

COASTLINE

The Newsletter of Suffolk Coastal District Council

Issue 27, Spring 2006

Cut your Heating Bills

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

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

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

Anyone wanting to sign up for a free no-obligation home energy audit or to find out more information can call 0845 971 7731 quoting Reference SCCT. Please note that conditions apply and that retrospective applications cannot be considered. Lines are open 8am – 8pm Mon – Fri, and 8am – 1pm Sat.

Paying Your Bills Online

From April 1 you don't have to fool around with your bills as you can use Suffolk Coastal's new improved online payment service.

If you visit www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk you will be able to pay your Council Tax, car park fines and other invoices online.

On board for free Bus Passes?

By the middle of February nearly 12,000 residents had already signed up for the new free bus pass which offers free travel to all those aged 60 or over, or those with a qualifying disability, across the county.

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

Using the Suffolk Saver people can use their new free pass to travel anywhere within Suffolk, or even further afield as long as their journey starts or finishes in Suffolk and does not involve a change of service outside Suffolk.

The new passes will be issued by April 1, and if you want more information contact the Customer Service team on 01394 444647.

Help Us save the Earth

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

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

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

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

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

A Better Reception

A much more welcoming reception is on offer to Suffolk Coastal customers visiting our Melton Hill offices after changes made in February that have given our team more room to provide an even better service.

We also want your help to make all our customer services better – we are reviewing all aspects of the way we serve you and how we can use technology to provide an even quicker response. Please fill in the enclosed survey form to make sure we provide our customer services the way you want them.

Andy Smith returns as Deputy Leader

Felixstowe's Andy Smith returned to Suffolk Coastal's Cabinet as Deputy Leader in December after a time out of the spotlight

due to ill-health. Due to other commitments, Councillor Maggy Wilson has stood down from the Cabinet, although she will continue to focus on the Arts and older people issues as a Cabinet Support Member. Her place in Cabinet has been taken by Councillor Rae Leighton.

Government Decision on Seafront Plans welcomed

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

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

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

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

Call the Hotline

Local police are urging residents to take advantage of a new hotline to report antisocial behaviour and details of other incidents affecting their quality of life.

Set up in October 2005, the Community Intelligence Hotline - 0800 783 9112 – has already proved successful, with officers able to act on a number of pieces of information left by members of the public. Callers are asked to record their information and leave their contact details if they wish to. As this is a line to leave recorded messages on, it should not be used to report problems that require an immediate police response. If a crime is in progress or life is in danger call 999.

Fundraising Fun

Suffolk Coastal staff broke the £1,000 mark recently with their fundraising efforts. The Sports and Social Club charity day in December raised £746.31 for the Royal National Lifeboat Institute, and they are planning a week of events between March 27 and 31 again in aid of the RNLI.

Building Control's efforts saw £288.50 going to Christian Aid's Present Aid, while Port Health's collected £150 for the Send A Cow charity.

The Air Ambulance Fund gained £180 thanks to a prize raffle held by the Benefits Team.

Village of the Year

Local villages with an electoral population between 501 and 3,000 can apply for the prestigious title of Village of the Year 2006, a competition organised by the Suffolk Association of Local Councils.

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

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

How to contact us

Suffolk Coastal District Council

Melton Hill

Woodbridge IP12 1AU

www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Fax 01394 385100

Minicom 01394 444211

E-mail scdc@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Emergencies outside office hours 07771 816535

Planning Advice 01394 444403

01394 444423

Council Tax 01394 444855

Housing Benefits 01394 444838

Business Rates 01394 444544

Port Health 01394 614933

General Enquiries 01394 383789

Office Hours

Monday to Thursday 8.45am - 5.15pm

Fridays 8.45am - 4.45pm

Cash Office

Monday to Thursday 9.00am - 4.30pm

Fridays 9.00am - 4.00pm

Refuse and Recycling 01394 444000

Also call this number for street cleansing, car parks, pest control, public toilets, abandoned cars, ground maintenance, coast protection - all provided by Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd.

Tourist Information Centres

Aldeburgh	01728 453637
Felixstowe	01394 276770
Woodbridge	01394 382240

Leisure Centres (managed by DC Leisure)

Felixstowe	01394 670411
Brackenburg	01394 270278
Leiston	01728 830364
Deben Pool	01394 384763

Call for Government Cash to avoid Flooding Disaster

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

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

"This Council, with the support of the Environment Agency and regional DEFRA staff, has been planning a replacement scheme at the southern end of Felixstowe. The current defences are derelict and we were ready to replace them this May," said Councillor Andy Smith, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for coast protection

All the indications had been that funding would be available, but in December the Government announced that its budgets were

fully committed so it could not fund any new schemes in 2006/07 – the first time ever that no funds were available.

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

The overall scheme for South Felixstowe should cost £10 million, shared between the Council and the Environment Agency, which following the Government's decision, has at present withdrawn its own funding for the coming year. The joint scheme would protect over £400 million worth of property.

The low beach levels are resulting in more stress on the sea wall, and if current trends continue the Council warns that parts of the sea wall are at severe risk of at least partial collapse, most likely around the Shore Break café. This could then threaten the foundations, and so the stability, of the vital flood wall maintained by the Environment Agency, which protects the low-lying parts of the town from flooding.

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

Port Expansion welcomed

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

The decision will unlock a multi-million pound investment at the Port and in the infrastructure serving it, while safeguarding existing jobs and creating about 1,400 new jobs in the local economy.

"This long-awaited decision should safeguard Felixstowe's status as being one of the most important ports in Europe, a vital gateway to local and national prosperity. While the announcement will be a significant jobs boost for our district, I am also pleased that our efforts have largely been successful to ensure that the impact of the expansion on residents and the environment will be minimised," said Councillor John Perry, Cabinet Member for the Economy and Tourism.

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

The application by Hutchison Ports (UK) Ltd was the subject of a public inquiry as Suffolk Coastal had not made a decision on the application within the official prescribed time-limit. However, this move was supported at the time by all sides as it brought forward the public inquiry and so resulted in a speedier decision.

Watch out for our new Recycling Scheme

This summer a new improved recycling service will be launched for around 10,000 homes in the district, giving people the chance to have their cardboard, plastics, foil and cans collected every fortnight.

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

The all grey bin will be emptied one week, and the following week the recycling teams will empty the blue-lidded bin, plus the brown bin for garden waste. For these homes, and these homes only, the green crates for paper will no longer be emptied as all waste paper, catalogues and other paper products should now go in the blue-lidded bin.

Every home on the scheme will receive special information, as there will be roadshows, and a hotline on 01394 444050, to deal with any questions.

The homes on the new scheme will no longer be able to put out black sacks - their non recyclable rubbish will go in the all grey bins that will be emptied every fortnight.

The new scheme is similar to one adopted across much of Suffolk, and has been the key to helping St Edmundsbury claim to be the country's best performing district for recycling. See under 'Views from Suffolk' what people in other districts now think of their service.

Coming soon - Your Green Take Away Food Service

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

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

"All the material collected this way will then be delivered to Parham, where the massive drum will turn it all into compost. This new service is not available yet, so watch out for details in the local press, through your letterbox, or on the Council's website for when you can start using your brown bin for so much more," said Councillor Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment, natural and built.

Get Your Catalogues into the Recycling Habit

Residents are being reminded that it is not just newspapers, magazines, letters, junk mail, paper bags and wrapping paper that can be recycled every fortnight – brochures, directories and catalogues can also be put out in the green crates for the Council's recycling collection teams. The only exception is Yellow Pages directories.

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

Bargains for would-be Composters

Suffolk Coastal has linked up with the Government-funded Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to offer compost bins at a bargain rate, with prices beginning from only £4 – and there's free home delivery.

“These prices are up to £86 off the recommended prices so they really are a bargain. The more residents can divert from landfill sites the less money their councils have to pay in landfill taxes, so getting into the recycling habit and becoming a home composter really does save everyone the earth,” said Councillor Andrew Nunn, Cabinet Member for the Environment – natural and built.

A 220 litre bin costs only £4, a 330 litre £6, while the giant 700 litre is £20. All prices include free delivery and a free kitchen caddy to store up those fruit and vegetable cuttings, tea bags and coffee grinds before adding them to the compost bin. Call 0845 077 0759 to order one now. You can also find useful tips on composting on the Council's website

www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourhome/waste/ or call the recycling team on 01394 444000.

Views from Suffolk

"The recycling bin is fantastic. It is so easy to use. Now almost all my waste is recycled and my black bin is hardly used!"

Anon - Lowestoft

"I have been recycling for years. Now I can recycle even more on my doorstep with less effort. This is a great scheme."

Alan Gilmour - Lowesoft

"Provided that you dispose of waste properly and do not put liquidy-type food waste in the bin, you will never have a problem. I have never once had maggots! Top tip: do not buy

poor quality bin liners and avoid putting the bin in full sunlight in the summer."

Joe - Hadleigh

"It is an excellent scheme and I can't believe people are against it."

Anon - Bury St Edmunds

"I live in Ipswich and we have the alternate weekly collection and have no problems. The recycling bin is always full and the refuse bin is only half full after two weeks. It is a good system, easy and effective to use."

Hannah - Ipswich

"Can't understand why Mid Suffolk didn't do this years ago. I feel that I am playing an important role for the environment."

Rodney - Stowmarket

Business Forum relaunched

A breakfast event with John Gummer MP as a guest speaker helped relaunch in February the Suffolk Coastal Business Forum (SCBF) which is looking for new members as it looks to take on a more active role.

The SCBF was founded in 1991 originally to help the Council consult with representatives of the business community about its spending plans, which has given it a genuine influence on Council policy. It has recently adopted a new Mission Statement: To protect, represent and support the interests of the Suffolk Coastal Business Community.

It aims to be representative of all businesses working in the district, and meets regularly with senior Council representatives to discuss and give feedback on Council plans. The Forum also has two seats on the Board of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and it has also already discussed with the LSP how it can

assist researching the development needs of small businesses and improving the local support network for this sector.

The Forum is keen to ensure that its membership remains truly representative, not only of existing support structures (such as the Chambers of Trade and Commerce), but also of the various business sectors in our community (eg agriculture, tourism, energy, telecommunications etc) and with a geographical coverage of the whole of the district. It wants to recruit new members to fill identified gaps.

For more information about how you can get involved, or for recommendations of new members or ideas for events or activities, please contact the Forum's Chairman, David Edwards, at Aldeburgh Productions, Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Snape, Saxmundham, IP17 1SP or call 01728 687100 or email [**dedwards@aldeburgh.co.uk**](mailto:dedwards@aldeburgh.co.uk)

Partners working together for a Better District

Projects aimed at specifically improving key aspects of the quality of life of the district's residents have gained over £100,000 of backing from Suffolk Coastal's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

The LSP is a formal partnership chaired by the Council Leader, Councillor Ray Herring, and includes representatives from many of the important organisations providing services or jobs or representing parts of the community. "Central to the LSP's work is the reality that by working together, sharing their expertise, and targeting their resources, all the partners can make a far bigger, more effective and indeed value-for-money impact," said Cllr Herring.

Special LSP groups have been set up to identify what needs to be done most urgently to help it meet its five priority areas where it can uniquely make a difference. These groups are made

up of people working in, or with experience of, those areas. The LSP used Suffolk Coastal 2021, the recently updated Community Strategy, to identify its five main priorities.

These are:-

- Young people
- Development of community and voluntary groups
- Access to local services and transport
- Healthier lifestyles
- Improving the local economy/ learning and skills, particularly in rural areas

These main priorities are backed up with action plans, setting out ways that these can be achieved, and the LSP has agreed to fund a range of projects that will make a real difference in our local community over the next 18 months (see LSP section below for details).

If you want to know more about these initiatives contact the LSP co-ordinator on 01394 444252, or email scfsp@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk, or visit suffolkcoastallsp.org.uk

LSP supported Projects that will make a Difference

- Watch out for much more information about local transport services as the LSP has recognised that residents, especially elderly and young people and those in rural areas, find it difficult to know exactly what public and community transport services are on offer. A pilot scheme in the Leiston/Saxmundham/Aldeburgh area will be launched this Spring offering improved access to information. This scheme will be extended if it proves successful in its trial areas.
- Local community and voluntary groups are set to be helped. A key task will be to identify where there are skills gaps among local groups and then attract more people with the necessary abilities to give voluntary support to help these groups provide an even better service to their local communities. Suffolk

Coastal has many excellent voluntary organisations and it is hoped that by sharing their knowledge and expertise, all groups will be able to improve and those looking to help in their communities will find the opportunities that best suit them.

- Plans to develop the first districtwide Youth Forum are being backed to help give young people a voice to identify their needs, how services can be developed for them, and help make this an area where they want to stay from choice. It is also expected that the forum would be able to attract national funding from organisations like the Big Lottery Fund to support its work.
- The Suffolk Rural Services Scheme is also getting a financial boost to help it expand its support for capital investment in village shops and other small rural businesses.
- Among the other successful projects backed by the LSP Board was encouraging more people to get involved in environmental projects in their communities, an information roadshow, special exercise sessions aimed at those aged over 75 to help them remain mobile, an expansion of the health walks initiative, and support for countywide partnerships assisting young people to live healthier lives.

Council agrees Budget to protect Services and Residents

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

The full meeting of the Council agreed in February to a £13.9 million budget financed by a £132.03 Council Tax for Band D homes, a rise of 4.9 per cent.

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

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

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

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

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

“Despite the external factors that continue to force up our costs, and the ongoing failure by the Government to properly fund rural districts like ours, we have been able to fund improvements in those services that need it most. The harsh financial reality is that we cannot do everything we want at once

and we also need to make a further £2million of savings between 2007 and 2009,” added Cllr Herring.

The Band D Council Tax figures are as follows:

Suffolk County Council	Suffolk Police Authority	Suffolk Coastal District Council	Total per week	Total per year
£990.63	£130.86	£132.03	£24.11	£1,253.52

In addition, most residents in Suffolk Coastal also pay for their parish or town council. The average charge for a Band D property is £31.64, bringing the average Council Tax bill for Band D homes to £1,285.16. The average Council Tax bill will rise by 4.6 per cent in Suffolk Coastal.

Band D is the national average figure for calculating Council Tax – in Suffolk Coastal 57 per cent of homes are Band A, B or C.

Suffolk Coastal's Performance Report 2005/2006

Suffolk Coastal delivering Success

Over the next eight pages we will put the spotlight on the way that Suffolk Coastal has performed over the last 12 months.

Delivering Value for Money

Value for money is right at the top of Suffolk Coastal's agenda, and this year the Council has made great strides towards delivering even more cost-effective services. In 2005/06 over £1 million was delivered in efficiency savings without cutbacks to the services that matter most to residents.

How did the Council achieve this?

- **By rigorously reviewing all our spending to identify waste:**
Every year, all our services have to assess their potential for operating more efficiently

- **By forging partnerships with the private sector and with other councils to achieve economies of scale:**

This year we've agreed to work more closely with Ipswich Borough Council on building control, and additional savings have been gained through our partnership with DC Leisure to run our leisure centres

- **By investing to save:**

The introduction of new technology in the housing benefits section has resulted in lower costs

- **By streamlining processes:**

By introducing more effective working practices at the Port Health facility in Felixstowe, significant savings have been made

- **By making effective use of external sources of finance (that isn't funded through the Council Tax):**

For example, we have used funding from Government to develop our customer access strategy so we can provide an even better service to residents.

Measures such as these mean that Suffolk Coastal compares well with other councils when it comes to delivering efficiencies. All councils have to submit an efficiency statement to the Government, and the latest results showed that Suffolk Coastal was in the top five per cent of district councils when it comes to making efficiencies. This builds on our track record of:

- Having no double digit Council Tax increases for the last nine years;
- Having a Council Tax level in the lowest third of all shire districts

All of these efforts to promote efficiency would be of little use if the quality of our services was suffering or if we could not make investments to meet genuine local needs. But this is not the case at Suffolk Coastal, and 2005/06 saw important investments in:

Preventing homelessness – increased debt advice and a new post to reduce the number of tenancies ended because of rent arrears

An improved planning service – further improvements to reception and telephone services, including the setting up of a planning help desk at our Woodbridge offices and online applications

An improved recycling service – the fortnightly garden waste collection service was expanded to every home in the district

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

Last year we reported on the results of CPA – a test by an independent local government watchdog (the Audit Commission) of how well the Council is serving its communities. Following CPA we drew up an improvement plan that has seen some notable achievements during the year:

- Performance in deciding planning applications and housing benefit claims is now on a par with the best performing 25 per cent of all councils as the graphs show
- We've worked with a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations to make sure that we're all delivering 'joined-up' services for the district through a revised Suffolk Coastal Community Strategy
- We undertook a major survey of town and parish councils and are currently putting together some proposals to respond to results
- We're undertaking a major review of our housing services to see whether we can be more effective

As part of CPA, the Council will shortly receive a further assessment on how well it is doing in using its resources for the benefit of the community. This will include a judgement on value for money as well as the soundness of our financial management arrangements.

This and full details of our performance this year will be published in our Best Value Performance Plan no later than June this year. The Plan will be fully accessible via our website at **www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk** and will also be available at the Council's Woodbridge and Felixstowe offices.

Community Well-being

Our objectives - Protect and promote the well-being of the community in terms of its health, safety, leisure and cultural opportunities.

Improvements this year

- Public toilets at Leiston and Bawdsey have been brought up to modern standards, including facilities for baby changing and disabled people, and our modernisation programme will continue with planned improvements at Framlingham's Crown and Anchor Lane, and Felixstowe's Crescent Triangle while new facilities in the pipeline include Woodbridge Riverside, Felixstowe's South Seafront and the Landguard Fort Visitor Centre.
- Worked with the police and other local organisations to reduce crime and disorder in the district, which included a 2.5 per cent drop in public place violence thanks to the ongoing Nightsafe campaign.
- Nearly 9,000 residents bought a Coastal Card, which offers discounts at the Council's leisure centres.
- Supported the Amplifier project which in its first year has held over 80 informal music sessions for young people.
- Drinking bans were introduced in Woodbridge and Leiston in partnership with their two Town Councils and the police, with one pending for Felixstowe.
- Urged the Government to give local health services more time to balance their budgets and so protect local residents.

Fiscal & Democratic Services

Our objectives - Respond to our customer and community needs with integrity and openness, using resources wisely and encouraging public participation wherever possible.

Improvements this year

- Provided an even more efficient service as recognised by the Government who ranked us eighth among 238 district councils for achieved savings. Since 2000 we have delivered over £5 million of efficiencies and reinvested over £2 million in better service, at a time when external factors forced our costs up by over £5 million.
- With our partners Bloor Homes, submitted exciting plans for a multi-million pound leisure-focused redevelopment of Felixstowe South Seafront which gained the Council's backing in February.
- The Council's performance against most of its key measures has shown a further rise in standards, with planning and housing benefits recording the biggest improvements.
- Following its transfer by the Government, we successfully brought in the new system of licensing premises across the district.
- Began working with councils across Suffolk to help identify new ways of working together to provide more efficient services. Our latest partnership is with Ipswich for building control.
- An independent survey ranked Suffolk Coastal as the fourth safest, the 30th healthiest, and the 34th best natural environment of over 350 areas in Britain.

Environment

Our objectives - Protect, improve and make sustainable use of our environment for the people who live, work and visit the area, leaving a rich and diverse legacy for future generations.

Improvements this year

- Gave every home the chance to recycle their garden waste, and agreed the phased introduction of an enhanced collection scheme to help residents recycle more and so save us all money while protecting the environment. A record 35 per cent of waste was recycled thanks to residents.
- Worked with partners, including the Environment Agency, to put in place new coast protection works, and lobbied the Government for funding now for urgent works.
- Suffolk Coastal was a member of the Suffolk Recycling Consortium that won the National Award for Excellence in recycling and waste management.
- Continued the detailed work to produce the district's first Local Development Framework which will define how the district will be developed and be protected in the future.
- Introduced an online planning service on the Council's new – look website.
- Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd helped the district harvest lots of prizes at the Anglia in Bloom award ceremony, including the best local authority display thanks to the 3D galleon display at Felixstowe.

Economy

Our objectives - Stimulate a prosperous and sustainable economy in order to improve the quality of life in the community

Improvements this year

- The Dip, Felixstowe and the rural beaches at Aldeburgh, Thorpeness and Sizewell, plus the main resort beach at Felixstowe South all won national awards for their cleanliness, and 75,000 holiday guides have been produced to attract tourists.

- Supported the expansion of the Port of Felixstowe, so attracting new jobs and securing existing ones, while gaining significant benefits to safeguard local residents.

- Agreed with the Port of Felixstowe to provide an even better Port Health service to check imported foods.

- Worked in partnership with other Suffolk councils to gain national funding for a special information and training campaign to help all local food business comply with new food hygiene laws.

- Agreed a new arts strategy and selected a new company to run the Spa Pavilion for the next ten years.

Rural Issues

Our objectives - Improve the quality of life for rural communities by focusing on access to services.

Improvements this year

- Supported the new community regeneration partnerships in Framlingham, Leiston and Saxmundham.
- Agreed and launched the new countywide free bus pass for those aged 60 and over.
- Unveiled the district’s first mobile skatepark, which was one of the attractions during the ever-popular summer activities on offer to children across the district.
- Over £120,000 was paid to local community groups across the district to help them provide key services to local people.
- Our small business rate relief scheme helped many rural businesses.

Housing

Our objectives - Encourage the improved provision of, and access to, appropriate housing to meet existing and future needs.

Improvements this year

- Working with our partners to make more homes available to local people, 81 new affordable homes were given the go-ahead.
- Succeeded in reducing the reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families, and launched initiatives to reduce the human and financial cost of homelessness.
- Our housing benefits team were among the top 25 per cent in the country for performance, and also worked with the Pension Service and other agencies to help residents claim the benefits to which they are entitled.
- Agreed to implement our new planning policy that will ensure more affordable homes to rent or buy are built.

How Pam made Fund-raising Child's Play

Melton Playing Fields is now home to a splendid new set of play equipment, with a list of organisations that have helped fund it almost as long as the queue for the windsurfer simulator, but the real driving force behind it all is Pam Ferguson.

Pam joined the Melton Parish Council in 2003, admits to being a great-grandmother, and she and her three-year-old great-grandchild tried out much of the equipment before it was ordered.

The new-look playground aimed both at youngsters and teenagers has cost over £70,000 and, with other improvements across the Parish Council-owned playing fields, Pam has attracted nearly £90,000 of funding.

CoastLine met her to find out how she had coped with the swings and roundabouts of successfully gaining grants and hopefully her example might give others the courage to try doing the same in their area.

“It all began after I joined Melton PC and the then Chairman Graham Laight proposed the setting up of a new playing field committee which Stewart Ellis and I joined along with Penny Warburg. I cheerfully suggested that we really needed to put in some modern play equipment and aim to have something that would attract our local teenagers. That was the easy part – the struggle then began to attract the necessary finance and the support of my parish clerk, Trevor Brown, has been invaluable.”

September 2003 saw a car boot sale that raised £107 and a Christmas carol concert with the local school collected £51, so the race was on. “I asked Suffolk ACRE for advice at the start, and I received a very useful pack which gave details on charitable trusts and companies that give out grants, plus some advice on how to do it. I soon learnt to keep my eyes and ears

open – community noticeboards in shops like the Co-op can have details of available funds, while I heard about the Copella trust on Radio Suffolk.”

Some of the first grants she attracted were from SCARSE, Adnams, the Copella Environmental Trust, the Co-operative Society, Bellway Homes and the Woodbridge Society. There was also £4,000 from the former County Councillor for the area, Peter Bellfield. His successor, Clare Aitchison recently added a further £1,500.

“To get the £75,000 we needed for the play equipment, the backing of Suffolk Coastal was vital, and its agreement to grant us £7,500 opened up so many more doors for us as I was making applications to organisations that needed to see that we had already secured at least 10 per cent of the funding locally. Once I could show that we had real local support already in the bank, it became a bit easier,” added Pam.

The East of England Development Agency put in £3,000, the Suffolk Environmental Trust £10,000, and Melton Parish Council agreed £3,000. The largest amount came from the Biffa Award which is supporting the playground with £42,000.

“I will not pretend that it has been easy, and some of the paperwork has been horrendous, although it might reassure some people when I admit that all my applications have been handwritten. It may well be simpler for people with computers but our new playground is living proof that a ballpoint pen can sometimes be enough.

“I have also had to rely on support as I struggled with the jargon that all these forms seem to be written in – Suffolk ACRE (Jonathan Bell and Christine Abrahams) helped me through the very lengthy application for the Biffa Award, and Dawn Easter, Joe Liggett, Catherine Thornber, Alan Biddle and Laura

Beardsell at Suffolk Coastal have been invaluable at different times.”

The play equipment is all in place, although the muddy state of the fields means that the official opening is being delayed. However, that has not stopped the local youngsters already enjoying everything that is on offer.

As well as the playground, Pam’s fund-raising efforts have also helped the much-needed clean-up of a pond, plus a fresh new look for the pavilion. Her challenges are not over yet as Pam has now diverted her attentions to tackling the drainage problems that have plagued the playing fields in recent years.

New Help for Rural Businesses

The Rural Gateway offers a quick and easy route to advice for all farm, land based and rural enterprises including finance and funding, managing and training your staff, information and communications technology (computers and broadband), environmental advice, business mentoring, innovation and design, starting a business and trading internationally.

To access the Rural Gateway, or to get a copy of their newsletter with information of funding initiatives, grants, events and news relevant to rural businesses, call 0845 600 9006 or email **ruralink@bls.org.uk** or visit its website **www.ruralgateway.info**

How can you tap into Community Funds?

As Pam Ferguson’s example shows, there are many different possible sources of funding, at both a local and national level. Below are some possible sources that you can try to approach.

Suffolk Coastal

The Council issues over £100,000 a year to support local organisations that are providing useful services or facilities across the district. These can either be capital grants, to pay or help pay for an expensive piece of equipment or building improvement, or revenue grants that are for more routine running or day-to-day costs. To find out more contact Suffolk Coastal on 01394 444626 or email **committee.section@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk**

In February the Council agreed to give Blythburgh Parish Council £3,800 towards a new roof to Blythburgh Village Hall, £8,000 to Bucklesham Play Equipment subject to them getting support from others, £3,200 towards Art on the Prom (Felixstowe), £10,000 to Thomas Mills High School towards the extension of Framlingham Sports Centre, £630 to Parham Village Hall to insulate the ceiling and replace windows, £10,000 to Coastal Accessible Transport to help replace an existing 16 seater minibus and £10,000 to Westleton Parish Council towards the purchase of land for a village recreation area.

The National Lottery

This fund for the community has now been rebranded The Big Lottery Fund or BIG for short. There are many different funds including the newly launched Reaching Communities that will provide funding to ‘help improve local communities and the lives of people most in need’. It will fund projects that respond to needs identified by communities, and actively involve them. These include geographic communities and also communities with shared interests, such as people with poor mental health. Up to £100 million available in 2006-07, with grants from £10,000 up to £500,000, including a maximum of £50,000 for capital grants. Call the BIG Advice Line on 0845 410 20 30, or visit **www.biglotteryfund.org.uk**

Biffa Awards

Funded from landfill tax credits, Biffaward has distributed over £70 million to nearly 900 projects across the country. The fund offers three levels of support:

The Small Grants Scheme provides grants between £250 and £5,000 for projects that enable communities to improve local amenities and to conserve wildlife and habitats.

The Main Grants Scheme grants between £5,001 and £50,000 for amenity projects that provide and improve community facilities to act as mechanisms for recreation, sporting achievement, lifelong learning and community involvement. In addition it supports projects that increase or maintain biodiversity.

The Flagship Scheme offers grants between £150,000 and £500,000 for larger projects for regionally or nationally significant voluntary sector-led regeneration or biodiversity projects.

You can call BIFFA to find out more on 0870 036 1000 or via email on [**grant@rswt.org**](mailto:grant@rswt.org) or visit its website on [**www.biffaward.org**](http://www.biffaward.org)

Suffolk ACRE

It offers access to databases with details of funding from charitable trusts, commercial companies with charitable objectives, as well as other sources of Statutory and Lottery funding, which is available for community based initiatives from anywhere from a local to a regional level.

Suffolk ACRE, Suffolk House, 2 Wharfedale Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 4JP, 01473 242500, Email:

info@suffolkacre.org.uk or visit its useful website
http://www.suffolkacre.org.uk/funding_introduction.php

LNF Grants on Offer

There is still funding available to small voluntary or community groups working with children and young people aged 0-19 years or with young adults with learning disabilities up to 25.

The Local Network Fund (LNF) is managed locally by Suffolk ACRE. One-year grants, from £250 - £7,000, are available, with priority given to help new small groups make a difference in their communities.

Among the supported projects are playgroups that wanted to develop their outside activity areas, drop-in clubs aimed at young people, arts sessions for young people with disabilities, and the setting up of parent and toddler groups.

If you have a project or activity in mind and need a grant to make it happen, contact Wendy Jephcote on 01473 242523 for more details on how to apply. The grants must focus on providing new opportunities for children and young people.

Training Opportunities

Suffolk ACRE is offering free training and support to help local people improve their employment opportunities. The Vigour scheme is aimed at those in the 50 plus age group who are not in paid employment, while Social Economy Horizons is for those aged over 24 who are either unemployed or working or volunteering in the voluntary sector. Get It On is aimed at the black and ethnic community.

A free package of support is tailored to each person's needs to give them the chance to gain experience and build confidence. It could include access to information, advice and guidance, the chance to gain appropriate employability and vocational skills, or opportunities of accredited training courses. Taster sessions or work placements are also available.

To find out more call Diane Piperno on 01473 242500, write to Suffolk ACRE, 2 Wharfedale Rd, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 4JP or email **diane.piperno@suffolkacre.org.uk**

Communities Online

Town and parish councils, plus community groups have been turning to onesuffolk for all their website needs. Over 130 have already signed up to the free and easy to use way to set up your own local website. onesuffolk is ready to help you. To find out more call Kerry Burn on 01473 583891 or email **kerry.burn@onesuffolk.co.uk** or visit **<http://www.onesuffolk.co.uk/introduction>**

Bentwaters

The owners of most of the former Technical Base at Bentwaters have almost completed applications for new public rights of way and Suffolk Coastal expects to be asking for views on the proposals in the next month or so.

If you are interested, then please keep an eye on the local press, or watch out for news on **www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk** where details will be published when available, plus information on how you can give your views.

Speak up for Woodbridge's Air Quality

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The report, and details of the AQMA Order, is available on the Council’s website at

<http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/envprotection/airquality> Alternatively, paper copies are available for viewing at our Melton Hill offices in Woodbridge and our Undercliff Road West offices in Felixstowe.

Comments are welcomed from residents on the report and AQMA. Written comments can be sent to environmental protection at the Council’s offices, Melton Hill, Woodbridge IP12 1AU, or email to

environmental.protection@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk or by using the response sheet available on the website. Any suggestions that you have to improve the air quality at this junction will be welcome and will be investigated as part of the Action Plan. The closing date for comments is June 30, 2006.

Planting for a Greener Future

Protecting and enhancing natural habitats within our new housing development areas is an important area of work for Suffolk Coastal's countryside team who recently linked up with residents to replace an elm hedgerow in Brook Farm Road, Saxmundham that died out due to Dutch elm disease.

On a sunny Saturday morning in January, many adults, teenagers and children helped Anne Westover, our countryside and landscape officer, plant a 70 metre stretch of hedgerow. All the species planted were native local species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, dog wood, spindle, buckthorn, and privet, plus holly bushes donated by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

Three trees, an oak, a small leaved lime and a bird cherry, were also planted within the hedgerow. Over time and with maturity the hedgerow will provide a valuable wildlife habitat for insects, beetles and bird species in particular. Buckthorn may even attract the yellow brimstone butterfly. The hedge will provide a visual amenity for the residents providing valuable shade, absorption of pollution, colour and interest all year round.

This project illustrates the importance of involving residents in new projects within their local area. If you would like to know more about getting involved with the Parish Tree Planting Scheme, contacting your local Tree Warden or helping with the management of natural habitat areas, please contact either Anne Westover on 01394 444420, or Peter Smith, Countryside Ranger on 02394 444508.

Time for a Spring Clean?

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

The idea of the Spring Clean week between March 20 and 26 is Carol Gurney's, President of the 2005 Suffolk Show, who enlisted the High Sheriff, Philip Hope-Cobbold in a campaign that is being co-ordinated by the Suffolk Agricultural

Association, and supported by many voluntary organisations and businesses, as well as local councils.

Suffolk Coastal Services is ready to take away any rubbish collected by volunteers during the week. Last year over 1,200 volunteers collected 2,000 black sacks full of rubbish across 49 parishes as part of Suffolk Coastal's annual Spring Clean supported by Suffolk Coastal.

You don't have to carry out your local spring clean during the countywide week - any time that you want to help keep your community tidy by organising a litter pick you can get support from Suffolk Coastal, including sacks, gloves and disposal of collected waste. Contact your parish or town council or call Suffolk Coastal on 01394 444033 or email **waste.management@suffolkcoastalgov.uk**

Making Planning Easier

It is now easier than ever to make a building control or planning application to Suffolk Coastal as it can now be done online via the Council's website where there is also lots of helpful information about planning.

“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 applications, and we now have a 24-hours a day virtual helpdesk via the internet,” said Councillor Andy Smith, Cabinet Member for Planning.

A visit to **[www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/devcontrol/planning online/](http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/devcontrol/planningonline/)** will open up a wealth of information, including

- a quick search of the planning register to see all applications, decisions, appeals and appeals' decisions during the last 30 days;
- the progress of applications;
- information on what type of developments people need planning permission for and how the planning process works;
- how to submit an application online, or print off the relevant forms and send them by post - you can also submit a building control application online;
- details on all the Council's policies and proposals for the development and use of land in the district.

Book into Kesgrave's Library

Kesgrave's new-look library has proved a big hit since it moved to new purpose-built premises next to Tesco just before Christmas, thanks to a partnership agreement between Suffolk County Council and Kesgrave Town Council.

Replacing the old portacabin, the new library has triple the space, with three computers giving the public free access to the internet and space for children's activities. Opening times are 9am - noon, and 2.30pm to 5pm on Tuesdays, 2.30pm to 5pm and 6pm to 8pm on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and 10am to 1pm on Saturdays, plus 10am to 3pm on Sundays.

Suffolk County Council's transformation of Felixstowe library should be finished in May.

Spotlight shines on Spa Pavilion

A new management company will take over the running of Suffolk Coastal's Spa Pavilion Theatre in June after it was agreed to give a ten-year contract to Openwide International.

In 1996 the Council first brought in an experienced theatrical management company to develop the Spa and the contract was due for renewal. Clear Channel last year withdrew from the contest but the Council believes it has found a worthy replacement.

“Openwide International met our tough selection criteria with its background of proven experience and financial clout, and a programme to develop the Spa as both a performance venue and a place to meet and eat,” said Councillor Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

Openwide International has successfully run the Pavilion Pier in Cromer since 2001. It plans to offer drama/plays, youth drama, children’s shows, classical/orchestral music, dance, comedy and light entertainment, plus a summer season aimed at attracting residents and tourists, plus an ongoing commitment to amateur performances.

“It was essential to agree a partnership with someone with a proven theatrical and financial track record. The Council has also agreed a profit-sharing arrangement with Openwide International whereby our annual payment to the company will be off-set if it does really well in future years,” added Cllr Leighton.

Arts in the Spotlight

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

“Developing the arts is a major priority for Suffolk Coastal as it can result in a better quality of life and be a boost to the local economy. The arts strategy is the key to unlocking the potential in the district and recognises that the Council can play a positive

role in encouraging the further blossoming of the arts in our communities,” said Councillor Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

The strategy lays out four key strands of work the Council want to develop over the next three years. These are:

DIY Arts will provide an advice, information and training service to give communities the knowledge, skills and confidence to develop arts activities of quality themselves.

From **Cradle to Crave** seeks to give people who are hard to reach the opportunity to participate in and see the arts, with a focus this year on providing opportunities for young people and people living in rural areas.

Sitting Pretty promotes the potential of artists to help shape our built and natural environments. This will involve working closely with the planning sector, landscape managers and local communities to develop new build, regeneration and landscape schemes which include artists on the design and development team. The aim is to ensure planned change in the district is sympathetic to the special qualities of the area and reflects distinctive character of our communities and landscapes.

Creative Economies will support arts organisations and the rich vein of artists that are living and working in our District, often rather hidden from public view.

Sites for Sore Eyes

A special seminar is being held at Snape Maltings on Thursday, April 6 aimed at exploring the role artists can play in shaping our built and natural environments. Sites for Sore Eyes will

include an excellent programme of speakers and for planners, artists, architects, landscape architects or developers it will provide inspirational examples of public art schemes from around the country, plus an insight into how to implement such schemes through the planning system and existing funding streams.

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

To book a place, or to find out more, please contact Suffolk Coastal's Rachel Nightingale on 01394 444294 or email **rachel.nightingale@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk**

Licensing Explained

As part of its commitment to assisting the local arts community, Suffolk Coastal is running a free training session on the new licensing laws on Thursday, March 30 at 7pm at its Melton Hill offices when its Licensing Manager, Judy Gowen, will lead a session to demystify the new laws and answer any questions.

The session is aimed at drama and other performance groups, venue managers, town and village programmers, festival and carnival organisers and anyone else planning to organise an arts event in the district. To book a place, call Rachel Nightingale on 01394 444294 or email

rachel.nightingale@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Want to put on a Real Show?

If you are a school, local fete or festival organiser, or a community group, you might be interested in booking a show

for your event. How about The New Wolsey's outdoor summer show King Chimp, an hour long show aimed at children of all ages - to find out how you can book it please contact Julia Donat on 01473 261142 or email **jdonat@wolseytheatre.co.uk**

Contact Suffolk Coastal's Arts and Heritage Officer Rachel Nightingale on 01394 444294 or email **rachel.nightingale@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk** for details of other possible opportunities for booking home grown talent.

Your Local Museum needs You

Have you been twiddling your thumbs in the long winter months? Would you like to get involved in your local community? Then volunteering in your local museum could be for you.

This district is very blessed with small independent museums, with more than 10 registered, covering diverse areas of interest such as heavy horses, anglo-saxon kings and airfield history. These guardians of our unique and precious heritage have often sprung up through the enthusiasm, knowledge and generosity of local people, and all but one are run on a purely voluntary basis.

They rely on local people to keep them open and carry out a wide range of tasks. These include welcoming and showing around visitors, producing the publicity, documenting the collections, looking after the objects or bringing their engineering experience to good use.

Volunteering also offers a great way of getting to know your local area, learn new skills, make friends and have fun! The Association for Suffolk Museums organises a range of training opportunities to volunteers in relevant subjects.

If you are now inspired to find out where your local museum is and get involved, look on www.suffolkmuseums.org.uk where you will find contact details. Most of the museums are open to the public between Easter and October but volunteers will continue to carry out work all year round.

New Sports Club for Disabled People

Suffolk disability charity Optua have joined up with Suffolk Social Care Services at the Saxmundham Centre to organise a new sports club for disabled people at Leiston Leisure Centre.

A ten-week programme aimed at anyone aged 16 or over with physical, sensory or learning disabilities was launched in February to give them the chance to try out a variety of sporting and fitness activities.

The sports club is held every Wednesday, 10am-3pm, until April 12 and includes boccia, table tennis, tennis, beanbag and skittle games, plus an hour of exercise to music. The sessions are followed by the weekly Big Splash swimming sessions, and it is hoped to make the club a regular event.

For more information about the sports club or volunteering, call Shelly Dixon, Optua Leisure officer on 01449 770154, or email shelly.dixon@optua.org.uk

Safer Dancing

The latest Lowbiza dance event was held at the Bandbox in Felixstowe shortly after Valentine's Day and attracted around 220 young people along for a safe night of fun, dancing and information. Supported by the Suffolk Coastal Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Nightsafe partnership in East Suffolk, this has been a great success in Felixstowe and other events are now being launched across the district. Leiston will hold its second event on April 7 at Sizewell Sports and

Social Club, with nights at Framlingham and Woodbridge in the pipeline. If you want to find out more about Lowbiza then contact Daye Goddard on 01986 835367 or visit www.onesuffolk.co.uk/nightsafe/

Lowbiza dance events are for 13-17 year olds and aim to provide a fun night out in a nightclub type environment but without alcohol, drugs or tobacco. The events are organised by the Nightsafe Partnership that includes licensees, community safety police, Suffolk Coastal, local health services, Connexions, community education and voluntary youth organisations.

Call for Minister to intervene on Health Cuts

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

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

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

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

‘Indeed, this White Paper lays out a vision for the future in which we are likely to see far more expanded intermediate care. Therefore PCTs taking current decisions about the future of community hospitals will be required to demonstrate to their strategic health authority (SHA) that they have consulted locally and have considered options such as developing new pathways, new partnerships and new ownership possibilities. SHAs will then test PCT community hospital proposals against the principles of this White Paper.’ “People across Suffolk feel anger that their strongly-aired views do not appear to have made significant differences to the final decisions of their PCTs. I also now question whether the PCTs’ decisions reflect the future direction as set out in the White Paper.

“The Government is also offering the chance for PCTs to work with councils to bid for capital support for reinvestment in ‘the new generation of community hospitals and smaller facilities offering local, integrated health and social care services’. I cannot see that the PCTs have yet taken account of this new opportunity.

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