	835.68
B	770.49	101.78	102.69	18.75	974.96
C	880.56	116.32	117.36	21.43	1,114.24
D	990.63	130.86	132.03	24.11	1,253.52
E	1,210.77	159.94	161.37	29.46	1,532.08
F	1,430.91	189.02	190.71	34.82	1,810.64
G	1,651.05	218.10	220.05	40.18	2,089.20
H	1,981.26	261.72	264.06	48.21	2,507.04

In addition, most residents in Suffolk Coastal also pay for their parish or town council. The average charge for a Band D property is £31.64, bringing the average Council Tax bill for Band D homes to £1,285.16. The average Council Tax bill will rise by 4.6 per cent in Suffolk Coastal. The average bill will be shared out four ways with 77 per cent going to County, 10 per cent going to the police, 10 per cent staying with Suffolk Coastal, and 3 per cent going to a town or parish council.

The Band D is the national average figure for calculating Council Tax – in Suffolk Coastal 57 per cent of homes are Band A, B or C. For more information about the Council's budget visit www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk



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Want to volunteer for a spring clean?



[Listen to the text on this page](#)

28 Feb 2006

Archived press release.

This March sees Spring Clean Suffolk which wants to encourage people across the county to get involved in a special clean-up, and address the 'culture' of throwing litter down in our towns, villages, roads and countryside.

The idea of the Spring Clean week between March 20 and 26 is Carol Gurney's, President of the 2005 Suffolk Show, who enlisted the High Sheriff, Philip Hope-Cobbold in a campaign that is being co-ordinated by the Suffolk Agricultural Association, and supported by many voluntary organisations and businesses, as well as local councils.

"Suffolk Coastal Services is ready to take away any rubbish collected by volunteers during the week. Last year over 1,400 volunteers collected 2,300 black sacks full of rubbish across 47 parishes as part of Suffolk Coastal's annual Spring Clean supported by Suffolk Coastal," said Cllr Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment – natural and built.

"I hope as many people support this March's clean-up, but people in our district do not have to carry out their local spring clean during the countywide week - any time that you want to help keep your community tidy by organising a litter pick you can get support from Suffolk Coastal, including sacks, gloves and disposal of collected waste," added Cllr Nunn.

Anyone interested in taking part in a clean-up in their area can contact their parish or town council or call Suffolk Coastal on 01394 444033 or email waste.management@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

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Speak up and improve Woodbridge's air quality



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09 Mar 2006

Archived press release.

Comments are wanted on steps to be taken to improve air quality around a busy road junction in Woodbridge where surveys have shown that nitrogen dioxide concentrations are higher than the objective level set for this pollutant.

The junction at Lime Kiln Quay Road, The Thoroughfare and St John's Street is currently being monitored by Suffolk Coastal under the Local Air Quality Management process and in August 2005 the Council consulted about its latest annual update report.

This progress report concluded that there needed to be more investigations into the concentrations of nitrogen dioxide arising from vehicle exhaust emissions at this junction and these have now shown that there are properties affected on the junction. These findings were approved by the Council's Cabinet on October 4.

It was agreed that the Council should declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) to tackle the problem, a move which has now been backed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The Order was made on March 3 and will come into effect on April 3.

"Once the Order comes into operation, a further assessment must be made of the air quality and reported back to Defra within 12 months. We are also required to produce a written Action Plan within 18 months, setting out what measures we will introduce to try and achieve the objectives," said Cllr Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment – natural and built.

"We will be involving relevant District Council and County Council departments, Woodbridge Town Council, local businesses and local residents, and we would like to hear their ideas for inclusion in our action plan.

"Discussions with Suffolk County Council have already begun, and alterations have been made to the traffic light timings to try and ensure the optimum traffic flow through the junction, and so lessen the current problem" added Cllr Nunn.

The report, and details of the AQMA Order, is available on the Council's website at <http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/envprotection/airquality> Alternatively, paper copies are available for viewing at our Melton Hill offices in Woodbridge and our Undercliff Road West offices in Felixstowe.

Comments are welcomed from residents on the report and AQMA. Written comments can be sent to environmental protection at the Council's offices, Melton Hill, Woodbridge IP12 1AU, or emailed to environmental.protection@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk or use the response sheet available on the website. Any suggestions that you have to improve the air quality at this junction will be welcome and will be investigated as part of the Action Plan. The closing date for comments is June 30, 2006.

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Making sure we give everyone a better reception



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10 Mar 2006

Archived press release.

The finishing touches are being made to Suffolk Coastal's improved reception area at its main Melton Hill offices as part of the Council's commitment to provide even better customer services.

The Council is working to ensure that that it is consistently delivering a high quality service to customers of all its services in a more effective and efficient way that maximises value for money.

"The reception area at Melton Hill is a visual example of what we are aiming to do in the provision of all our services. Visitors to our offices will now get a friendlier and more efficient service than ever as our team now has the right environment to provide this. It is something that they have always wanted to offer and that our customers rightly expect," said Cllr Doreen Savage, Cabinet Member for Customers and Partners.

"Across all areas of our organisation we are adopting a set of standards for the way we provide our customer services. We have always had a higher than average level of satisfaction from our customers but to ensure there is no slippage in any areas of service the standards will reinforce this.

"We estimate that every month about 100,000 customers get in touch with the Council. To make sure that we are providing the right service we are asking all residents of Suffolk Coastal to assist us to further fine-tune our service by taking part in a special survey. I sincerely hope that as many people as possible will take a little time in completing what to the Council is a very important survey," added Cllr Savage.

The survey is available on the home page of the Council's website – www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk – and is also featured in the Spring edition of CoastLine, the Council's magazine that is being delivered to every home in the district from March 20.

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Stop littering our district call from Council



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13 Mar 2006

Archived press release.

As large parts of the county get ready to take part in this month's Spring Clean Suffolk, the escalating littering problems facing local councils has been highlighted by Suffolk Coastal's need to increase its clean-up team.

Recent months have seen a major growth in litter along the district's main roads of the A12 and A14, with 50 to 60 full bags of rubbish now being picked up every day by Suffolk Coastal Services.

"We have always carried out daily clear-ups along the A12 and A14 but in the last few weeks we have had to double our workforce because of the appalling increase in general litter and other items being strewn along these roads," said Cllr Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment, natural and built.

"There are now two teams of two people whose sole duties are to try and keep these main roads clear of rubbish. It is a heartbreaking task because the thoughtlessness and selfishness of others mean they will probably have to return to exactly the same spots within the next 24 hours to clear it all up again.

"I would appeal once again to motorists to stop throwing their newspapers, food cartons and wrappers, cans and bottles out on to the roadside, and to commercial vehicle operators to ensure that their loads are secure and do not litter the roads with packaging and material. Not only is it an eyesore, and an increasingly expensive one, but it also can cause potential road hazards as it blows around these busy roads," added Cllr Nunn.

Suffolk Coastal has a good record of taking positive action against people littering its district. Since April 2005 it has issued 46 fixed penalty notices and has so far received payment on 33 of these, with a further five still pending. Some have been cancelled after further investigations.

"Anyone spotting people throwing litter or waste from vehicles, or fly-tipping waste can report it to us so we can take action. If we are given information such as car registration details, date, and time of incident then we will do all we can to take legal action against those responsible. Just call SCS on 01394 444000, or visit <http://www.onesuffolk.co.uk/reportaproblem>, and help us clear up our district.

"This month's Spring Clean Suffolk is an important initiative to get the community to clean up their areas, but equally it is about highlighting the need to change the current attitude to littering that so many people now seem to have," added Cllr Nunn.

It is estimated that clearing up dumped rubbish costs the country over £500 million a year, and in Suffolk Coastal the cost of its cleansing operations including its litter clear up teams is around £700,000.

Anyone planning to help keep their community tidy by organising a litter pick can contact Suffolk Coastal on 01394 444033 for support, including sacks, gloves and disposal of collected rubbish.





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Expert advice on offer for landlords and letting agents



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14 Mar 2006

Archived press release.

Next month offers a free chance for some expert advice and information at Suffolk Coastal's seminar for landlords and letting agents which is being held on Thursday, April 6 in the Council Chamber at the Council's Melton Hill offices.

"This event will give property owners the opportunity to meet up, share their views and talk about topics of mutual interest," said Cllr Chris Slemmings, Cabinet Member for Housing.

"Landlords have an increasingly important role to play in providing quality rented accommodation for the people of the district and this seminar is intended to be of interest to both individual and corporate landlords as well as owners of single properties and properties in multiple occupation," continued Cllr Slemmings.

David Brown, Vice President of the Residential Property Tribunal in Cambridge will give a talk on the work of the tribunal and how rent disputes can be resolved and Suzanne Lacey of the Energy Saving Trust in Lowestoft will speak about new ideas for reducing energy costs.

"There is also an important consultation element to the evening. Mike Eaton, Suffolk Coastal's Head of Housing & Benefits and Paul Byrne our Best Value Officer will be seeking views on how we can work more effectively with private landlords and letting agents," added Cllr Slemmings.

The seminar is being held in Suffolk Coastal's Council Chamber at its Melton Hill Offices, and runs from 5pm through to 7pm. Places are limited so to ensure a seat advance bookings can be made by calling 01394 444838, by emailing benefits@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk or faxing 01394 444554.



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Putting the spotlight on new licensing laws



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16 Mar 2006

Archived press release.

As part of its ongoing commitment to assisting the local arts community, Suffolk Coastal is holding a free training event on the new licensing laws later this month.

The Council's Licensing Manager, Judy Gowen, will lead the session which is being held at 7pm in the Council Chamber at the Melton Hill offices on Thursday, March 30.

"The session is aimed at drama and other performance groups, venue managers, town and village programmers, festival and carnival organisers, and indeed anyone else who is planning to organise a performing arts event in our district," said Cllr Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

"The Government's introduction of new licensing laws last November gained lots of headlines because of the changes to alcohol licensing hours.

"However, the new laws also had some significant changes to licensing live music, film shows and theatrical performances. This event, and Judy Gowen in particular, will be able to demystify some of the new regulations and hopefully lead people through what can be a bit of a minefield to those who are not properly informed," added Cllr Leighton.

The event has been organised by Suffolk Coastal's Arts and Heritage Development Officer, Rachel Nightingale. Anyone wanting more information about the event, or to book a place, can call her on 01394 444294 or email rachel.nightingale@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

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Sites for sore eyes - encouraging arts in our communities



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16 Mar 2006

Archived press release.

A special seminar is being held at Snape Maltings that will examine the role that artists can play in shaping the look of where we live, work or visit.

Sites for Sore Eyes on Thursday, April 6 is an event organised by Suffolk Coastal, with the backing of five other local councils, and aims to look at all aspects of public arts in the community.

"An excellent programme of speakers has been lined up, with experts on hand to explain what is public art and the positive role it can have, how it can be commissioned and the funding on offer, and the views of an experienced artist," said Cllr Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

"This really is ideal for anyone interested in how their area looks, or who cares about proposed changes to local landscapes and townscapes, or wants to be involved in planning such changes," added Cllr Leighton.

The event will provide inspirational examples of public arts schemes from around the country and it is hoped to attract planners, artists, architects, landscape architects, or developers.

It should also be attractive for community leaders who are planning to build new halls, create public parks, or provide facilities such as signage, seating, lighting and trails, as it explores how to commission artists to create locally distinct and sympathetic solutions to their area's needs.

The speakers include David Wright, Director of Commissions East, who will explore how to involve artists in new development and regeneration schemes. Balancing this with a rural perspective is Sue Clifford, Director of Common Ground, who coined the term local distinctiveness and then promoted the idea through popularising activities such as Apple Day, Tree Dressing and Parish Maps.

Andy Thompson of KUBE planning consultants will provide an insight into how to implement schemes involving artists through the planning system. Sasha Ward, an architectural glass artist, will share her experience of working on projects varying in scale from the small and intimate to those of national significance.

The event runs from 10am to 4pm, and the cost is only £15 per delegate. The seminar has been organised by Suffolk Coastal with support from Ipswich, Babergh, Mid Suffolk, and Forest Heath councils plus Suffolk County Council. To book a place, or to find out more, please contact Rachel Nightingale on 01394 444294 or email rachel.nightingale@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

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Deadline set for ideas for use of local land



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17 Mar 2006

Archived press release.

As part of the latest stage of its drawing up a new planning blueprint for the whole district, Suffolk Coastal is asking for ideas on where possible future developments should or should not occur.

A deadline of Tuesday, May 2 has been set for when the team drawing up the district's new Local Development Framework (LDF) should receive suggestions, the document that will set out how the area will grow and be protected over the coming 15 years. The LDF will replace the current Local Plan, under the Government's new rules.

"The LDF is a long and complicated process, and we have already published many documents and held a series of workshops and public meetings to help us identify and agree the key issues facing the future of this district," said Cllr Andy Smith, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning.

"We know from the Regional Plan (Spatial Strategy), and surveys of local needs, that growth is needed, particularly for housing, so we now need to consider where are the possible locations for that, and also for employment and recreational needs. We have to think carefully how we as a Council approach these needs, both in villages and the larger towns.

"Parish and Town Councils and many other groups have already given us a wide variety of opinions on these issues during the consultations over the past three years, which will be at the forefront of our deliberations. However, any final comments will still be welcome.

"Also, a number of landowners have already contacted us with proposals for sites that they would like developed. By setting a deadline for these, we want to ensure that we have got all the possible sites ready for our consideration, and indeed an early warning of where people do not want any further growth," added Cllr Smith.

To assist in the overall process the Council has published for public comment a summary of the key issues and also a set of objectives to which the LDF is expected to contribute. This is available from the Council or can be found on its website www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/planning/review/corestrategy

The LDF is the new system of setting out the development areas across the country and will replace the current Suffolk Coastal Local Plan. The LDF will include the Core Strategy that is the cornerstone of the new Framework, setting out the long-term vision and development strategy to 2021 as well as policies to be used in the determination of planning applications.

Another new document that will be created, as part of the LDF process, is the Site Specific Allocations and Policies: which relates to specific locations, areas or communities.

In order to be successful these documents require clearly defined and measurable objectives to guide their implementation and the monitoring of their achievements. These objectives are based on relevant policies and strategies at national and regional levels, from the district's Community Strategy, and from the results of local consultation.

The next major stage in the process will be the preparation of Preferred Options documents which will set out the Council's suggested policy directions together with policies, proposals and alternative approaches where appropriate. This is scheduled to be published in the summer and all parts of the local community will be encouraged to have their say at that time.

A response form is available from the Council and can be found on its website. Comments should be returned to the Head of Planning Services at the District Council by Tuesday, May 2.



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Planning application for Felixstowe skateboard area submitted



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17 Mar 2006

Archived press release.

The planning application submitted by Suffolk Coastal for the proposed skatepark in Felixstowe at Orwell Green is due to be considered by the Council's South Area Development Control Sub Committee at its meeting on March 30.

The proposal has been drawn up after seeking the views of both the many potential users of such a facility and also local residents. What has been submitted is for a 20x30 metre skateboarding area that would be at below ground level, enclosed on two sides by landscaped bunds and surrounded by a footpath.

The application includes provision for lighting with two columns providing light for the area until 8.30pm each evening. The bunds and access pathways will be designed to prevent them being used as an extension of the park itself.

The facility has been designed so it can be easily seen from Grange Farm Avenue so that skaters can feel safe that they are not completely out of sight. It is also part of Felixstowe's proposed legally designated zone to prevent alcohol being consumed there, which would give the police the official powers to take action if the rules are broken.

"This is an important development for young people but we are aware some concern has been expressed by local people. This application has been drawn up so as to try to satisfy all parties, but I hope that all those interested in the proposal take the opportunity to express their views," said Cllr Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

Anyone wanting to make comments on these proposals can write to the Head of Planning Services at Suffolk Coastal District Council Melton Hill Woodbridge Suffolk IP12 1AU or email dcadmin@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk – please quote the application reference number C06 0303. If you require further information please call the Planning Help Desk on 01394 444738.



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Get on board now for a free bus pass



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20 Mar 2006

Archived press release.

Thousands of residents have already signed up for the new free bus pass which offers free travel to all those aged 60 or over, or those with a qualifying disability, across the county.

The Government has made it compulsory for all councils to offer free bus travel in their district, but Suffolk Coastal is offering a much better deal by signing up to the Suffolk Saver scheme.

“Using the Suffolk Saver people can use their new free pass to travel anywhere within Suffolk, or even further afield as long as their journey starts or finishes in Suffolk and does not involve a change of service outside Suffolk,” said Cllr Stephen Burroughes, Cabinet Member for Rural Issues.

“I am pleased that we can offer our residents an even better deal than that proposed by the Government and it is obviously proving popular than the old-style pass as our team is being kept very busy with the number of applicants.

“The new bus pass is clearly an excellent option for many with specific needs in Suffolk Coastal, and I would urge anyone who wants one to apply as soon as possible to make the most of their year-long passport to free bus travel,” added Cllr Burroughes.

Demand has been higher than anticipated but it is still hoped that all the new passes will be issued by April 1. Any resident wanting more information can contact the Customer Service team on 01394 444647 for full details.

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Making CoastLine more accessible



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20 Mar 2006

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal's quarterly magazine is being delivered next week to over 50,000 homes across the district but this Spring's edition will be a first as it is also on offer as a compact disc.

The latest edition of CoastLine is packed with news about the Council and its partners, with features on the new improved recycling services, a detailed performance report on the Council, and news on how community groups can tap into funding opportunities.

"We have a small but loyal readership who rely on either large print versions of CoastLine or an audio tape. The talking newspaper team responsible for producing the tape version is also now making them available on CD which might be preferable for some of our regulars and may also attract newcomers to our 'talking' CoastLine," said Cllr Stephen Burroughes, Cabinet Member for Rural Issues.

"This is another significant step towards making our services more accessible to everyone and I would encourage more people to make use of this free service. We always advertise on its front page the fact that CoastLine is available in these special formats and I hope that anyone who has a visual impairment, or has a friend or relative who has, will join our mailing list.

"We also plan to put audio versions of the CoastLine articles on to our website – www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk – so that people will be able to download them and listen to them when they want," added Cllr Burroughes.

Anyone wanting to join the CoastLine mailing list for a large-print, taped or the new CD version can contact the Council's communications team on 01394 444345.

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New sporting partnership making progress



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21 Mar 2006

Archived press release.

Volunteers are invited to get involved in a new sporting partnership that could help attract more money and facilities for the district.

Suffolk Coastal was one of ten areas selected by Sport England to launch a new way of encouraging the growth of sporting opportunities and giving local people a louder voice in the way that national resources are allocated.

Sport England recognised the need to build stronger local partnerships to ensure that at grass-root level there are sporting opportunities for all and to set up Community Sports Networks (CSNs) across the country to deliver this.

“We invited representatives from local sports clubs, volunteers and organisations to open meetings earlier in the year to find out more about CSNs and the benefits that could be gained from a district-wide community sport plan,” said Councillor Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member for Community Well-Being.

“To move the initiative on, three further meetings have been organised to establish sub-committees, the first of which was held last night at Brackenbury Sports Centre. Two further meetings have been organised - in the northern part of our district the Riverside Centre at Stratford St Andrew will be the venue on Monday, March 27 from 7pm-9pm and for the central area Wednesday, April 19, from 7pm-9pm at the Council Chamber at Suffolk Coastal Offices.

“The importance of sport is being increasingly recognised, whether for its commercial and career opportunities, its role as a promoter of health and fitness, or as an important diversion for the energies of young people

“Those involved in sports are spread across all parts of our district and we want to bring them together so that they can share their knowledge and expertise and I hope that there will be a good response to the request for volunteers to sit on the three sub-committees.

“By getting everyone to help draw up a district-wide community sport plan that reflects local needs it may be that our CSN can open the door to new funding by linking their activities more directly to national targets. It has been estimated that an additional £450M is being put into sports-linked initiatives by the Government. Having its own CSN is a chance for this district to get in and claim its rightful share,” added Councillor Leighton.

If anyone is interested in attending the Stratford St Andrew or Woodbridge meeting or would like further information about CSNs, they should contact Sarah Shinnie, Suffolk Coastal's Active Communities Officer on 01394 444652 or email sarah.shinnie@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

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22 Mar 2006

Details about major improvements being introduced this summer to its recycling services show that Suffolk Coastal has no intention of resting on its laurels after this week's announcement that it has gained Beacon Status along with the rest of the Suffolk Waste consortium.

This summer around 10,000 homes will be the first in the district to get an even better recycling service from Suffolk Coastal as part of the Council's commitment to make it easier to get into the recycling habit.

From June about 5,000 homes will be able to recycle cardboard, plastics, foil and tins in special wheelie bins that will be emptied every fortnight, with a further 5,000 homes joining the scheme in September.

"Thanks to our residents, we are already seeing around 35 per cent of all domestic waste being recycled but it is increasingly important that we collect even more. The environmental impact of still throwing away two-thirds of local rubbish into landfill is bad enough, but the financial costs will increasingly hit us all," said Councillor Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment, natural and built.

"It is estimated that if we all just carry on recycling at our current rates, then the cost of throwing away our rubbish will rise to a staggering £9 million a year by 2019, the equivalent of £150 on every Band D Council Tax bill.

"It will literally cost us all the earth if we do not recycle more, which is why this Council is committed to making it easier to recycle. This expanded service is not cheap which is why we are having to gradually roll it out across the district over the next few years but it is an investment in a service that people want and that will help save money over the years," added Cllr Nunn.

The first 5,000 homes to get the service will be getting two special wheeled bins delivered at the end of April, along with information on how and when to use them. One will be grey with a blue lid for the new recycling service, and the other bin will be all grey and is for waste that cannot currently be recycled.

Every home on the scheme will receive special information about how they can get into the recycling habit and there are roadshows when people can go along to find out more. A special hotline is also available just to deal with any questions that people may have about the new scheme - just call 01394 444050.

This summer will also see a massive boost for residents when they will be able to recycle all their food, fruit and vegetable peelings by putting them in their brown wheelie bin.

Thanks to a new high-technology composting plant at Parham, Suffolk Coastal will be able to accept all food, cooked or uncooked, fruit and vegetables as well as the normal garden waste in the brown wheelie bins that are emptied every fortnight.

"All the material collected this way will then be delivered to Parham, where the massive drum will turn it all into a compost. This new service is not available yet, and I would urge residents to watch out for details in the local press, through their letterbox, or on the Council's website for

when they can start using their brown bin for so much more," said Councillor Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment, natural and built.

"The equipment at Parham is still being installed and tested, but we expect in the early summer to be able to make the announcement that I am sure will be appreciated by residents across the district as this is a major service improvement that every home with a brown bin will be able to make use of," added Cllr Nunn.

The Beacon Council Scheme celebrates excellence in local government and was established by the Government to select councils to act as centres of excellence and help spread best practice to other local authorities. The Government on Monday announced that just two Beacon Council Awards for waste and recycling have been made this year across the Country, and that both have gone to partnerships in the East of England. The two awards have gone to the Suffolk Waste partnership, of which Suffolk Coastal is a member, and to the Cambridgeshire partnership.

Each year the Government selects themes for the Beacon scheme, chosen because of their importance in the day-to-day lives of the public and are key to improving the quality of life in our communities. Authorities hold the status for a year and share their good practice through a series of learning exchanges, open days and other learning activities.

Beacon status is granted to those authorities that can demonstrate a clear vision, excellent services and a willingness to innovate within a specific theme. However, to obtain beacon status applicants must demonstrate that they have good overall performance, and not just in the service area for which beacon status is awarded.

The Beacon award is not just a way of marking the Council's achievements; it is also recognition of the hard work of all its partners and the staff who are at the front-line of delivering services.

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Pension dispute strike hits refuse collection



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23 Mar 2006

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal will be open for business on Tuesday, March 28 despite the national one-day strike planned by members of local government unions campaigning against the proposed reforms for the Local Government Pension Scheme, but the Council's refuse and recycling services will be suspended.

Residents who normally have their refuse collected on a Tuesday are being asked not to put them out on March 28, but to keep them until the following Tuesday when a double collection will be made.

"While it is impossible to predict the strength of support that the unions will gain for the planned one-day strike, the Council feels it is better to tell everyone in advance that we are suspending our refuse and recycling services on that day," said Cllr Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment, natural & built.

"We cannot guarantee our normal quality service so we have decided in advance to withdraw the collections on March 28.

"Suffolk Coastal apologises for any inconvenience caused by this national dispute which is now threatening local services. We will do all we can to ensure that essential services continue to operate but it seems likely that some of our other activities like street cleaning will also be affected. The most serious impact will probably be on our refuse and recycling collection and I hope that our residents will understand that it is due to circumstances outside of our direct control," added Cllr Nunn.

The County Council's three Household Waste and Recycling Centres at Felixstowe, Foxhall, and Leiston will be unaffected by any strike action and residents can use these to dispose of their household rubbish.

Those homes in the district which would normally have a paper or garden waste recycling collection on March 28 will also be affected. The Council is asking residents to keep these items until the next scheduled fortnightly recycling collection day.

The Council's Melton Hill offices will be open but some services may be affected by the strike action. Anyone who wants further information can call the Council on 01394 383789. No disruption to services provided by the Council-owned leisure centres and swimming pools is anticipated.