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Spotlight on Customer Services



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03 Oct 2005

Archived press release.

Some of Suffolk Coastal's senior figures will be marking National Customer Services Week by taking to the Council's main reception areas this week to meet and help residents with their enquiries.

Among those 'taking to the floor' will be Cllr Doreen Savage, the Cabinet Member responsible for customer services, the Chief Executive Stephen Baker, the two strategic directors Tony Osmanski and Jeremy Schofield, the head of development and building control Bob Chamberlain, head of customer and strategic services Karen Kennedy and Joy Waterman, customer services manager.

"The aim of the week is to highlight and recognise the importance of good customer relations and those in our teams who are front-line ambassadors to the public," said Cllr Savage.

"This is the first year we have participated in this national initiative and several of the Council's top managers have volunteered to help provide our front-line services at Melton Hill. So, customers coming into our reception areas this week or phoning our customer services contact centre, could find their enquiries being answered by myself, or one of our corporate management team," added Cllr Savage.

There will be a number of other activities aimed at promoting the importance of good customer services, with staff able to enter competitions, sponsor a charity event and nominate their team customer service champions.

"There is an element of fun with some of what we have planned for this week but there is also a serious side. I expect it may present some of our special temporary receptionists and switchboard operators with a fresh outlook on what our residents require when they visit or phone us and illustrate the commitment of our customer services staff to giving them the answers they want.

"Providing a quality, friendly and efficient service is at the core of what this Council strives to do, as can be seen by our much-improved, customer-friendly reception area at Melton Hill," added Cllr Savage, who will be on reception part of Wednesday and Thursday this week.



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Advice day targetted at elderly people



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04 Oct 2005

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal's benefits team will be one of the many local organisations on hand this week at a special event in Felixstowe aimed at providing a one-stop information shop for elderly people.

Organised by the Royal British Legion and held at St Felix Hall, Gainsborough Road, the event runs from 10am to 3pm on Thursday, October 6.

"Admission is of course free, as is all the advice, but those attending could depart much richer in terms of both the information they gain and maybe even from finding out about the benefits they are officially entitled to receive," said Cllr Chris Slemmings, Cabinet Member for Housing.

"Our benefits team will be on hand with leaflets and other publicity material and will be able to give help and advice on how those claiming benefits can get help to pay their rent or Council Tax. Our officers will even be able to give an on-the-spot quotation of the help someone is entitled to.

"Surveys show that there are still many people, especially among our elderly population, who do not know what they are entitled to claim. It may well be that they are scared about the potential paperwork, but our staff is ready to offer whatever assistance is needed. I would urge anyone who wants to know more to come along on the day and congratulations are due to the RBL for organising this important event," added Cllr Slemmings.

Among the other organisations expected to be on show on the day are the Pension Service, the local branch of the Citizens Advice Bureau, Age Concern and Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen and Families Association.

Anyone who cannot get along to this event but would like to find out more about what help they are entitled to help pay their rent or Council Tax can contact Suffolk Coastal's benefits team on 01394 444838.

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Conditional approval for wind farm at Parham



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05 Oct 2005

Archived press release.

A conditional go-ahead has been given by Suffolk Coastal to plans by PAWF Ltd to build six 100-metre high wind turbines at the former Parham Airfield.

After around two years of public debate and in-depth consultation, the focus today (Wednesday) switched to the Development Control Committee meeting held at the Riverside Centre at Stratford St Andrew in front of a 200-strong audience.

“We recognise that there will inevitably be visual and environmental impacts on the local community but the committee believed that there were not enough reasons under Government planning rules to reject the application,” said Cllr Ivan Jowers, Chairman of the Development Control Committee.

“National planning guidance makes it clear that this district should be playing its part in encouraging more renewable energy schemes. This application makes a small but still significant impact on that national need for alternative sources of energy on a site which has been identified as one of the most appropriate in the county.

“The weight of the Government’s planning advice gave us little alternative but to approve it, but I am proud that we have imposed many conditions that seek to minimise as much as possible the impact of the development on the local area,” added Cllr Jowers.

After five hours of detailed explanations, questioning and discussion, including verbal comments from representatives of the applicants and the local community, the Committee agreed to give authority to approve the application subject to a lengthy list of conditions.

These included giving the developers only three years to start the development, which has been given a maximum lifetime of 25 years, and the setting aside of a sum of money to cover the estimated £36,000 net cost of removing the turbines which must not exceed 100 metres in height.

The Council has demanded that software be installed on the turbines to stop them working at below four metres per second or above 25 metres per second in order to minimise the impact of noise on local residents to a further extent than the current national guidance.

The developers will also be taking action to control the potential flickering of sunlight for those few minutes of the day when the sun might be low enough to cause problems when shining through the turning turbines, and will also be required to deal with any potential TV or radio interference.

“This has been an extremely detailed and complicated application that has attracted over 700 responses and I would thank everyone who has taken the time to air their views. The Committee has gone through a great deal of evidence before making its decision today on the planning merits of the application.

“We have tried to make it as easy as possible for people to find out all the information they needed so they could give an informed view on the proposals. I would also thank our planning

team led by Phil Ridley, and the other officers of the Council who have helped the Committee to come to its decision”, added Cllr Jowers.

The application site is on part of a 310 hectare farm in the parishes of Parham, Great Glemham and Marlesford. PAWF say that the wind farm would generate enough energy to meet the average needs of 4,047 homes, without producing the emissions that are blamed for global warming.



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Christmas is coming and the cards are now in stock



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12 Oct 2005

Archived press release.

For people who prefer to send charity cards to their friends and colleagues on their Christmas list, there are over 40 designs for 20 different charities now available from Suffolk Coastal's Tourist Information Centres (TICs).

The three TICs at Felixstowe, Woodbridge and Aldeburgh are getting into the Christmas spirit by offering cards from the "Cards for Good Causes" range which include charities such as the British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research, RNIB and Shelter.

As well as the Christmas card range, Aldeburgh TIC is also selling Advent calendars and candles, wrapping paper, gift tags and much more from the "Cards for Good Causes" range. Felixstowe TIC is selling local calendars.

"With 40 different designs to choose from, customers should be able to find something to suit their taste as well as being able to support their favourite national charity", said Councillor John Perry, Cabinet Member for the Economy.

"Christmas is a time for giving and I am pleased that our TICs are stocking these cards as the charities concerned will receive at least 81p in every £1," continued Councillor Perry.

The TICs are open Monday - Saturday during the winter season (October to March), their opening times are 9am - 5.30pm Monday to Friday. On Saturdays they are open 9.30am - 5.30pm.



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Recycling only please



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12 Oct 2005

Archived press release.

Anti-social dumpers are turning a popular recycling centre at Tesco in Martlesham Heath into a rubbish tip which is costing the Council dear and could threaten the future of the site.

This particular recycling facility is one of the busiest in Suffolk Coastal, with 285 tonnes of glass, paper, textiles and cans being collected during the year, contributing £850 in community recycling grant to the local community.

Despite notices advising the public that it is an offence, every week dozens of black sacks of domestic refuse along with boxes of junk and bags of garden waste are being left alongside the recycling banks.

“The problem is now getting out of hand, and we are having to regularly clear up the illegally dumped waste so that people are not put off using the recycling facilities. However, this is causing additional unnecessary costs to the Council,” said Councillor Andrew Nunn, Cabinet member with responsibility for waste management.

“There is clearly no excuse for this anti-social behaviour as Suffolk Coastal provides a comprehensive refuse collection service for householders and businesses within the district, as well as fortnightly recycling collections of paper and garden waste. The Foxhall household waste recycling centre is also less than half a mile away from this facility where household waste can be taken for recycling or disposal free of charge.

“It should be pointed out that rubbish left in this way could jeopardise the very existence of the recycling facility, as the Tesco management could view it as a detraction from the image of their recently expanded superstore,” continued Councillor Nunn.

Suffolk Coastal will prosecute anyone found to be fly-tipping their waste at this, or any other recycling site and Courts can impose fines of up to £50,000, a two year prison sentence, and confiscation and destruction of any vehicle involved in fly-tipping offences.

“The Council has written to over 50 people who have left rubbish at these sites and has issued several £50 fixed Penalty Notices to offenders, but it appears that persuasion is not working and we will need to begin to use the full force of the law,” added Councillor Nunn.

Anyone who has normal domestic waste which cannot be recycled at one of the many recycling sites across the district can dispose of it free of charge at the Foxhall, Leiston or Felixstowe household waste sites. For advice on special collection and disposal services for difficult or hazardous wastes, or for advice on recycling contact Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd on 01394 444000.

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Seeking views on how to find a balanced budget



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12 Oct 2005

Archived press release.

Views from across the district are being sought by Suffolk Coastal as it continues planning how to make nearly a million pounds of efficiencies from its budget for the next financial year.

A series of consultation meetings are already underway, and residents were given the chance to have their initial say in the recent edition of the Council's magazine, CoastLine, which included a four-page special explaining the issues it is facing.

"We are asking all parts of our community for their ideas on how services can be made more efficient or improved as we face up to an estimated £1 million shortfall in our budget for 2006/07," said Cllr Ray Herring, Leader of Suffolk Coastal.

"Despite having saved around £5 million since 2001, external factors and expected Government funding decisions means that once again this Council is having to examine all aspects of its spending and services.

"We value local views on helping us identify the best way forward for us, and I would encourage representatives from local community groups to play their part by attending either of our next two meetings at Felixstowe and Saxmundham. They can help us in our task to balance our budget against the needs of our district," added Cllr Herring.

Two meetings have already been held, with members of the business community last week and representatives of local town and parish councils and community groups at Farlingaye School on Monday.

The next two meetings are being held at St John's Church Hall, Felixstowe on Monday, October 17 and the Market Hall, Saxmundham on Thursday, October 20, with both starting at 7pm.

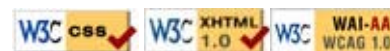
Invitations have been sent out to a variety of business and community groups but if any group is interested in sending a representative along they can contact the Communications Team at Suffolk Coastal on 01394 444361 to find out how they can attend.

A special section of the Council's website is also being launched this week to give everyone with access to the internet the opportunity to find out more about the Council's budget. There will also be an interactive budget game that people can take part in to make their own changes to the Council's budget.

"We are trying to let as many people have their input into our budget at this early stage. Our final decisions on next year's budget will not be made until the end of February but to find £1m of efficiencies from a budget of just over £12.5 million is not an easy task.

"There are no easy solutions as so many of our services are ones we must either provide by law or because the Government sets us tough performance targets linked to future funding. Gaining views from across the district will help us meet this latest challenge," added Cllr Herring.

Anyone wanting to send the Council their views on what efficiencies and savings can be made to existing services can email budget2006@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk or write to Freepost RYLA-



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Councillor defends leisure centre



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13 Oct 2005

Archived press release.

Leiston Leisure Centre has gained a thumbs-up from Councillor Maggy Wilson, Suffolk Coastal's Cabinet Member with responsibility for leisure, after she looked into comments made by an Aldeburgh Town Councillor.

At a recent meeting of the Town Council, Councillor Wilson promised to look into the criticisms of the sports centre made by Councillor Tony Graham-Enock and she has now completed her investigations and finds that there is nothing to justify the allegations.

"I am disappointed that comments about Leiston Leisure Centre were made at such a meeting rather than to the staff at the centre who have no record of any of these issues being raised," said Councillor Wilson.

"Surely if someone has a complaint the obvious thing to do is to take it up at the time rather than wait a few weeks and talk about it in a town council meeting and to the local press," continued Councillor Wilson

DC Leisure manages the centre and contacted Mr Graham-Enock whose complaints seemed to be about a perceived price increase to over £4 for the use of one of the facilities in the gym, some cracked mirrors and the cleanliness of the gym.

The cost of the cardio-vascular equipment that was mentioned went up by 55 pence to £2.80 in the year before the change of management, and to anyone with a Coastal Card the cost is now £2.90.

"There have been incidents of cracked mirrors in the gym caused by people using the equipment and these have been removed by DC Leisure for health and safety reasons and will be replaced and resited as part of a slight redesign of the gym. DC Leisure also has a planned programme for replacing equipment.

"There has been no change in the cleaning carried out at the centre since DC Leisure took over and I have complete confidence in the way that the new management is continuing to provide a quality service to our residents.

"I note that the regular surveys of users and the comments book offers no evidence that anyone else shares Councillor Graham-Enock's views, but if people do find something wrong I would urge them to first take it up with the duty manager so that it can be dealt with straightaway," added Councillor Wilson.

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Kesgrave sets its sights on smaller sports hall



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21 Oct 2005

Archived press release.

There are hopes that Kesgrave will still get its own sports hall after a study concluded that the original plans would be unlikely to attract the necessary funding to make it possible.

“Suffolk Coastal had contributed half the £10,000 cost of a feasibility study that looked at the possibility of providing sports facilities on the Grange Farm estate to serve Kesgrave and Martlesham,” said Cllr Maggy Wilson, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

The developers of the Grange Farm estate had allocated land at Hartree Way, free of charge, to the local community for the provision of indoor bowls facilities and a four badminton court size multi-sports hall, with associated reception, changing and shower facilities. This offer was made on the basis that the land would be used by 2010.

“The study produced by PMP Consultants identified that there was unmet demand for badminton courts and indoor bowls rinks in the area, but also revealed serious concern among all the potential partners about whether the costs of running the centre could be met, let alone those of building it,” said Pat Mills, Chairman of the project group.

The study had concluded that as well as costing around £4 million to build, the original centre would also have annual net running costs of around £200,000.

However, this is not the end of the story. SPARK (Sport and Recreation in Kesgrave), Kesgrave Covenant and Kesgrave Community Centre are currently considering a much less ambitious project for the provision of a smaller multi-sports hall to be located within the grounds of the existing Kesgrave Community Centre. There is every expectation that negotiations will be successful and that such provision will be met in the near future.

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Still time to comment on South Seafront plans



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25 Oct 2005

Archived press release.

Residents are being reminded that they still have a few weeks to comment on revised plans for the leisure-focussed scheme to regenerate 17.5 acres of derelict land at Felixstowe's South Seafront.

The formal period for consultation ended earlier this month and a number of comments have so far been received to the proposals drawn up by the Council's partner Bloor Homes.

"Over 500 people visited our special three-day exhibition of the revised plans last month when there were views expressed both for and against. However, there have not been many comments sent to our planning department," said Cllr Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the South Seafront.

"There does seem to be more of a consensus that something must be done now once and for all with the site. The revised plans offer a much-needed injection of leisure facilities and other services for residents and visitors alike, all funded by a modern, creative approach to the housing part of the scheme.

"I hope as many people as possible make their views clear as quickly as possible. It seems likely that the application will not go before development control councillors until December, so people still have a few weeks to make clear their preference, but I would ask that they make them sooner rather than later," added Cllr Leighton.

Visitors to the recent exhibition at Felixstowe Leisure Centre could leave comments about the proposals but were advised that they would need to make their views about the application directly to the Council's planners. The display boards have since been at Broadway House in Hamilton Road, while the full plans can still be inspected at the Town Hall and library in Felixstowe, as well as the Council's main Melton Hill offices in Woodbridge. There is also information on the Council's website – follow the link on www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

The comments from the exhibition have already proved useful as some changes have been made to some of the application's details as regards the orientation, elevations and parking at the Manor Terrace end of the site.

The exhibition comment book included many generally positive views, with support for the leisure facilities and the housing. The opposition largely focuses on concerns about the loss of open space, the amount of housing and its design, and flood risk.

The largely derelict site has been earmarked for development for many years, and the revised proposals take account of the reasons for rejecting the original proposal, including cutting the number of homes by a quarter.

A detailed Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared by TA Millard East Anglia Ltd that demonstrates that the site is developable according to the strict criteria of the Environment Agency, and even allowing for the effects of further climate change. Major improvements to the sea defences are also set to occur next Spring.

The revised plans include 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 261 additional car-parking spaces that, according to over 270 surveys carried out at peak Sunday times, will be sufficient to meet demand.

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.

Anyone wanting to comment on the planning application should write, quoting the application reference of 05/1723, to Development Control, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Melton Hill, Woodbridge IP12 1AU or email DCadmin@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

The proposals have received a welcome by Cabinet and the special Task Group of councillors set up for this scheme, and were endorsed by our Corporate Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A top barrister has confirmed that the Council has followed proper procedures to ensure that the scheme offers value for money.

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Local youngsters get heard with Amplifier



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31 Oct 2005

Archived press release.

October not only marked the first anniversary of the death of the legendary broadcaster and Suffolk resident John Peel but also the first birthday of Amplifier, a countywide music project of which he would almost certainly have approved.

Amplifier has been offering informal tuition in rock, pop and urban music to young people aged 11-25 across Suffolk for one year. Nearly 80 sessions alone have been held across Suffolk Coastal, including Felixstowe, Leiston, Kesgrave, Saxmundham, Framlingham and Woodbridge, with about 125 young people benefitting from the workshops.

"This has been a really exciting project that is aimed at getting young people to develop their musical talents, pick up useful tips, and maybe form new creative partnerships. For some, this might just be a diverting 'middle eight' during their life, but for some it could be an overture to a new and successful career. However, the real people to listen to about Amplifier is those who have been involved in it," said Councillor Maggy Wilson, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

"I have learnt more about DJ'ing in two hours here tonight than I have in two years" - 14 year old from Leiston.

"I was constructively criticised for things I was doing wrong, for example, finger patterns; this really helped me, as I wouldn't have changed my technique without Amplifier. I also enjoyed working with other guitarists, as it's helped me understand how to get everything running smoothly. I thought the teaching methods were excellent, and I learned so much more due to this." - 13 year old from Woodbridge

"It's just been great to make new friends". - 14 year old from Woodbridge.

This summer saw seven performances across the county designed to showcase the progress so far, with Woodbridge Town Football Club hosting Suffolk Coastal's showcase where 25 young people performed, many for the first time.

This term, Amplifier sessions are running at the Salvation Army in Woodbridge on Monday evenings, offering the opportunity for young people to work towards a vocational level 1 qualification in modern music.

Everyone, whatever their musical ability and taste (from Rock to Indie to Urban), are welcome to attend Amplifier sessions, however places at the sessions are limited, so we strongly recommend reserving or booking your place in advance through The Junction's booking office on 01223 511511. The cost for each session is £3 or £1 concession. This price includes the optional qualification course, which would see the participants receive a certificate of achievement from Access To Music at the end of the Amplifier year. For further information please call 01473 418025 or check www.amplifiersuffolk.co.uk



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SCS delivering success



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31 Oct 2005

Archived press release.

Councillors have heard that the setting up of a new stand-alone company to provide some of the Council's services has proved to be a real success story after its first year of operation.

Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd (SCS) was set up in partnership with Norfolk County Council in July 2004 and includes the grounds maintenance, waste management, property, engineering and vehicle maintenance services that were previously provided directly by the Council.

"This important step was taken to help deliver savings while protecting services and SCS has produced some real results. By the end of March 2006 SCS will have helped the Council achieve £290,000 of budget and efficiency savings, which is a significant achievement," said Councillor Doreen Savage, Cabinet Member for partnerships.

"Much of the savings have been generated by the ability to tap into the advantages of being part of a much larger organisation, with costs reducing by up to 10 per cent on the purchase of items like black sacks, protective clothing and vehicles," added Cllr Savage.

SCS has also won plaudits for its role in the Council's success in resort and rural beaches winning the prestigious Seaside Awards, and its part in the district's recent success in Anglia in Bloom, working in partnership with local Town and Parish Councils.



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Art for Christmas?



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31 Oct 2005

Archived press release.

Looking for that special Christmas present? Then the Arts and Crafts Fair at Waldringfield Village Hall in School Lane on Saturday and Sunday, December 3 and 4 may well be the place to find the perfect gift.

For sale will be some high quality arts and crafts produced by professional artists and makers from all over Suffolk, including watercolours, oil paintings, textiles, prints, jewellery, furniture, glass, wood, sculpture, metal work, ceramics and baskets.

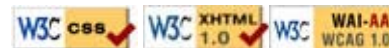
“The Fair is the first of several events to be organised by Deben Arts, an organisation set up to promote community arts at venues along the River Deben,” said Councillor Maggy Wilson, Cabinet Member with responsibility for art and leisure.

“We are very pleased that our arts and heritage development officer, Rachel Nightingale, has been able to offer support to this group, and we wish them every success with their Fair and the other events they have planned,” continued Councillor Wilson.

The Fair will be open from 10am – 8.30pm on the Saturday and from 10am – 4pm on the Sunday, admission £1 for adults, children free.

There is free parking and refreshments in the form of morning coffee, light lunches and afternoon tea will be available.

The hall also offers excellent facilities for the disabled with a parking area, comfort facilities and accessibility for wheelchair users. The layout of the Fair has been designed so that electronic wheelchairs will be able to get round the stands.





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Disappointment at Town Council recommendation



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31 Oct 2005

Archived press release.

A senior Suffolk Coastal Cabinet Member has expressed his disappointment at last week's decision by Felixstowe Town Council to recommend refusal of the multi-million pound plans to regenerate part of the resort with a leisure-focused development.

Revised plans for the Felixstowe South Seafront have been submitted by Bloor Homes, Suffolk Coastal's partner, and the Town Council is one of many bodies being asked for its formal views on the proposals.

"This is a disappointing decision by those Felixstowe Town councillors permitted by the Code of Conduct to discuss this application. Many members (including the two ward District Councillors) were officially excluded from the debate and the vote because quite properly they sit on our Task Group that is co-ordinating the scheme. If those councillors that did take part in the meeting were not clear about the proposals the sensible option would have been to seek clarification and more information and advice on those points that they did not fully understand," said Cllr Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member for the South Seafront project.

When the original plans were submitted, the Town Council voted to recommend approval but with a list of 16 conditions that it wanted to see happen. At last Tuesday's Extraordinary Meeting, the Town Council voted to recommend that the revised scheme should be refused as it thought that only four of those conditions had now been met.

"It is clear from their decision and the published reasons that the councillors present at the vote did not fully understand what is being proposed. For example, I find it strange that they say there are no firm proposals for the refurbishment of the Martello Tower when the revised plans show that the Martello Tower will be the main focus for the central area of the park and at least £220,000 has been allocated by Bloor Homes for the repair and refurbishment of the Tower in close liaison with English Heritage. We hope it will eventually be converted into an arts centre but there is a great deal of restoration work that needs to be done first, which would be funded by the residential part of the scheme," added Cllr Leighton.

Three more of the concerns from the Town Council relate to public transport, cycle routes and traffic management, all of which are the areas of responsibility of Suffolk County Council. Its Highways Department has confirmed to Suffolk Coastal that the scheme meets its requirements.

"The issue of sea defences is also raised but there is a separate planning application for a £5 million project to start next Spring putting in place major much-needed improvements. Suffolk Coastal has undertaken works to the defences since the previous planning application, and it is committed to the maintenance of the flood defence as shown by the planning application and allocation of funding.

"The 16 affordable homes are designed as an integral part of the scheme, indistinguishable from the other homes. The special circumstances of this development, namely the overall economic considerations and the purpose of the residential development being to enable the leisure development to take place, justify the 10 per cent proportion. I would point out that this was not

one of the reasons why the original plans failed.

“What we are then left with is an odd list of grumbles by the Town Council that I do not really think justify refusal or jeopardising such a major investment in the town. Does the lack of showers, a telephone, a water fountain, or the size of the café present really strong enough reasons for a refusal of a sound multi-million pound scheme for which the Felixstowe people have waited well over 20 years to materialise?”

“Many of the points of detail referred to by the Town Councillors can be covered in the discussion of the comprehensive specification. In any event, Suffolk Coastal has already resolved that further public works should be included, funded by Bloor Homes, when further money becomes available through our profit share agreement.

“The final decision will rest with the Development Control Sub-Committee, probably in December, when it meets to determine the application and will have the comments of the Town Council and all the other bodies and individuals who have responded,” added Cllr Leighton.

The revised plans specifically address the reasons cited for refusal last time, take account of consultation and include 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 261 additional car-parking spaces that surveys show will be sufficient to meet demand.

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.

More information on the proposed development and what it means can be found by following the link on the Council’s website www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Anyone wanting to comment on the planning application should write, quoting the application reference of 05/1723, to Development Control, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Melton Hill, Woodbridge IP12 1AU or email DCadmin@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

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Go-ahead given for twin bin collection



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01 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

Making it easier to recycle and protecting residents from potentially massive Council Tax rises are the two key reasons behind Suffolk Coastal's recent decision to introduce an enhanced recycling scheme.

Suffolk Coastal is now the only area in the county still restricting its domestic recycling collection to paper and garden waste. Its Cabinet has now backed plans to improve recycling services by switching to an alternating collection service with a wider range of recyclable materials collected on one week, and non-recyclables collected the following week, using wheeled bins.

"Our residents are showing their commitment by using our current recycling collection schemes for paper and garden waste and these, together with the use of neighbourhood recycling centres is resulting in over 30 per cent of their waste being recycled. However, there is also frustration that we are not taking other materials such as plastic and cans," said Councillor Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment, natural and built.

"There is also the stark and chilling financial prospect that if we do not reduce the amount we take away in black sacks then by 2019 the additional cost to our Council Tax payers would be £9 million a year, the equivalent of over £150 on every Band D Council Tax bill.

"Further radical changes to our refuse and recycling service are therefore inevitable as the financial and environmental impact of doing nothing cannot be seriously considered. We are therefore planning the phased introduction of the twin bin scheme incorporating better recycling and composting services," added Cllr Nunn.

All homes will eventually receive two wheeled bins, one for rubbish and the other for recyclates – materials that the Council will collect for recycling. Councillors are insisting that the colour of the bins be considered to minimise any adverse visual impacts, and that procedures be reviewed in respect of assistance for infirm or disabled residents, as well as the possibility of shared bins for some homes.

"I can understand that there may be some concern that retaining kitchen waste for up to two weeks might cause problems for some residents in the summer. However, in other districts it has been proved that this can be avoided by residents taking the preventative action of wrapping their food waste before putting it in the non recyclables bin. In addition there are proposals for food waste to be allowed in the 'green waste' bins so that this can also be composted; this is however dependant on the construction of a suitable fully enclosed composting facility.

"There is a consistently strong demand in our district for even better recycling services and we are happy to make it easier for people to get into the recycling habit. We have examined collection schemes at over 120 other local authorities and believe that we have identified a scheme that can be shown to work well, give every resident the opportunity to play their part in recycling and protecting the environment for future generations, and can be introduced in a way so as to minimise the financial impacts.

"I am confident that people will understand that these changes will deliver better services and avoid the potentially horrendous financial cost of doing nothing," added Cllr Nunn.

Two Government policies regarding the disposal of waste to landfill sites are putting increased financial pressures on all councils to ensure that even more recycling occurs. If there were no changes to current recycling and refuse rates, the total bill for all Suffolk councils is estimated to be around £45 million a year by 2019. At the moment Suffolk Coastal offers the most cost-effective waste collection service in the county at an equivalent of 54 pence a week, 18 pence less than the next council and 42 pence lower than the highest.



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Funding agreed for improved play facilities



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03 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal's innovative Playspace scheme is set to help three more projects across the district that will bring about improved play and recreation facilities for the community.

Funding from the Playspace scheme for improvements to three play areas at Seaton Road, Ferry Road and Adastral Close in Felixstowe, and support for the construction of changing rooms at Kings Field, Aldeburgh, were all given the go-ahead by Cabinet this week (Tuesday).

"This fund has proved to be an important financial support for projects across the district and I am pleased we were able to support four more local initiatives that will improve the quality of play in Aldeburgh and Felixstowe," said Cllr Maggy Wilson, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

Seaton Road will see £27,000 spent bringing the Council-owned play facilities up to current standards and also more attractive for teenagers. Half the money will come from the Playspace scheme and the rest from the Council. A new £3,000 item of play equipment will also be installed at Ferry Road, with the costs again split between the Council and the Playspace scheme.

The local residents association want the Orwell Housing Association owned play area improved and brought up to national standards and had bid for the full £25,000 estimated cost. However, Cabinet agreed to Felixstowe Town Council's request that because of the need to support other projects only £10,000 be paid and that Suffolk Coastal help identify other potential sources of funding.

It was also agreed to give £20,000 to the Aldeburgh Community Sports Trust that is seeking to add changing rooms to its planned creation of a community centre. The Trust has already successfully gained over £100,000 of funding from six other sources including the National Lottery.

The Playspace scheme was set up to accumulate funding from housing developers so that improved play and leisure opportunities could be provided in the areas where most new homes were being built.

If you are a community or sports group that would like to improve facilities in the district the Playspace scheme may be able to help you. To find out more contact Joe Liggett, Leisure Services Manager, on 01394 444318, write to Joe at Melton Hill, Woodbridge IP12 1AU or email joe.liggett@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk



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Help Suffolk Coastal keep its standards



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03 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal is seeking an independent person to join its Standards Committee that helps to ensure that councillors and officers of the District Council and the District's Town and Parish Councils continue to meet the high standards expected of them.

The Standards Committee includes four District Councillors, two representatives of the Town and Parish Councils, and two independent people. An independent member chairs it.

"We are inviting applications from people with local links to bring an independent view to the work of this important committee. We should like to find someone who has a genuine interest in promoting and improving high standards of conduct in public life. Ideally they should have an awareness of the local area and community issues, be familiar with ethical dilemmas, have questioning skills, be assertive, and be independent of any political party and local government," said Hilary Slater, Monitoring Officer for Suffolk Coastal District.

Independent members of the Standards Committee should be aged 18 or over, and be able to undertake something in the region of six to eight meetings per annum (mostly in the evening).

Anyone who is a member or officer of the Council, or any other relevant public authority, or is a close friend or relative of any councillor or Council officer, will not be considered.

There is no formal payment for being on the Committee although the Council will pay allowances to cover travel and subsistence expenses.

Anyone who would like to find out more about becoming a member of the Standards Committee can obtain an information pack and application form by writing to Alan Biddle at Suffolk Coastal District Council, Melton Hill, Woodbridge, IP12 1AU or telephoning (01394) 444325. Completed forms are needed back by November 26 at the latest.



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Give health services more time to find savings



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

04 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal is renewing its call to the Government to protect residents by giving local health trusts more time in their urgent battle to balance their budgets.

The health care system in Suffolk East is facing a very difficult financial situation with a combined deficit of £47.9 million and a Government requirement to both balance their books by March 2007 and pay off any debts.

“Last week I was part of an all-party delegation from Suffolk that met the Health Minister Rosie Winterton to present first-hand the strong concerns of local people about the drastic programme of savings proposed by our Primary Care Trusts (PCTs),” said Cllr Sherrie Green, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

“The blame for this financial crisis does not lie directly with the Government but it does have the ability to expand the time given for the overspend to be paid back, and this could be done in a way that could soften the impact on local residents.

“The Minister was insistent that the overspend had to be paid back and that there was no more money available, but on the time issue she was not so insistent. Ms Winterton asked if Suffolk County Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be referring the PCT proposals to the Secretary of State for reconsideration and I sincerely hope they do this. The councillors, along with our MP John Gummer, strongly urged the Minister to look at these major health issues as the people of Suffolk do not deserve to suffer in the future because of the past mistakes in budgetary management,” added Cllr Green.

The current PCT proposals would see a reduction in local services to a ‘core’ level, with restrictions on service development. Among the changes that would affect Suffolk Coastal residents are the closure and sale of Felixstowe’s Bartlett Hospital and Annex, the removal of in-patient beds at Hartismere Hospital and its closure and sale, fewer beds at Aldeburgh, and the closure of three older people’s mental health day hospitals.

The Council is concerned that local carers will not be able to immediately cope with the additional demands caused by the removal of local hospital community beds.

“These changes were planned to take up to five years, giving local groups time to get ready but now it will happen in six months. There is an unwritten expectation by the PCTs that the voluntary sector or social services will do those services that are not part of the ‘core’ but we seriously doubt if they will be capable.

“We just do not believe that the resources and skills are there to fill in the gaps that the package of cuts proposed by the PCTs will leave in our communities. Unless more time is given by the Government and its Strategic Health Authority to allow proper planning then there will be a severe adverse impact on local patients,” added Cllr Green.

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Who will fund free bus passes?



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04 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

Confusion still surrounds the funding to meet the Government's latest promise that free bus passes will be available for elderly and disabled people from April 2006.

Suffolk Coastal estimates that it could cost £685,751 next year to provide a pass that will give free bus travel across the county to local elderly and disabled people but it is anticipated that only £491,923 of money will be made available from a special Government fund.

"The Government announced after its Budget in March that all councils must provide free travel to elderly and disabled residents but it is not providing enough money to run the scheme and meet the full cost of its latest 'promise', and more worrying still it may only offer support for the first three years," said Councillor Stephen Burroughes, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Rural Issues.

"This leaves a gap of about £200,000 which is about what this Council was already spending on its half-price travel scheme, but only part of which was funded by the Government. However, we will face real problems if the scheme proves more popular, or more difficult to administer, than we predict and what is meant to happen after 2009 when the Government is set to cut the money off is anyone's guess.

"We currently offer our half-price scheme which has provided value for money for our elderly and disabled residents and also for this Council, and we welcome the opportunity to expand it to a completely free service but there should be adequate and on-going funding from the Government," added Cllr Burroughes.

Any resident aged 60 or over is automatically eligible to apply for a bus pass from the Council, as is anyone with a qualifying disability which includes being blind, partially sighted, impaired walking, a learning disability, or not permitted to drive on medical grounds.

Under its current half-price bus pass scheme, Suffolk Coastal issued 10,438 passes last year, with just over a quarter of those eligible applying for one. It is expected that over 13,000 people will be attracted by the new-style pass. If applications outrun resources, then it could have a serious impact on the Council's financial position as each pass costs over £50.

In addition to the bus pass, the Council also offers a Senior Railcard at £15 each (£5 below its official price) to residents aged over 60 who do not want a bus pass, a disabled persons railcard at £13.50, and also £40 worth of travel vouchers for use on taxis or community transport by those with disabilities who are unable to use conventional methods of transport.

Full details of how to apply for a bus pass will be in the Spring edition of CoastLine or keep an eye on the local press or the Council's website for news once the final scheme has been announced.

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Performance targets being met



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08 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

After a successful year in 2004/05 when most of the measures of key services provided by Suffolk Coastal were shown to have improved, the first six months of this year are proving to be even better.

Last 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 – for example, our housing benefits team has been delivering good to excellent services when compared to national targets and are well up on this time last year,” said Cllr Ray Herring, Leader of the Council.

“We have also achieved excellent results in dealing with the average time on processing changes in benefits cases. We are also committed to ensure that these improvements are not one-offs.

“In the coming months new computer software will be introduced which will greatly improve the efficiency of our benefits visiting service, while other new business processes are in the pipeline. At the same time, we are also actively promoting benefit take-up in the district to ensure that residents claim what they are entitled to,” added Cllr Herring.

Other figures in the report show that sickness absence is at record low levels, that the target of 65 new affordable homes being built this year should be met, and that major progress is being made on coastal protection. Homeless families in hostel accommodation are also spending less time and the Council is meeting the Government target of having no families in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than six weeks.

“The latest statistics also show that our development control team has also been delivering good to excellent performances during the first six months of this financial year. For a variety of reasons we were struggling to meet Government targets for dealing with planning applications but we have put in place a major action plan which is clearly now delivering results.

“Overall, this Council is moving in the right direction to provide the quality of service delivery that our residents rightly expect and I am proud 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 that we will,” added Cllr Herring.

While recycling rates are at a record high in the district at around 38 per cent, there has to be a slight concern that the amount of household waste being collected is not really decreasing.

Other measures reported also show that Suffolk Coastal has both the lowest rates of long-term and current unemployment in the county and that it has very low rates of burglary and vehicle crime.

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Highways Agency views take priority on Orwell Crossing



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11 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

Serious concerns expressed by the Highways Agency left councillors with no choice but to refuse the request by the owners of the Orwell Crossing café to allow any member of the public to use their facility.

Yesterday's (Thursday) meeting of the South Area Development Control Sub Committee voted to refuse to lift two official planning conditions that currently restrict the use of the café for only lorry drivers.

The café was originally granted planning permission by the Council in November 2002 when the applicants agreed as part of their application that it and the other facilities in the lorry park would only be for lorry drivers.

"The applicants were now looking to have two planning conditions lifted which would make it legal for them to serve any member of the public and not just lorry drivers. I understand that it is a first-class, well-run facility but this Committee had to abide by the Highways Authority's direction to refuse the planning permission," said Cllr Ivan Jowers, Chairman of the South Area Development Control Sub Committee.

"This could still prove to be a major local attraction but the applicants need to resolve with the Highways Agency what appear to be rather fundamental objections as the A14 is at near capacity levels. Unfortunately, we have no choice when the Agency formally directs us to refuse because in its words this application would result in 'enhancing accident risk'," added Cllr Jowers.

Written comments from the Highways Agency were received too late for the published agenda item for the committee, but were shared with the councillors at the meeting.

The spelt-out reason for its objection is that 'intensified use of site by those other than lorry drivers and existing trunk road users would significantly increase traffic movements to and from the site, thereby enhancing accident risk.'

In its accompanying letter, it states 'The Highways Agency has serious concerns regarding the lifting of conditions 2 and 5. The Agency maintains that services on the network should where practical and possible be provided wholly for the users of the network.'

The letter goes on to say that the Highways Agency would have given a direction of refusal in 2002 if they had known that it was intended to offer what is currently being advertised - coach parties, live music, entertainment programme, bar with normal licensing hours, Christmas and New Year functions catering for up to 150 people.

'The Agency have maintained the principle that any proposals for use of sites on the trunk road network, other than those which service the network user, would be refused as the site then becomes a destination in its own right. This would place extra pressure on the network, create undesirable traffic movements, and increase the very real probability for accidents to occur.

'It is the Agency's position to secure the network as far as possible from unnecessary additional usage. This in effect protects and enhances the safety of the trunk road network and its users. Therefore, the Highways Agency objects to lifting of the above conditions on the basis of the stated safety concerns,' the letter concludes.



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Find out more about proposed offshore wind farm



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15 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal is inviting people to visit its website to see for themselves the details of a request for planning permission to construct onshore connection works relating to the proposed Greater Gabbard offshore wind farm.

Greater Gabbard Offshore Winds Ltd. has submitted its formal planning application for the onshore connection works at Sizewell to the proposed wind farm sited on sandbanks known as the Inner Gabbard and the Galloper off the Suffolk coast.

The connection works consist of an onshore cable installation and associated equipment, vehicular access and associated tracks including temporary laydown areas and construction compounds and construction of a sub-station with a maximum height of 15 metres above ground level at Sizewell.

Associated earthworks and landscaping are also proposed, including the repositioning and replacement of an electricity pylon.

"We are inviting residents to let us have their comments on the associated works, not the actual offshore wind farm application, which is the subject of a separate submission by the company to the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs," said Councillor Ivan Jowers, Chairman of the Development Control Committee.

"This is a detailed application with a lot of supporting information and because we know there will be public interest in it we are putting as much of the detail as possible on our website.

"I would recommend that people take the time to look at the special section on the plans on our website and they can even give their comments on-line about the proposals. We are setting a closing date of Wednesday, November 30, 2005 for people to give their comments and these will then be presented to councillors when the application is discussed by the Development Control North Area Sub-Committee," added Cllr Jowers.

Any resident wanting to make comments on the application can visit the Council's website <http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/devcontrol/applications/offshore/> or can email dc.sizewellwind@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk or write to Development Control at Suffolk Coastal District Council, Melton Hill, Woodbridge IP 12 1AU quoting the application's reference number CO5/1949/FUL.

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Felixstowe TIC a beacon for sea safety



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24 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

Her Majesty's Coastguard has awarded a Gold Sea Smart Safety Award to Felixstowe Tourist Information Centre (TIC), one of only five such awards issued throughout England, Scotland and Wales this year.

These new awards recognise and reward those TICs around the coast that are making a significant contribution to sea and beach safety and were issued after mystery shoppers made visits across England, Scotland and Wales.

"This important new initiative aims to raise standards across the country and I feel proud that Felixstowe TIC is being seen as a beacon for others to follow. This Council takes water safety very seriously and I am very pleased that its efforts has gained this national recognition," said Cllr John Perry, Cabinet Member with responsibility for tourism.

The Sea Smart Safety Awards assessed whether TICs stocked any free sea and beach safety publicity material, and rate the helpfulness of the service they received. Both the Coastguard and the Royal National Lifeboat Association provide a range of free information that is available to TICs.

The Coastguard Sea Smart campaign promotes sea and beach safety to parents of young children to reduce serious injuries and deaths on our coastline.

"TICs are a potentially vital source of coastal safety information and this gold award acknowledges the excellent work being done by Felixstowe. We want other TICs to follow this shining example because this work can literally make the difference between a great day out and a potential tragedy," said Chief Coastguard John Astbury.

The award was officially handed over to the TIC today (Thursday) by Mr Murray Milligan, MCA Area Operations Manager for the Eastern Regions, witnessed by Cllr Perry, Cllr Doreen Savage, and the Mayor of Felixstowe, Cyril Webb.



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Top of the awards



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24 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

At the recent Suffolk Lawn Tennis Association's Awards Evening, the Council won the Local Authority award and six of the other awards on offer went to individuals, clubs or schools in the Suffolk Coastal district.

The event, sponsored by Ensors Chartered Accountants and HFU Mutual (Ipswich), was held at Culford School, Bury St Edmunds on Wednesday, November 9 to honour and reward achievements of individuals and providers who had contributed significantly to tennis in the county.

"This Council has been committed to encouraging the take-up of tennis with a regular series of coaching sessions for all abilities held at venues across our district," said Councillor Maggy Wilson, Cabinet Member with responsibility for sport and leisure.

"Thanks to those who have worked so hard to raise the profile and standard of tennis in Suffolk Coastal, seven out of a possible thirteen awards went to clubs, schools and individuals in our district as well as the Local Authority award to our Council.

"It is encouraging that mini-tennis attracted two of the awards giving young children in our area the opportunity to get started in the game at an early age with the chance to move up to junior, senior and club tennis as they improve and gain confidence in the sport. We could well be nurturing the next Andy Murray or Elena Baltacha, and it is very pleasing to see that Felixstowe's Andrea Cooper has been starring over the last year," continued Councillor Wilson.

The seven awards were:

Local Authority: Suffolk Coastal

The local authority that has provided a comprehensive community tennis programme and demonstrated a range of initiatives for all ages and standards.

Mini Tennis Centre: Woodbridge Tennis Club

The venue which has delivered a quality coaching and competitive programme for starter players and developed a proven link between mini-tennis and junior tennis.

Club School/Link: The Abbey School/ Woodbridge

The club and local school who have demonstrated an efficient partnership to develop opportunities for the local community.

Coach of the year: Framlingham's Trevor Wright

A coach widely recognised and respected for their on court coaching knowledge and support to players and who has developed a comprehensive coaching programme at a particular venue.

Primary School: Wickham Market

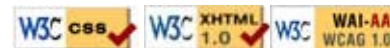
The primary school which has developed a good programme of mini-tennis including curriculum delivery, an after-school club and an involvement in the County Primary Schools Mini-Tennis Competition.

Senior of the year: Felixstowe's Andrea Cooper

The senior male or female who has demonstrated outstanding results either individually or for county representative teams.

Facility of the Year: Bramford LTC

A facility which has been completed in the calendar year, judged on criteria including project design and scope of development to provide better opportunities for year round tennis.



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Help us explain our spending



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25 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal is seeking views on whether it has been successful in its attempt to make its accounts easier to understand following the production of a new summary to explain how it spent its money last year.

Each year the Council is required to produce a large document that details its full accounts for the previous financial year in a format prescribed by regulation, but this time it has also produced a four page summary which can be seen on its website.

“This short summary of the accounts from last year covers details such as revenue, cash and capital. We would like to hear from people whether they think it is useful or not, does it go into too much detail, or not enough? Have we been successful in trying to get rid of some of the jargon involved with our accounts?” said Cllr Robert Whiting, Cabinet Member for Fiscal and Democratic Services.

“It includes our key financial information such as our gross spending, our main income sources, and the way the gap was filled via the Council Tax, and our share of grants and business rates that the Government gives us. Also included are summaries of our balance sheet, cash flow statement, reserves, plus our capital expenditure.

“The full version of the accounts can also be seen on our website, and while this summary clearly does not go into as much detail we want to know whether people find it useful or not. As well as seeking feedback from our residents and the public at large, we will also be asking our town and parish councils as we want as wide a range of views as possible,” added Cllr Whiting.

The full version of the statement of accounts can be found on the same section of the website. Comments on the usefulness of the summary can be sent to the Council's finance team at Melton Hill, Woodbridge IP12 1AU or by emailing accountancy@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

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Bags of reasons to clean up after your dog



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28 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

There's good news for dog owners as Suffolk Coastal is selling rolls of 50 bags for 50 pence so that they can clear up any mess left by their pets.

The bags can be bought from the Council's offices at Melton Hill, from the Tourist Information Centres in Aldeburgh, Felixstowe and Woodbridge, Suffolk Coastal Services' depot at Ufford, and also at libraries and many other shops across the district.

"Suffolk Coastal has always been keen to encourage responsible dog ownership, and these bags are a way of making it easier for people to make sure that their beloved pet is not an unwanted pain for other residents," said Cllr Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment natural and built.

"Dog mess can contain worms that cause serious eye disorders in adults and children, although these worms can be controlled if the dog is regularly wormed. However, there is no argument that dog mess on a park, grass verge, pavement, heathland walk or beach is unpleasant.

"I hope as many people as possible take the chance of buying these bags at this bargain rate. They have proved very popular in the past, which I think shows that there are many responsible dog owners in our district but it is high time that all of them just followed the basic rule of bag it, tie it, bin it – clean up after your pet," added Cllr Nunn.

As well as the bags, there are over 2400 dog bins and litter bins which can also be used to dispose of bagged dog waste throughout the district. The Council can impose a £50 fixed penalty fine (soon to be increased to an expected level of £100) for anyone who fails to clean up after their dog has fouled and if an offender is prosecuted in court, they may face a fine of up to £1000

A dog warden service is also provided by the Council's partner company, Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd (SCS). You can contact SCS on 01394 444000, by emailing scsltd@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk, or by writing to: SCS, Ufford Park Offices, Yarmouth Road, Ufford, Suffolk IP13 6ET.

SCS collects stray and lost dogs, taking them to kennels to await collection by their owner. There is a charge to reclaim the dog. The minimum charge is £55 for a dog with a readable chip or wearing an identity tag when it is caught, or £65 where the dog is not wearing anything to identify it.

There is a further charge for each day the dog is kept and all charges must be paid before the dog can be collected. The dog is normally kept for up to seven days, after which it will be offered for re-homing or, in some cases, it may be destroyed. If you have lost your dog, call SCS on 01394 444000 who will check to see whether it has been collected and taken to a kennel.

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IIP, IIP hooray, Suffolk Coastal retains prestige status



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28 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

A thorough inspection of Suffolk Coastal has seen it retain its status as an Investor in People (IIP) with praise for the fact that improving performance is at the core of the Council.

The Council achieved IIP status in 1999 and the assessor's report of its third recognition review carried out three weeks ago has now been received. It starts with a quote from an interviewed employee that it says summarises the culture of Suffolk Coastal - 'It's changed for the good in the past few years, the bosses have a no-blame culture and we take more responsibility for what we are doing.'

"This is excellent news and management, staff and councillors deserve praise for this latest thumbs-up for Suffolk Coastal. As a Council we are committed to improving the quality of life in the district, and to achieve this we need staff that are ready to provide the efficient effective services that our residents deserve," said Cllr Robert Whiting, Cabinet Member for Fiscal and Democratic Services.

The IIP assessment confirms that there is 'clear strategic direction for improving performance' that 'key performance indicators are used to drive performance improvements' and that 'each individual has their own targets that tie into the team objectives.'

The report states that Suffolk Coastal 'is standing up to a period of unprecedented change and its top management team are meeting the challenges through continuous restructuring of services and by reorganising the way it makes decisions. The Council has a clear vision of the future and provides strategic and operational direction through a balanced scorecard approach.'

"This has been a challenging period for Suffolk Coastal, and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. We should not forget that these significant strides recognised by this IIP assessment have occurred during a period when we have found efficiencies of £5 million since 2001 from an annual budget of under £13 million.

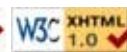
"We have had, and still have, no choice other than to find more and more efficiencies, but we have also taken the opportunity as recognised by this report to make our management structure more effective and efficient. Indeed, our revised top management structure has itself saved over £150,000," added Cllr Whiting.

Among the points made in the assessment are that there is a much more positive attitude in all the areas included in the review to staff development processes, that information from customer surveys is being fed back and discussed, and that team meetings were one of the ways in which the Council had improved since the last visit.

Among the considerable changes and progress recognised by the assessment since the last inspection are the introduction of a new appraisal scheme tailored to review the performance and encourage the development of each employee, improved internal communications, and the implementation of the balanced scorecard and a competency framework. The report also

suggests how further improvements could be made.

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New plans for Felixstowe skateboard park roll out



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29 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

New plans have been unveiled for a skatepark in Felixstowe's Orwell Green which include additional measures to control noise to help resolve the fears of some local residents about the development.

Initial proposals, distributed around local homes at the start of the year, provoked some concerns about whether enough was being done to minimise noise and address related concerns. The project is being developed in partnership with Felixstowe Town Council, together with skateboarding groups and young people. The Council has also worked closely with the local police in developing the project.

"In January we asked for comments from people living around Orwell Green on the plans for providing this much-needed facility for the young people of Felixstowe. These new plans I think meet most of the concerns that were raised by some people," said Cllr Maggy Wilson, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

"The actual skating surface would now take up about 25% less space than before, and we are proposing some significant landscaping around it to minimise the noise.

"The challenge has been to balance the desire to keep noise and disturbance to a minimum while still providing a facility that is accessible and visible enough for young people to use safely. We think these plans meet that goal and I hope that local residents will recognise what great steps forward have been made," added Cllr Wilson.

The proposal 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 bunds and the steps down to the skatepark would be designed deliberately to prevent them being used as an extension of the park itself. It is also intended to provide lighting, with maybe two and no more than four columns providing just enough light for the area until 8.30pm each evening.

It 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, with the police having the official powers to take action if the rules are broken.

"Our target is to submit a planning application next month (December) for these proposals when all those in the immediate area of Orwell Green will be formally consulted for their views. However, we have delivered a copy of the latest plans to local people and any of them who want to make their comments now can do so," added Cllr Wilson.

Anyone wanting to make comments on these latest proposals can write to the Community and Economic Services Team at Suffolk Coastal District Council, Melton Hill, Woodbridge IP12 1AU, or email community.economic@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

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Coming weather or not - the new green motto



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30 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

Whatever the weather, the partnership of local residents and Suffolk Coastal is working together to break all local records for the amount of recycling, with the all-year round garden waste service proving a massive hit.

Since April this year over 6,500 tonnes of garden waste have been collected, and so diverted away from landfill to composting, by Suffolk Coastal Services on behalf of the Council.

“After our mild autumn, I am sure more people than normal were out tidying their gardens and I would remind all our green fingered and green minded residents that they can continue to put their garden waste in one of our brown bins as we collect throughout the year,” said Cllr Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment – natural and built.

“The efforts across the district have been tremendous this year, with more than 4,000 tonnes of other materials being recycled as well, through our fortnightly collection of paper, or at one of the mini-recycling centres. For the six months from April, 37.98 per cent of household waste was being recycled, compared to 31.21 per cent in the same period last year.

“Our residents have really got into the recycling habit and their commitment is having very positive effects in protecting the environment for future generations. Plans are being drawn up for an even more comprehensive recycling service in response to calls from our public for plastics and other products to be collected,” added Cllr Nunn.

Diverting garden waste to composting helps to reduce greenhouse gas production at the landfill sites and produces a useful soil improver for both the clay and sandy soils found within the district. It is available from Viridor Waste Management in small and large quantities for both agricultural and horticultural use.

There are many ways that residents can play their part. Suffolk Coastal pioneered a real nappy scheme ‘Coastal Cottons’ which provides free trial kits of ‘real’ nappies to mothers and new parents through midwives and health visitors. Home composters are still available at discounted rates, over 230 neighbourhood recycling banks have been provided, primarily for glass and cans, and residents can recycle paper products, and garden waste through the Council's existing fortnightly collection schemes.

For residents who are finding that they are producing more garden waste than their home composter or brown bin can take, it might be time for them to get another bin at £25 + VAT a year from Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd.

For further information on recycling services in Suffolk Coastal visit the Suffolk Coastal District Council website at www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk or contact Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd on 01394 444000.

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Council registers objections to health service cuts



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30 Nov 2005

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal's voice on health issues has listed the Council's serious concerns about the proposed changes to local health services proposed by the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in their Changing for the Better consultation document.

The health care system in Suffolk East is facing a very difficult financial situation with it reporting a combined deficit of £47.9 million and a Government requirement to both balance their books by March 2007 and pay off any debts.

"The PCTs have been asking for views since September on their package of cuts to local services that is aimed at helping them balance their books. While I recognise the financial urgency, this Council cannot support the proposals in the consultation document in anyway whatsoever," said Cllr Sherrie Green, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

"The PCT has a statutory and legal obligation to the local population. This Council feels that the current financial shortfalls and the responsibilities for them must lie with the PCT, not with the local people who will most definitely suffer from these drastic changes," added Cllr Green.

"The PCTs state that they would reduce local services to a 'core' level and they have admitted they need to assess what are core services. I would say that the reduction of beds for older people in community hospitals and of medical beds at Ipswich Hospital is an attack on the very core of what they should be providing and what our residents have every right to expect," added Cllr Green.

In her letter formally responding to the consultation, Cllr Green goes on to ask why no needs assessment has been carried out for the proposed reduction in beds at Felixstowe, or any assessment of the risks being caused by all the changes planned for the resort. She also wants to know what happened to the promised day clinics that would save people being ferried up and down the A14 for treatment.

The closure of the minor injuries unit and the reduction in beds at Aldeburgh is also regretted, and the Council wants reassurance that private beds will not replace them at a hospital that was built as a result of local fundraising.

"We also find it deplorable that the PCT has now instructed Ipswich Hospital to treat emergencies only and not carry out planned surgery until patients have been waiting four months.

"Ipswich will see the loss of 80 beds, 28 surgical, and 52 medical. There is a massive assumption that patients can be cared for in the community but in the short-term the resources for this community care cannot be instigated effectively. This type of massive sea change needs years of planning, not months.

"Suffolk Carers have told this Council that they could not manage the extra care that would be required due to the removal of local hospital community beds, and those at Ipswich Hospital. Even more chillingly, at the same time the PCT plans to reduce the voluntary sector's budget by about five per cent," added Cllr Green.

The letter also predicts that the closure of respite beds will lead to an increase in admissions for both the sufferer of the chronic disease and also their carer, unless they can afford to find private support.

Suffolk Coastal has been asking the Government to give the local PCTs more time in their battle to balance their budgets. Cllr Green was part of a recent all-party delegation that visited the Health Minister Rosie Winterton to present first-hand the strong feelings of local people about the drastic programme of savings. While Government Ministers appear insistent that the PCTs must pay back any overspending, Cllr Green thought they were not so insistent on the currently tight timescales. She has called on the Government to grant a longer time period to PCTs to resolve their immediate financial problems and so avoid the potentially serious impacts on health services for local residents.

A copy of the Council's response can be downloaded by [following this link](#).



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Suffolk Coastal's Christmas 2005 opening times



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07 Dec 2005

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal's Melton Hill offices will be closed to the public from 4.45pm (cash office 4pm) on Friday, December 23 until 8.45am (cash office 9.15am) on Tuesday, January 3.

The Felixstowe office will close at 4.30pm on Wednesday, December 21 and will re-open on Wednesday, January 4 at 9.00am.

The normal emergency out of hours service provided by Suffolk Coastal will be available to residents of the district throughout the festive period and can be contacted by telephoning 07771 816535.

Refuse and recycling services will be working every day except for Monday and Tuesday, December 26 and 27 when there will be no collection. There will be slight changes to normal recycling services during the holiday period and these are covered in a separate press release.

If you have any recycling or refuse enquiries after Christmas, Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd will re-open on Wednesday, December 28 to Friday, December 30 and on Tuesday, January 3. Their opening times are 8.45am – 5.15pm Monday to Thursday, 8.45am-4.45pm Friday and they can be contacted on 01394 444000.

Details of Suffolk Coastal's services can be found on www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk.



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Partners welcome seafront plans decision



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08 Dec 2005

Archived press release.

The partnership behind the proposed multi-million pound regeneration of a derelict site in Felixstowe has welcomed the news that it has won the planning go-ahead for its ambitious scheme.

Today (Thursday) saw Suffolk Coastal's South Area Development Control Sub-Committee give unanimous all-party approval to 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.

"This is a massive leap forward for the people of Felixstowe because it means we are at last closer to being able to replace an increasingly ugly eye-sore with some exciting new leisure facilities aimed at all the family. I am sure they will prove a big hit with residents as well as offering another new attraction for visitors," said Cllr Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member leading on the South Seafront project.

"I would like to thank our partners Bloor Homes who have persevered with this vital project on a rather long and rocky road. They have worked closely with the Council to come back with an improved scheme that succeeds in meeting our goal of providing a much-needed facelift for this area.

"There are still some significant hurdles to overcome but we have managed to achieve a creative way of getting new leisure-related facilities built that will be funded by Bloors. 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 plans offer a much-needed injection of leisure facilities and other services for residents and visitors alike, all funded by a modern, creative approach to the housing part of the scheme.

The application specifically addressed the reasons cited for refusal last time, taking account of consultation and include 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.

“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,” added Cllr Leighton.

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.

“We want the park to be the main focus of the development, and expect it to be a significant attraction for family members of all ages, both residents and visitors. The inspiration for the public park is drawn from the seafront and the heritage of Felixstowe but with a contemporary maritime character, a philosophy which has also influenced the style of our proposed housing,” said Andrew Marns, Land Manager of Bloor Homes.

“We have taken great care to respect and enhance the setting of the Martello Tower, an official ancient monument, after detailed discussions with English Heritage. This is a very important development site, and I believe that we and the Council are ready to put in place a major enhancement for the resort with both its leisure facilities and housing,” added Mr Marns.

However, progress on the project will partly depend on whether the Government chooses to call in the decision for further consideration as the plans are a possible departure from the agreed Development Plan for the area, and the Council owns most of the site.

A Government announcement this week may also cause delays as it was revealed that there would be no funding available in the coming financial year for urgent coastal improvement works that the Council had been working on with the Environment Agency and the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The work on replacing 50 groynes and replacing them with 19 rock groynes was due to start in the Spring. The Environment Agency’s support for the South Seafront application was conditional on the defence works being carried out.

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Plans for Felixstowe coastal defence get go-ahead



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08 Dec 2005

Archived press release.

Plans for major coastal defence improvements in the South Felixstowe area were given the go-ahead today (Thursday) as urgent discussions have begun to gain the funding to enable the work to begin as soon as possible.

The South Area Development Control Sub-Committee approved planning permission for the works that would include replacing 50 decaying groynes with 19 rock groynes.

"We have been working hard with the Environment Agency and also with DEFRA for works that would get underway in the Spring to provide much-needed coastal protection works along the southern seafront of Felixstowe," said Cllr Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member with responsibility for coastal protection.

"This £5 million project will offer vital protection against flooding to 1,616 existing homes as well as the Port of Felixstowe and the many local businesses and tourist attractions. It is a massively important proposal and it is therefore very disappointing to discover this week that the Government is currently unwilling to fund it.

"We will be contacting the Government urgently to try and persuade them to recognise that funding has to be made available for this project sooner rather than later. Our proposed scheme would offer protection to a great deal of local homes but also the nationally-important Port and I hope we get the decision reversed," added Cllr Leighton.

On Tuesday, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) announced in a press release that it would be funding coastal protection works across the country worth £74.4 million in 2006/07 and on the same day Suffolk Coastal learnt it would not be one of the selected projects.

As always, there are far more bids for projects than there are funds, but a points system is used to appraise and rank those schemes, and although the Felixstowe scheme gained a very high 32 points it was still not enough to gain it funding in the coming year.

It is thought that the 2006 DEFRA budget is being allocated to schemes that had already gained approval, most of which are already underway.

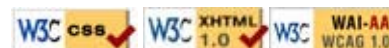
"I shall be writing to DEFRA to plead our case for a meeting to discuss the full case for why we think we should be treated specially. Not only do I think that our scheme would positively affect many more homes than the average scheme that is currently being funded, there are also significant implications if this one does not get an early go-ahead.

"Not only are countless residents put at risk, and potential delays to the much-needed regeneration of the Seafront area, but it would almost certainly mean a halt to the Environment Agency's planned works around south Felixstowe. The Agency had intended to carry out flood defence work that can only really proceed if our project does as well, and it would probably mean a major waste of time and effort for them if they now have to postpone it all.

"I think that we have an excellent set of reasons that I hope will win over DEFRA and mean that

our scheme can get underway sooner rather than later. I would accept the work being put back to later next year but the reality is that we cannot allow this part of Felixstowe to face the elements for much longer without proper defences being put in place," added Cllr Leighton.

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Christmas recycling and refuse collections in Suffolk Coastal



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09 Dec 2005

Archived press release.

Disruption to recycling and refuse collection is again being kept to a minimum this year, with Suffolk Coastal Services' teams working normally on every weekday except the bank holidays of Monday, December 26 and Tuesday, December 27.

Anyone whose normal refuse and recycling collections day falls on these dates should store their refuse until the following week when it will all be taken away on their usual collection day, either January 2 or 3. They are also asked to keep their paper for recycling until their next fortnightly collection on Monday, 9 or Tuesday, 10.

Christmas cards, envelopes, newspapers, magazines, catalogues, television guides and wrapping paper, if not of the foil type, can all be recycled in the green recycling crate or taken to a paper bank at 129 locations across the district. Residents can help by folding and flattening paper so that the vehicles' collection pods can cope with the extra paper at this time of the year.

There will be no collection of garden waste on December 26 and 27 or January 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. People should keep their brown bins until the next scheduled fortnightly collections on January 9, 10, or January 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 respectively.

Residents can recycle Christmas trees (without buckets or decorations) by leaving them next to their brown bins on the garden waste recycling collection day. Alternatively, they can be taken to one of the Household Waste sites in the district at Foxhall, Felixstowe Carr Road and Leiston which will be open every day until the end of January except for Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day from 8am to 4pm. Cardboard, plastics and batteries can also be recycled at these sites.

As this time of year usually sees more rubbish than ever put out for collection, residents can help by making sure they put out all their rubbish by 7.30am as the refuse collection crews may call earlier than normal over this busy period.

If anyone ends up with unwanted presents then it is suggested that they can be donated to village fetes and charity shops.

It's a busy time too for many businesses, especially those selling gifts and involved in catering for those Christmas parties. Shop and restaurant owners need to plan ahead to ensure that they have made arrangements for the disposal of all that extra waste produced at this time of year.

"Christmas is an excellent time to get into the recycling habit. Items such as cans, bottles and jars can be recycled at one of over 230 recycling sites across the district, but we would appreciate it if people did not leave these on the ground if the banks are full. Please report full banks and wait until they are emptied or use an alternative site. Metal jar and bottle tops, as well as foil can go in the can banks, but these need to be put into a small plastic bag first. Paper, Christmas cards, envelopes, store catalogues and television guides can be put out in the green crates ready for the fortnightly paper collection" said Cllr Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment.

“Cutting down on the amount of waste created this Christmas will help the environment. Buy gifts that are not over-packaged, save wrapping paper, gift tags, and decorations for reuse next year, and put fruit and vegetable peelings onto your compost heap,” continued Cllr Nunn.

The public can find out more information about recycling and refuse collection days by calling 01394 444000, or visit the Council's website – www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourhome/waste/

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South Seafront development wins Council's go-ahead



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09 Dec 2005

Archived press release.

The ambitious plans for a multi-million pound leisure-focussed redevelopment of a 17.5-acre site of derelict land on Felixstowe's South Seafront were approved unanimously yesterday (Thursday) by Suffolk Coastal's South Area Development Control Sub-Committee.

The partnership scheme between the Council and Bloor Homes succeeded in convincing the Committee of its merits, whereas a previous application had been rejected in July 2004.

"This Committee is pleased to see that the key elements of our original objections have been addressed in this latest application which has a much greater emphasis on providing the type of leisure facilities that were always envisaged for this site," said Cllr Ivan Jowers, Chairman of the South Area Development Control Sub-Committee.

"Once again we have seriously considered all the representations made to us about this application, but these revised plans have succeeded in meeting our concerns and on planning grounds I can see no reason to refuse them.

"As with virtually every application, we have imposed some conditions on our approval to ensure that this development progresses in the best possible way for our community. For example, we will be seeking agreement to ensure that the park and car park facilities are provided as soon as possible, and that additional funding is available to help the Martello Tower be reused," added Cllr Jowers.

As the application can be seen as being possibly a departure from the Development Plan for the site which is largely owned by the Council, it will be referred to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister who can decide whether to 'call in' the decision and double check that the right decision has been made.

Leading Counsel has assessed the financial package for the scheme and confirmed that the Council has taken proper advice in order to ensure it has complied with its duties to achieve the 'best consideration that can be reasonably obtained for the land'.

The new designs, according to the Council's planners, provide a backcloth for the Martello Tower and the public space around it, with the 158 new homes all a reasonable distance away from existing housing. At least £300,000 will be set aside by Bloors for the restoration of the Martello Tower, which is intended to be the centrepiece of the development.

During the consultation period an exhibition of the plans was on show at venues in Felixstowe and a special section was put on the Council's website giving people information about the scheme and the chance to respond. The comments from the exhibition proved useful as some changes were made to some of the application's details as regards the orientation, elevations and parking at the Manor Terrace end of the site.

"I would like to thank everyone who did take the opportunity to find out more about the plans and especially those who took the time to send in their views. All the responses were considered and

helped us consider the issues regarding this scheme, although in the end we had to make a decision on strictly planning grounds,” added Cllr Jowers.

A Government announcement this week revealed that there would be no funding available in the coming financial year for urgent coastal improvement works that the Council had been working with the Environment Agency and the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The work on replacing 50 groynes with 19 rock groynes was due to start in the Spring. The Environment Agency's support for the South Seafront application was conditional on the defence works being carried out, and the Council will now be lobbying the Government to seek a guarantee of the funding as soon as possible.





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An early Christmas present for district's tourists



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13 Dec 2005

Archived press release.

One of the district's must-have publications has just been issued at a major local tourist attraction in time for the Christmas rush to start planning next year's holidays.

The Suffolk Coast Holiday Guide 2006 was officially unveiled at Easton Farm Park today (Tuesday, December 13) at 11am when the Vice-Chairman of the Council Sir Peter Batho was on hand to receive the first hot-off-the-press edition delivered by Father Christmas on his sleigh.

"We calculate that since 1974 we have distributed over 1.5 million copies of our holiday guides and this latest edition has a print run of 85,000 that will be sent throughout the British Isles and well beyond," said Cllr John Perry, Cabinet Member for the Economy and Tourism.

"The Guide remains a massively popular and useful way to find out where to stay and what to do in our district but it is not the only way that people get information from this Council about tourism. In August alone, our tourism pages on our website were viewed over 20,000 times.

"This latest Guide is also now available on www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/tourism/ along with an easy to use accommodation search facility. Taking on board the changes in the way that people want information and our need to be even more efficient, the 2006 Guide has been redesigned in a way that I am sure will again see it flying off the shelves and dropping through letterboxes as people begin planning a holiday in our district," added Cllr Perry.

There are over 180 entries listed in the Guide, which includes accommodation and places to visit, plus a list of some of the main events planned for the year.

Copies are sent literally all over the world, with promotional adverts in the national media including women's magazines, TV magazines, daily and Sunday newspapers, and specialist publications. The network of Tourist Information Centres across the country also receive some of the latest Guide.

It is estimated that tourism brought in £170 million into the district in 2003 and it is one of the important local growth employment areas, with 4,000 full time equivalent jobs.

Easton Farm Park is featured in the Guide and declares itself to be the ideal place for a fun-filled family day out, with a chance to meet the farm animals or feed the goats. Visitors can ride around on pedal tractors or go-karts, and as well as free pony rides and Pat-a-Pet, an indoor soft playbarn, adventure playground, gift shop and riverside cafe, it also has four star self-catering holiday cottages. It is also running its own festive activities from December 17 – 23.

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Making it virtually easier to make a planning application



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13 Dec 2005

Archived press release.

It is now easier than ever for anyone wanting to make a building control or planning application to Suffolk Coastal. It can now be done online via the Council's website as one of the latest improvements to these services.

Thanks to a link-up with the Planning Portal, it is now possible to make planning applications online, as well as being able to view a wealth of material that could prove helpful, such as planning policy statements, including the Council's Local Plan, and research sources.

"We are making real progress in our commitment to provide a better planning service at Suffolk Coastal with significant improvements in the speed of dealing with planning applications, a restructured team with a new Head of Service, and a planning helpdesk," said Cllr Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member for Planning.

"Now we can make our first-class customer service available to visitors to our Melton Hill offices 24 hours a day by providing a virtual helpdesk via the internet. This is another positive step forward in making our service more efficient, effective and accessible.

"As well as being able to submit planning applications at a push of a button, people can check up on the progress of applications that have been submitted. I am really impressed with what is on offer and I would encourage residents who can access the internet at home or in their local library to visit the planning pages," added Cllr Leighton.

A visit to www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/devcontrol/planningonline/ will open up a wealth of information, with the chance to do a quick search of the planning register to see all applications, decisions, appeals and appeals' decisions during the last 30 days. Other options include monitoring the progress of planning applications and seeing who has been consulted, what responses there have been and if and when it will go to a committee for decision.

One of the most regularly visited parts of the site has been the weekly list of decisions and planning applications received and this is still available. There is also information on what type of developments people need planning permission for, how the planning process works, plus the chance to either submit an application online, or print off the relevant forms and send them by post. It is also possible to submit a building control application to Suffolk Coastal online.

In addition there are also all the Council's policies and proposals for the development and use of land in the district as laid out in its Local Plan, plus information on the Local Development Framework which will update and replace the current system.



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Get a really poplar Christmas present



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16 Dec 2005

Archived press release.

There is an excellent opportunity for anyone who is looking to give a belated and unusual Christmas present this year that will benefit the environment and really last for years. Suffolk Coastal is offering people the chance to plant a native black poplar tree, the only poplar that is native to this country.

This district is an important area for the survival of the male and female tree, and they are propagated and grown on for planting within wet meadows and river valley landscapes.

“This is an opportunity which I hope will appeal to our residents who are looking to give something different at this time of the year. This would be a really excellent present as it will help encourage the survival of this key native tree and at the same time is a lasting gift to the environment,” said Cllr Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member for planning.

The trees will not be available for collection from the Crown nursery in Ufford until late January, but anyone interested in finding out more can call the Council's landscape officer on 01394 444420.

This initiative is just one of the ways that Suffolk Coastal tries to protect and enhance the environment. Its Parish Tree Scheme has been running for nearly 30 years and this year has again seen a good response from parishes for trees and hedge plants to enhance the rural areas of the district.

The Scheme seeks out locations where new trees and hedging can improve the environmental quality of land in parishes and villages, and this year 17 parishes have come up with ideas that will see 4,000 hedge plants and 170 trees being added to the local landscape.

“Once again the Council has been able to fund a considerable number of trees and hedges for planting in visible places across our district. This is planting by local people for the benefit of local people and is a marvellous initiative which has helped improve the look of Suffolk Coastal over the years and I would like to thank everyone who came up with ideas this year, and all the Parish Councils and local residents who are going to be involved in the planting,” added Cllr Leighton.

Planting this year includes field and community ground hedging at Darsham, Sibton, Martlesham, Bruisyard, Benhall and Rushmere. In addition volunteers, with Suffolk Coastal officers, will be planting a new hedge at the Brook Farm estate in Saxmundham.

Suffolk Coastal also runs a successful Tree Wardens scheme supported by the Tree Council. There are about 75 tree wardens in the district who advise Parish Councils and run planting and conservation projects within their parishes. They can provide invaluable support to the Parish Councils and help council officers where a local contact is needed. If anyone is interested in becoming a Tree Warden they need to talk to their Parish Council first to see if there is a vacancy within the Parish.



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Three chances to get skating this Christmas



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16 Dec 2005

Santa's sledge may be barred, but for skate boarders and BMX riders there is some great news as Suffolk Coastal's mobile skatepark is visiting three venues over the holiday period.

The Council's Active Leisure team is taking its array of equipment to Felixstowe, Framlingham and Woodbridge so that young people have some extreme fun.

"Our mobile skatepark was launched this summer and proved a big hit. Weather permitting we will be setting up the equipment so that young people aged eight and over can have some safe supervised fun and maybe even learn a few new tricks," said Cllr Rae Leighton, acting Cabinet Member for Leisure.

For those in the know, the skatepark consists of grind rails, an angle grind box, plus fly-off and launch ramps. It will be on offer between 11am and 3pm on Wednesday, December 21 at the Drill Hall, Framlingham, and the following day at Brackenbury Sports Centre, Felixstowe.

On Tuesday, January 3 skaters can belatedly celebrate the New Year and maybe test out their Christmas presents between 1pm and 3pm at The Avenue car park in Woodbridge. At this event, visitors will also be asked for their views on the positioning of the ramps for the proposed permanent skatepark in Woodbridge.

All the sessions are supervised, and everyone taking part will be required to wear a helmet that will be provided on the day. Each session costs only £3 for hours of fun, and entry forms are available from Active Leisure at Suffolk Coastal by calling 01394 444652, or emailing active.leisure@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk.

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Felixstowe man barred from local charity shops



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20 Dec 2005

Archived press release.

An Anti-social Behaviour Order (ASBO) was recently served on a Felixstowe man who had pleaded guilty to two offences of stealing from charity shops and who had been making himself a real nuisance.

Anthony Baker of 9 Buregate Road, Felixstowe appeared before South East Suffolk Magistrates Court on November 30 who issued him with an ASBO that will last for at least two years. The Court also sentenced him to four weeks imprisonment, suspended for six months, and a one-month curfew from 10pm to 6am, seven days a week, with a variation for Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

The Court ordered that Baker would be prohibited from entering the premises, or any property at the rear, of the Cancer Research Shop at 184 Hamilton Road, the British Heart Foundation Shop at 78 Hamilton Road, the Age Concern shop in Orwell Road, and the Sue Ryder shop at 144a Hamilton Road.

He is also prohibited from behaving in any manner in public that is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to any member of the public. If he breaches the order and is convicted he could face a custodial sentence of up to five years, a fine, or both.

According to the published order, 'the Court considers that the defendant has acted in an anti-social manner, that is to say in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as himself, and that an order is necessary to protect persons in any place in England and Wales from further anti-social acts by him.'

"It appears that this man had regularly gone into these charity shops and verbally harassed and been aggressive to the volunteers who work there. He also went to the back of the shops and went through the stored items and rubbish, leaving a real mess behind him," said Cllr Sherrie Green, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

"This is an unusual ASBO but it reinforces the fact that they are there for all the community, to protect them from the uncaring and thoughtless actions of a very few. The volunteers, that staff the charity shops, many of whom are elderly, are vital for our local charities and this order will stop their lives being made a misery," added Cllr Green.



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Suffolk Coastal leading the way on efficiency



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20 Dec 2005

Archived press release.

Results published last week by the leading independent watchdog on local government help highlight that small can be beautiful as far as efficiency is concerned.

Suffolk Coastal was recently listed as being in the top five per cent of district councils for making efficiencies but the Audit Commission's report CPA – The Harder Test revealed that 46 per cent of unitary and county councils were only meeting minimum standards when it came to delivering value for money.

"I welcome the Audit Commission's new focus on measuring whether councils are achieving value for money for their residents as that is a factor that has long been at the top of Suffolk Coastal's agenda," said Cllr Ray Herring, Suffolk Coastal Council Leader.

"It seems from this latest report that maybe some of these larger councils in urban areas do not take value for money quite so seriously. We have managed to keep our Council Tax in the lowest third in the country and our increases below the national average because, in the last five years, we achieved efficiencies worth over £5 million without cutting back on the services that matter most to residents.

"Suffolk Coastal's commitment to value for money is on-going and we are working with councils across the county to identify further efficiencies. Any new spending proposals at this Council have to pass stiff tests to find out whether they deliver what our residents want – good quality services at an affordable price," added Cllr Herring.

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high quality local services for the public. It aims to provide important information on the quality of public services and be a driving force for improvement in those services with practical recommendations and sharing of best practice. It also ensures that public services are good value for money and that public money is properly spent.

According to its Chairman, James Strachan, "it is widely agreed that council services must deliver good value for money and we are concerned that half of all councils are only achieving at or below what we consider to be the minimum acceptable level. Improving value for taxpayers' money is the real challenge for the year ahead."

According to efficiency gain statistics published on the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's website, Suffolk Coastal was in the top five per cent of the 238 district councils that operate outside the major urban areas.

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Andy Smith returns as Deputy Leader



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21 Dec 2005

Archived press release.

Felixstowe's Andy Smith has returned to Suffolk Coastal's Cabinet as Deputy Leader after a time out of the spotlight due to ill-health. This was the main change to his Cabinet announced last week by the Council's Leader.

Due to other commitments, Cllr Maggy Wilson has stood down from the Cabinet, although her influence will remain as she will continue to provide a real focus on the Arts and older people issues as a Cabinet Support Member.

"I am pleased we can welcome back Andy full-time onto the Cabinet where he will once again be playing a very influential role. I would also like to thank Maggy for her hard work and commitment over the last four years since she joined as a founder member of our Cabinet, enthusiastically leading on many very successful arts and leisure projects," said Cllr Ray Herring, Leader of the Council.

"Andy's return and Maggy's departure has raised the chance to make a few minor changes to the duties of some of the Cabinet members and also to make Rae Leighton's cabinet role permanent.

"Rae has been doing a first class job leading on many of the areas that Andy will now pick up again, although he will keep the South Seafront project and development and building control responsibilities, while picking up much of what Maggy previously was in charge. This will result in a refreshed team who will continue our goal of providing more efficient and effective services to our residents," added Cllr Herring.

The full list of Cabinet Members and their responsibilities is as follows:

Cllr Ray Herring (Leader) – Council policy and strategy, external issues, Comprehensive Performance Assessment, Moving Forward Together;

Cllr Andy Smith (Deputy Leader, Environment Natural and Built) – Planning/Local Plan, conservation and design, coastal management and car parks;

Cllr Andrew Nunn (Environment Natural and Built) – Environmental protection, pollution control, waste management, and LA21;

Cllr John Perry (Economy) – Economic development and policy, regional economy, European issues, and tourist information;

Cllr Sherrie Green (Community Well-being) – Food and safety, community safety, Port Health, health promotion/NHS, licensing, and emergency planning;

Cllr Rae Leighton (Community Well-being) – Leisure indoor and outdoor, theatre and the arts, countryside management, rights of way, older people, South Seafront project, development/building control;

Cllr Chris Slemmings (Housing) – Housing, homelessness, housing advice, travellers, housing benefits, and fraud investigations;

Cllr Stephen Burroughes (Rural Issues) – Rural issues, accessibility, transport, concessionary fares, communications, parish liaison, community grants, IT/ICT, and Best Value;

Cllr Robert Whiting (Fiscal and Democratic) – Democratic services, revenue/capital budgets, Council Tax/NNDR, accounting, audit/risk, asset management/estates, land charges, and human resources;

Cllr Doreen Savage (Customers and Partners) – Customer service centre, consultation, partnerships, Local Strategic Partnership, social inclusion, Member development, and young people.



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The spirit of Christmas is alive!



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22 Dec 2005

Archived press release.

Suffolk Coastal staff have really got into the Christmas spirit this year and through their fundraising activities will be able to send a cow to Kyrgystan, a herd of goats to Bolivia, a flock of poultry to an African village and donations to the R.N.L.I. and the Air Ambulance Fund.

Staff at Port Health, based at Felixstowe Docks, decided not to send each other Christmas cards, but to send the money to 'Send a Cow', a charity that gives direct practical help to African families trapped in poverty. They collected £150 which will buy a flock of poultry, three sheep, 30 fruit tree saplings, a shared fishing net for four farmers and a beehive complete with bees.

Back at Melton Hill, a collection organised by the Building Control Team raised £288.50 for Christian Aid's 'Present Aid'. This will be enough for a cow to be given to a poor family in Kyrgystan, a herd of goats to local farmers in Bolivia and the balance will provide a community tap stand, a stethoscope and two months' teaching salary.

The staff Charity Day held on December 20 raised £746.31 for the R.N.L.I. Activities included Christmas pudding putting, a present wrapping competition, cake and book stalls, and the Council's very own buskers. The Benefits Team also raised £180 through a separate prize raffle in aid of the Air Ambulance Fund.

"Christmas is a time of giving and I am delighted that staff at the Council have, during this very hectic time of year, thought about people less well off than themselves and actually did something about it," said Councillor Robert Whiting, Cabinet Member for Fiscal & Democratic Services.

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Make a green new year resolution and recycle more



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29 Dec 2005

Archived press release.

The Christmas holiday period can mean rubbish for local residents as they have more waste paper, packaging, bottles and cans in their homes than at any time of the year, but Suffolk Coastal is hoping that it can encourage even more of it to be recycled.

With over 230 recycling sites across its district, it will only take a little effort to slim the black rubbish sacks and put the celebratory empty drinks cans and bottles in a bank where they can be reused for the good of the environment.

“This has been the best year ever for recycling in our district, but a good start to the New Year would be if everyone resolved to get into the recycling habit by trying to sort out what can be reused from the rubbish that has accumulated over the Christmas period,” said Councillor Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment, natural and built.

“Cans and bottles can be taken to one of our recycling centres while Christmas cards, envelopes, newspapers, magazines, catalogues, television guides and wrapping paper, if not of the foil type, can all be recycled in the Council’s green recycling crate or at one of 129 paper banks across the district.

“Real Christmas trees (without buckets or decorations) can be placed next to their brown bins on the garden waste recycling collection day. Alternatively, they can be taken to the County Council’s Household Waste sites at Foxhall, Felixstowe, and Leiston which will be open every day until the end of January, excluding New Year’s Day, from 8am to 4pm. Cardboard, plastics and batteries can also be recycled at these sites.

“Thanks to residents, we have managed this year to recycle over 30 per cent of household waste, but we must do more. Every tonne of rubbish that goes to landfill sites costs us all money, and it is a stark fact that if we carried on at our current level the total cost to Council Taxpayers in 2019 would be £9 million a year. That is why we must all do even more to get into the recycling habit,” added Councillor Nunn.

The Council plans to make it even easier to recycle in 2006 when homes in parts of the district will start having other items collected in addition to the paper and garden waste service that is currently available to everyone.

Because it is a very busy time of the year, Suffolk Coastal Services (SCS) who operate the Council’s cleansing and recycling services, are asking for help to keep the district’s recycling sites clean and busy.

Please report full banks by calling 01394 444000, and wait until they are emptied or use an alternative site. It would help everyone if people did not leave recycling items on the ground if the banks are full. SCS is working every weekday including Monday, January 2. The public can find out more information about recycling by calling 01394 444000, or visit the Council’s website – www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourhome/waste/

