



Parish *Bulletin*

Spring 2008



Sharing efficiency and delivering value for money

The latest move in Suffolk Coastal's drive to establish partnerships to increase its and other councils' efficiencies has seen an innovative initiative agreed whereby the Council's Chief Executive will hold the same role at Waveney District Council

Both Full Councils on February 28 approved the proposal of Stephen Baker dividing his time equally between them in a move that will place an increased emphasis on joint working and sharing of experience, resources and knowledge.

"This is just the latest example of our commitment to joint working which has helped us in Suffolk Coastal deliver better services and even better value for money to our Council Taxpayers," said Councillor Andy Smith, Deputy Leader of Suffolk Coastal.

"Stephen has been at the heart of the changes that have helped us deliver £7 million of efficiencies in the last few years, seen our services being regularly rated among the top 25 per cent in the country, and this district and council score the highest public satisfaction ratings in Suffolk.

"I would reassure our residents that this change will not jeopardise our performance as we have in place a Councillor and Officer structure that is used to managing change and delivering success. We will use the opportunities of working closer with Waveney to deliver even more efficiencies in our district," continued Councillor Smith.

It has been emphasised that each Council will remain independent and that this is not an official merger but a pooling of resources, talents and knowledge between two areas with many common features.



Both Suffolk councils face coastal protection challenges, share transport links, have tourism and ports as key economic drivers, and have large rural and environmentally-important areas.

"There is much in common between us, and there is much more that we can do jointly that can benefit all our communities. Working closer together should lead to more efficiencies and service improvements.

"Sharing a Chief Executive is a radical move, but it is one that we are confident will work because we have had the recent experience of sharing management of services such as building control and audit with other councils committed to partnership," added Councillor Smith.

The arrangement will begin on April 1, for a two year term.

Government puts Suffolk under the microscope

The Government has formally approached the Boundary Committee for advice on the local government unitary bids affecting Suffolk and Norfolk.

On December 5 the Government announced that the proposals for unitary councils in Ipswich and Norwich did not meet its strict criteria, but that it was keen to assess whether there were alternative unitary arrangements covering the town and city, and potentially the wider county areas of Suffolk and Norfolk, that will meet the specified criteria.

The Boundary Committee has therefore been asked by the

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Government to advise, by December 31, whether there are alternative unitary proposals that will deliver:

- * affordability,
- * value for money,
- * stronger leadership,
- * neighbourhood engagement,
- * and a broad cross section of public support.

The Boundary Committee has also been asked to respond to the proposal for a unitary council that would cross the existing Suffolk/Norfolk border containing Great Yarmouth and Waveney councils and whether that could deliver real benefits for local people.

What happens now?

The Government has requested that the Boundary Committee look at local government structures and advise whether, for each county area, there could be alternative unitary authority solutions which may involve changes to local authority boundaries.

The Committee began its structural reviews of Suffolk and Norfolk on March 3. It has been asked to report back to the Government by December 31. The Boundary Committee is a statutory Committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body established by an Act of Parliament.

Max Caller, Chair of the Boundary Committee for England, said: "We are keen that all local authorities and local stakeholders are engaged in these reviews. We will also be actively involving local people in the reviews and look forward to hearing their views on the proposals put forward."

In England there are still many two-tier areas where two different councils provide local government services: a county council and a district council.

One obvious attraction of a unitary

council is that people would receive all their services from one council, with one less tier of local government. However, it may not be as easy for a larger authority to include and involve all its different and geographically spread communities in its decisions. Over the coming months, the arguments will develop on both sides.

How can we have our say?

The Boundary Committee has promised that its review will include public consultation to allow local people to have their say on the draft proposals, which should be published on July 7. Watch out for details - we hope to include them in the next edition of the Parish Bulletin. You can also visit the Boundary Committee website www.boundarycommittee.org.uk/our-work/structuralreviews.cfm or visit the special section on the Council's website www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourcouncil/future

What does Suffolk Coastal think?

The Council's initial view is that it does not see any evidence that people locally want to have their local services run by a larger, possibly Suffolk-wide unitary council. Last year there was strong opposition from the communities and their representatives in those areas neighbouring or close to Ipswich that are now threatened with being merged with Ipswich.

Although there is an exceptionally high level of satisfaction among residents about the way services are currently provided by this Council, Suffolk Coastal cannot argue the case for no change or status quo. (It is possible that there will be no change, if the Boundary Committee cannot identify an alternative, or if the Government turns down the final proposals)

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The next issue of this Bulletin will be published in June 2008. This is your publication, if you have any items you would like included that would be of interest to other Towns and Parishes please contact the Communications Team on 01394 444741 or email communications@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

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Suffolk Coastal has to put forward a preferred unitary option, or 'concept' to the Boundary Committee for it to consider. The Council has until April 11 to come up with a concept and all councillors from all parties will have an opportunity to contribute views and ideas to that process.

The Council will keep you as informed as possible about what is being proposed and how you can make your voice heard. We would urge everyone to take the opportunity to let the Boundary Committee know what you think. For more information please contact the structural review team, specifying the county concerned: The Boundary Committee for England, Structural Review Team (Norfolk/Suffolk/Devon) Trevelyan House, Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HW, or telephone 0207 271 0512.

The timetable

Stage One - 3 March - 11 April

Concepts for new unitary authorities relating to five criteria. Finance briefing for section 151 officers.

Stage Two - 14 April - 4 July

Boundary Committee considers concepts and seeks information from local authorities and other stakeholders.

Draft Proposals Published

Stage Three - 7 July - 26 Sept

Consultation on draft proposals, including boundaries. Affordability information provided by local authorities.

Stage Four - 29 Sept - 19 Dec

Stage three information considered by Boundary Committee. Further information requested as necessary.

Advice provided to Secretary of State

Cabinet streamlined to be even more efficient

An unexpected vacancy gave Suffolk Coastal's Leader the opportunity to reshuffle the responsibilities of his streamlined team to help the Council become even more efficient.

Cllr Kevin Keable has stood down from his Community Wellbeing role which saw him leading on issues such as the arts, sport, leisure, countryside and theatre. However, he will remain a councillor for Walberswick and Wenham.

"Cllr Keable has unfortunately resigned from the Cabinet because the increasing success of his business meant he no longer could dedicate the time necessary to fully do justice to his role. Kevin joined the Cabinet, and indeed the Council last May, and I would like to thank him for his sterling efforts since then," said Cllr Ray Herring, Leader of the Council.

"I think we can use the strengths and experience of our existing Cabinet team even better, so rather than filling the vacancy I have shuffled some of the responsibilities. I am confident this will help this Council provide better services and even better value for money," added Cllr Herring.

The new nine-strong Cabinet, with their responsibilities, is as follows:

*Cllr Ray Herring - Leader, responsible for Council policy and strategy, external issues, Comprehensive Performance Assessment, Comprehensive Area Assessment, Joint Area Review, shared services, Local Area Agreement, communications and parish liaison.

*Cllr Andy Smith - Deputy Leader and Planning, responsible for Local Plan, development and building control, conservation and design, coastal management, car parks, and transport infrastructure.

*Cllr Sherrie Green - Community Health, responsible for food & safety, community safety, Port health, health promotion/NHS, licensing and emergency planning.

*Cllr Colin Hart - Economic Development, responsible for economic development and policy, regional economy, economic partnerships/Suffolk Development Agency/Haven Gateway Partnership, European issues, tourism and Information Technology/Information Communications Technology.

*Cllr Mary Neale - Leisure and Countryside, responsible for rural issues, leisure indoor and outdoor, sport, theatre and arts, countryside management, rights of way, community

grants, older people, and human resources.

*Cllr Andrew Nunn - Green Environment, responsible for environment protection, pollution control, waste management, Local Agenda 21 and the Green agenda.

*Cllr Doreen Savage - Customers and Partners, responsible for customer service, consultation, partnership development, Local Strategic Partnership, social inclusion, Member development, accessibility, local community transport, concessionary fares, and young people.

*Cllr Chris Slemmings - Housing, responsible for housing enabling, private sector housing and travellers, homelessness, housing advice, housing benefits and fraud investigations.

*Cllr Robert Whiting - Resources, responsible for democratic services, revenue and capital budgets, Council Tax and Business Rates, accounting, audit and risk management, asset management and estates, Felixstowe South Seafront project, and land charges.

In addition, Cllrs Bob Snell and Peter Bellfield provide support to the Cabinet Members for Planning and Resources respectively.

Record breaking year for sport and play funds

Nearly £250,000 was given by Suffolk Coastal from its outdoor play space fund (OPSF) in 2007 to help 23 different projects across the district, and the fund will shortly break the half-million pound barrier since its launch five years ago.

The OPSF was set up by the Council to ensure that recreation facilities kept pace with new housing developments and requires builders to make a contribution to the fund when they gain planning permissions.

This innovative fund was introduced by Suffolk Coastal to ensure that housing developers were putting something back to help meet the recreational needs of the areas that they were working in, and in 2007 a record £245,338 was paid out to support 23 different projects.



Knodishall play equipment



Little Bealings multi-use games area

It means that since 2003 the Council has helped 75 schemes across the district offer improved play and sport facilities with a staggering total of £478,423.

Suffolk Coastal is keen to encourage recreational projects that involve people in their communities and each year asks towns and parishes to identify their local needs for inclusion in the annual Outdoor Play Space Parish Strategy (OPSPS). This

strategy then ensures that funds available from the OPSF are used in the best possible way.

Anyone who would like more information about the OPSF or the OPSPS can contact Suffolk Coastal's outdoor playspace development officer, Jennie Catling, on Wednesdays and Thursdays on 01394 444321 or email community&economic@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

The full list of successful applications in 2007 is as follows:

- * £17,648 for the refurbishment of the Kings Field play area in Aldeburgh;
- * £4,000 to upgrade play equipment at Campsea Ashe;
- * £4,209 to install a teen shelter in Framlingham;
- * £3,089 for additional play equipment in Friston;
- * £19,000 for play equipment in Kesgrave;
- * £10,000 for a new play area in Victory Road, Leiston;
- * £991 to help start an aerial runway in Little Bealings;
- * £27,650 for play equipment in Martlesham;
- * £5,906 to Saxmundham Town Council to help buy the Chantry Road play area;
- * £1,366 for bark safety surfacing at Stratford St Andrew;
- * £730 for a seat at a Waldringfield play area;
- * £14,406 to buy land for play and sports use at Westleton;
- * £11,995 for a see-saw in Woodbridge;
- * £5,125 for a sky game at Kingston Field, Woodbridge;
- * £17,784 for a new storage shed at Kings Field, Aldeburgh;
- * £1,016 for a tractor to pull a mower at Bawdsey;
- * £1,400 for drainage works at a Campsea Ashe sports field;
- * £60,000 towards the Orwell all-weather area in Felixstowe;
- * £1,508 towards a skatepark at Framlingham;
- * £30,000 to install a multi-use games area at Kesgrave;
- * £5,481 to replace an all-weather five-a-side football area in Woodbridge;
- * and £2,023 to install a multi-use games area at Little Bealings.

Other News

Working together co-operatively pays dividends

The latest example of Suffolk councils working together has seen a saving of £76,000 generated in the costs that four of them have to pay their bankers.

Suffolk Coastal led a consortium with Waveney, Ipswich and Babergh Councils to see if they could get better value for money for their Council Taxpayers on the cost of banking services.

The tender for the banking services was won by the Co-operative Bank, who is already used by Ipswich and Babergh. The new contract will come into effect on April 1 and staff at Suffolk Coastal are working to ensure that the changeover from its current bankers runs as smoothly as possible. Suffolk Coastal is now leading another partnership approach to see if they can reduce their insurance bills.

Council wants firm assurances of local say on Sizewell C.

With the recent announcement by the Government that it is in favour of there being an expansion in nuclear power in this country, senior councillors at Suffolk Coastal have repeated their calls on the Government to ensure that there is a commitment that local impacts should be fully considered as part of any future planning processes that deal with new nuclear power stations.

New gentle, short Health Walks in Felixstowe

Gentle, short Health Walks in Felixstowe are being introduced for people who find they cannot manage walking long distances. Starting at 10am and lasting about 30 minutes, the walks will start and finish at Felixstowe Leisure Centre on the last Wednesday of each month. The first walk takes place on Wednesday, April 30.

Yoxford Family Fun Day

A special Yoxford Family Fun Day on Thursday, March 27 is being organised by the Suffolk Coastal Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) at Yoxford's primary school and village hall from 10am to 3pm.

"This will be third year that the LSP has held special events aimed at helping local people get more out of life and it is the first time we are visiting Yoxford. We want to have a mixture of fun activities and useful information on offer on the day, with local groups involved and promoting themselves," said Councillor Sherrie Green, Suffolk Coastal LSP Board member.

"Organisations like Suffolk Coastal, the County Council, the police and the

health services will have stands on the day giving people information about services and the help that is on offer, and there will also be lots of fun activities many aimed at young people.

"The goal of the day is to help people get more out of their life by finding out how they can improve their health and well-being, whether it is at a local club or by becoming a volunteer, or adopting a healthier way of living," added Councillor Green.



The Stepping Out guided walks



Would you like to join a walking group to get fit?



Health Walks are designed for people who may be recovering from illness or those who want to lose a little weight, but most of all they are fun and sociable.



Do you enjoy walking and could your enthusiasm for walking rub off on to other people? Volunteers of all ages are needed to help plan or lead walks. Free training given.

For more information on the "Stepping Out" walks, health walks in general, or becoming a volunteer walk leader contact Sharon Jarrett, Suffolk Coastal's Health Improvement Manager, on 01394 444697 or Zeta Wright or Althea Unthank, Health Walk Co-ordinators on 01394 444501.

The programme of health walks in the district can be viewed on Suffolk Coastal's website www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourfreetime/steppingout

Saxmundham's St George's Weekend Celebrations

A talk by Mark Mitchell on the Portrait of Suffolk on Friday evening, a charities market, food fayre, plant sale, jazz band and face painting will be held on Saturday with a dinner dance in the evening. On Sunday morning there will be an exhibition of dolls houses, toy soldiers and trains and story telling. The Civic Parade will take place at 2.45pm and a quiz in the evening.

For further information contact Maddie Gallop, Town Clerk on 01728 604595.

Help us conserve the best of Aldeburgh and Woodbridge

Suffolk Coastal's policy, design and conservation team want local residents to help them appraise the Woodbridge and Aldeburgh Conservation Areas as they evaluate and record the special interest of the Areas.

A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. They are a unique form of conservation because they will not only protect buildings, including those that are unlisted buildings, but also open spaces, trees and special features that make an area locally distinctive.

Compared with other areas of legislation, it is thought that, along with the Green Belt, conservation areas are one of the most popular and successful examples of planning in practice. There are 33 conservations areas in the Suffolk Coastal district.

"The team would like to receive ideas and comments on what the local community regard as the issues facing these Conservation Areas and how they may be addressed. We are also interested to find out local views on what features are more or less important within the Area and how change may be directed in the future," said Councillor Andy Smith, Cabinet Member for Planning.

A review of boundaries will be undertaken separately at a later date, but suggestions can be noted in the meantime. The appraisal will be drafted later this year when the Council will undertake a formal consultation process that will include Town Councils, community groups and anyone else who has contacted us on this topic.

Residents wanting more information can contact Robert Scrimgeour, senior design and conservation officer on 01394 444616 or email robert.scrimgeour@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk



Aldeburgh

Your views are needed on our Annual Report

Suffolk Coastal produced its first Annual Report in 2007. The report draws together some of the key information about the council and includes sections on the work done by us and our many partners, our priorities, information about the district and this Council's finances, and about our goals for this year. Copies were sent to Town and Parish Councils - to see at a copy click on www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourcouncil/performance/annualreport

We would like you to help us improve, making the next report more readable, informative and relevant as possible. To help us in this task partner organisations, town and parish councils, some government bodies, voluntary organisations and the public were invited to give us their views at an Open Day held on March 20 at the Council's Melton Hill offices.

We will gather the comments which we may use in published reports, but we will not identify who made them.

If you were unable to attend you can still email your comments to performance@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Village of the Year 2008



This year's Calor Suffolk Village of the Year Competition is open to larger villages with between 501 and 3,000 electors in the parish.

Judges will be looking at community spirit, care taken of the village, (this does not mean it has to be a chocolate box image), its attitude to caring for the natural environment, the

parish council and any special activities.

Closing date for entries is Friday, May 2 and the district round judging will be between June 9 and 20 to give plenty of time to arrange the county round judging between July 14 and 25.

Mark Murphy and Lesley Dolphin from Radio Suffolk will undertake the final judging on Saturday, August 9.

Information has been sent to those villages that are eligible to enter and it is perfectly acceptable for the entry form to be completed by another organisation within the village who will then take on the lead role.

Help us plan for more housing



Suffolk Coastal is asking for views on where new homes could be built in the areas east of Ipswich, and in Felixstowe, Walton and the Trimley villages, as the latest stage of its Local Development Framework (LDF).

The LDF will act as the blueprint for how the district will grow over the coming 15 or 20 years, and will set out for everyone exactly where, and where not, future developments will be acceptable.

“This is a very important document for the district and an important step towards finalising the Core Strategy which will set the context for the rest of the LDF. We have already involved the public and thanks to their contributions we are now at the stage of looking to identify possible broad locations for housing growth,” said Councillor Andy Smith, Council Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning.

“In round figures, we think that there should be around 1,000 homes built in the east of Ipswich area and a further 1,600 at Felixstowe, Walton and the Trimley villages.

“What we now want to hear is people’s ideas on where, in broad terms, it would be appropriate for those homes to go. I would emphasise that the priority will continue to be to redevelop brownfield sites where possible before greenfield ones.

“The stark facts are that we need to plan for more homes, and the best place is in a group close to where there is already

the jobs, schools, shops, roads and other infrastructure that are needed for quality of life, or the group itself is big enough to support new facilities. We have identified the best two areas, now we want help to start finding the best

locations in those two areas,” added Councillor Smith.

People have been invited to send their views in by April 11.

The Council will spend some time considering the responses to this eight week consultation and will later this year reveal its preferred general locations for housing developments, when there will again be an opportunity for the public to get involved.

Potential individual sites will not be considered until later in the process when they will be considered under a separate document, Site Specific Allocations and Policies.

“The whole point of the new framework is to meet the needs and aspirations of all who live and work here, or may do so in the future. Given an enormous spectrum of views, and many conflicting objectives, it won’t be possible to please all the people all the time. Nevertheless, the wider - and better informed - the public debate can be, the better we will together be able to get to the best set of solutions.

“The LDF is about people, all of us, about the sort of lives we shall lead in the future and the “quality of life” we, and crucially our children and grandchildren, will enjoy here.

“We have to work within a huge set of constraints. There are Government policies and rules that we must follow, and many circumstances and trends in society which may or may not be

welcome, but which are not going to go away should we ignore them.

“For the LDF to be both legal and effective, these are issues that we cannot ignore, for the sake of our future generations. I hope that all who contribute to the debate will try to do so in that spirit,” added Councillor Smith.

There are factors which the LDF must take into account which include the law and Government policy, specifically as defined in the ‘Regional Spatial Strategy’, together with the need to demonstrate a 15 year ongoing supply of building land. If the LDF does not conform with that, for example about the number of new homes, the Government will tell the Council to do it again.

Even with no increase in population, more homes are needed because we are all living longer and more often at home rather than in care homes, while marital/relationship break-ups mean two homes rather than one are needed, and young people are leaving home earlier. Also, more people are moving here for both work and retirement.

Anyone wanting more information about the LDF process can call 01394 444761 or email development.policy@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk or can visit www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/planning/review



Villages set for affordable homes boost

Three local villages are set to see 18 more much-needed affordable homes built thanks to a successful partnership of Suffolk Coastal, parish councils and Hastoe Housing Association.

Suffolk Coastal's councillors have backed plans for six new affordable homes to be built in the villages of Swilland, Ufford and Wenhaston, with all three areas having a proven need for more affordable homes.

It has taken nearly five years for Swilland and Witnesham Parish Council, Hastoe Housing Association and Suffolk Coastal to find a suitable site. The proposed one is on farm land on the north side of Swilland and is not within the "village envelope". As such it is an exception to the official planning policy for the area, but it is close to Witnesham Primary School, on a bus route and is walking distance from a village pub.

"It is clear that there is a need for affordable housing in and around Witnesham and Swilland. We have all been working tirelessly since 2003 to try to identify a suitable location, with 15 different sites considered and rejected. The site eventually chosen has been generously donated by a local landowner to allow the project to proceed," said Councillor Ivan Jowers, Chairman of the South Area Development Control Sub-Committee.

"It is one of this Council's top priorities to help provide more affordable housing as we know there are many local families who wish to remain in the area but who find themselves unable to afford appropriate homes on the open market.



"Surveys undertaken have shown there are 21 households in housing need in Wenhaston and 16 in Ufford. The provision of a number of new homes in each village will go some way towards meeting the needs of these local families.

"All three schemes are part of a bid to the Housing Corporation by our partner housing associations for funding for 169 new affordable homes to be built.," added Councillor Jowers.

The three sets of semi-detached three-bedroom homes at Swilland would be constructed in the corner of an arable field, with a deep hedge screen planted to integrate the development into the landscape. This planting, and the provision of bird, bat and insect boxes, will help to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the site.

Planning consent has also been granted for six, two and three bedroom homes in Ufford on Council-owned land at the junction of Yarmouth Road and Parklands, and a conditional go-ahead was given by councillors to six two and three bedroom homes in Wenhaston,

subject to further negotiations about appropriate planting and screening measures to better integrate the new homes with the surrounding area. At both these developments, the homes on offer will be a mix of rented and shared ownership.

"These three schemes are an important boost for affordable housing in our district and I would thank the four parish councils and Hastoe for their hard work and support. The Council will continue to seek and welcome schemes like these that help local people find an affordable home in their area. In 2007 we approved 117 more affordable homes in 13 parts of the district," added Councillor Jowers.

Council scored highly for use of resources

The latest annual assessment covering 2007 by the independent local government watchdog of how councils are managing their finances has rated Suffolk Coastal as the best in Suffolk and Norfolk, including both county councils.

Every year, the Audit Commission publishes its use of resources assessments which not only puts a critical microscope to every council's financial, asset and risk management, but also takes account of the way it is linked to each organisation's priorities and how it supports overall value for money.

The basic score is made up of five themes, financial reporting,

management and standing, along with internal control and value for money. The Council scored three on all but one of the themes and was the only council in Suffolk and Norfolk to achieve a top mark of four on any of them - which was for financial standing.

The assessment focuses on financial issues but links to the strategic management of the council. It looks at how financial management is integrated with the council's strategy and corporate management, and how it supports its priorities and whether it delivers value for money. Nationally, only 27 councils achieved the top score of four last year.

Council trying to be “Shaw” that its website is accessible



Suffolk Coastal has called in the experts to help make sure that its website is as accessible as possible to all parts of its community and the initial signs are that it is well on its way to gaining independent accreditation for its efforts.

In November last year, the Shaw Trust Web Accreditation Team carried out a detailed audit on the Council’s website www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk and the initial reports say it has a good level of accessibility.

“The Shaw Trust are recognised experts and indeed are used by the Audit Commission, the local government watchdogs, among others. We went to

them because we are committed to accessibility and wanted to find out exactly how our site performs, rather than just relying on automated checks,” said Councillor Doreen Savage, Cabinet Member for Customers and Partners.

“What makes the Shaw Trust’s approach so different is that they use automated tools to check out the site is working, plus a team of testers with a range of disabilities using the different access technologies on offer to help people with disabilities use websites,” added Councillor Savage.

National and European law, as well as Government guidance, states that the minimum requirement for public websites should be level AA of the Web Accessibility Initiative’s (WAI) guidelines. Gaining Shaw Trust accreditation would mean that the Suffolk Coastal website complies with level AA and has been fully tested against the guidelines.

“Thanks to a lot of careful work, our website is largely at AA standard, with only a few relatively minor tweaks to be made. However, it appears that there could be issues with some of the applications we have brought in to give people online access to services like planning, building control and payments.

“These applications may not be as accessible as the Shaw Trust would like them to be and we will be asking the manufacturers, who have supplied many other councils as well, to look at making any necessary changes to make their products more accessible,” added Councillor Savage.

The Council now has six months to carry out the improvements identified before it is given its final examination by the Shaw Trust to see if it qualifies for accreditation.

SCTV launches a more accessible website

The district’s own website for young people www.sctv.org.uk has just reinvented itself in a deliberate move to make sure that more young people can visit their site and keep up to date with what matters to them in the district.

Suffolk Coastal Teen Voices (SCTV) last year launched its website but the young people behind it quickly realised that they were accidentally excluding many of their target audience.

“It was originally designed with FlashPlayer, a software programme which allowed lots of nice-looking graphics and animations, but which was not compatible with everyone’s computers. So we have linked up with onesuffolk and now relaunched our site,” said Alex Stewart of SCTV.

“We now have a site which looks better than ever and which is more accessible than before. SCTV is all about getting better access to services for young people and giving them a say in how services are provided, so we felt a bit hypocritical to have a website that young people at schools, youth clubs or at home were unable to use.

“Because we feel SCTV’s website should be about the community working with us, and not just about promoting

SCTV, we are giving youth groups, organisations, schools and councils the chance to send us their news, information and events to promote on our site.

“We really want to make the site a hub for the community, a place where young people can see what’s happening in their area and a place where youth-related organisations can promote their information to their target audience for free. Just email enquiries@sctv.org.uk,” added Alex.

SCTV is just the latest of nearly 200 community websites by local groups, voluntary organisations and parish councils that has been helped start up by onesuffolk.

The websites are free to non-profit making organisations and onesuffolk provide a free bespoke design service for larger organisations. onesuffolk is a partnership of the district, borough and county councils in Suffolk along with the Police.



Alex Stewart
SCTV

Budget for growth, efficiency, and value for money

Suffolk Coastal agreed a budget at its Full Council meeting in February which pegs its Council Tax increase to only 10 pence a week on the average Band D house.

The new budget will see the next expenditure of the Council increase in 2008/09 by 3.5 per cent to £14.93 million a year, after £1.6m worth of savings and additional income has been generated.

“Our budget for 2008/09 continues this Council’s drive to delivering better services and even better value for money. We have worked hard to overcome an expected £850,000 gap between our income and our anticipated expenditure, and succeeded in keeping our Council Tax rise to 3.9 per cent,” said Councillor Ray Herring, Leader of the Council.

“Delivering value for money services, but not at the expense of quality, is an integral part of the Council’s vision for the district, which aims to make Suffolk Coastal a place where the community continues to receive top quality, efficient services from the Council in a rapidly changing environment.

“We are also able to fund investment and improvements in our priority services so we can, for example, expand our improved recycling service to another

13,000 homes, improve community safety, promote the regeneration of Felixstowe and work for better quality of life across the district with the Local Strategic Partnership,” added Councillor Herring.

This will be the 12th year in a row that Suffolk Coastal will keep to single digit Council Tax rises, meaning that the Council continues to have one of the lowest Council Taxes in the country.

The Council’s expenditure for the coming year includes external factors outside of its control such as pay and price increases leading to £647,000 additional costs, and a further rise of £116,000 in the cost of the new national free bus pass for over 60s and disabled people. Against these increases, the Government’s grant to the Council will rise by only 2.86 per cent or an extra £221,000.

Suffolk Coastal’s share of the Council Tax bill is 10.1 per cent, with 76.6 per cent going to the County Council, 10.7 per cent going to the police and an average 2.6 per cent going to town or parish councils.

The average Band D bill in the district will be £1,398.40 an increase of £1.09 a week, of which Suffolk Coastal’s share is 10 pence.

Resolving problems locally

A new local way for people to resolve any problems or complaints they have about their councillors will be on offer in the near future.

At the moment, anyone who is unhappy about the way a district, town or parish councillor in the Suffolk Coastal area has behaved must complain in writing to the Standards Board for England based in Manchester.

“Soon anyone with a problem about one of their councillors can instead take it up with the local Standards Committee of Suffolk Coastal District Council, which is made up of independent members of the public as well as councillors,” said Kevin Williams, Chairman of the Standards Committee.

On investigation if the Committee agrees that the Code of Conduct has been broken, it can do a variety of things, such as requiring the councillor to give an apology, or to undertake training. It can also censure the councillor’s behaviour or stop the councillor from acting as a councillor for a period of time.

More details will be available soon about these new arrangements or call Hilary Slater, Suffolk Coastal’s monitoring officer on 01394 444336 or email hilary.slater@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Council goes local to cash in on savings

From April 1, any resident wanting to pay cash to Suffolk Coastal will be able to make their payment at any of the district’s post offices.

“With fewer than 80 people a week paying cash at our Woodbridge office, it has become increasingly uneconomic to continue to offer our Cash Office service, particularly when there are many more convenient local ways for people to pay their bills,” said Councillor Robert Whiting, Cabinet Member for Resources.

“The vast majority of residents now prefer to go online, pick up a phone or use a direct debit or standing order, but for those without bank accounts that still want to pay cash, we can arrange it so they can instead use their local post offices or any pay zone which are open longer and are probably more convenient,” added Councillor Whiting.

Residents wanting to pay their bills on line can visit www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourhome/counciltax/online to find out how.

Payments can also be made by dialling 0845 880 1312 or online on www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourcouncil/contactus/payments. For more information call 01394 444541 or email epayments@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Anyone without a bank account and who wants to find out how to pay at their local post office or pay zone can contact the Council Tax team on 01394 444855 or email council.tax@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Economic success sparks investment in future

Suffolk Coastal's recent success in attracting additional economic investment has seen it gain an additional £385,000 grant from the Government's Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI) Scheme.

The Council will use the bulk of the grant to help regenerate Felixstowe's town centre and seafront. The remainder of the LABGI funds will be used to help safeguard the district's

coastal assets by funding a new post to help support the new integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) project for the next three years.

The ICZM would be produced by the Council and partners, including the Environment Agency, and should give the district a co-ordinated approach to coastal protection and so improve the likelihood of gaining the necessary national finances for the works.

Plans for a brighter future for Felixstowe become clearer

A range of projects that would help regenerate Felixstowe's town centre and seafront have been given the broad backing of Suffolk Coastal's Cabinet which has already agreed to support the initiatives with over £300,000.

"The Felixstowe Future group has used David Lock Associates to draw up and consult on proposals that would help breathe new life into the seafront and town centre. This ambitious but important regeneration programme can only occur if all the relevant private and public sector partners get involved," said Councillor Colin Hart, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Tourism.

"Our commitment should be an important step forward in the campaign to attract the major funding needed from bodies like the Haven Gateway Partnership, the East of England Development Agency and the European Union to make possible the number of projects proposed for the short, medium and long-term.

"We are funding someone to manage the potentially multi-million pound Felixstowe Future regeneration programme, with the rest of the money being set aside as seed corn funding to attract external investment for the projects. It will not happen overnight but the foundations are now in place for an exciting future for the resort and

town centre," added Councillor Hart.

Funding requests have already been made to the Department of Communities and Local Government for three projects under the Haven Gateway Partnership. If successful, this would result in improvements to cycle routes between the Trimleys and Felixstowe, and shared space schemes at Bent Hill and Hamilton Road for pedestrians and motorists.

An application is also being considered to the Lottery's Parks for People fund for the refurbishment and revitalisation of the Spa and Cliff Gardens, a potential £1.5 million project.

Talks have already been held with other European partnerships to see if a potential joint scheme would meet the criteria for gaining European funding. A team from Ostend are due to visit the district as part of these negotiations.

In all there are 27 different projects proposed which range from using a consistent design and style for seating, lighting and bins in the area, through to major projects such as developing a water sports centre, redeveloping the Station area and the former Cavendish Hotel.

All the details are on the Felixstowe Future website www.felixstowefuture.com/

Holiday Guide

The Suffolk Coastal Holiday Guide was produced in time for the Christmas rush to start planning this year's holidays, and has been

given a fresh new look with much more useful information for potential visitors. Nearly 5,000 copies have already been sent out in response to requests, and a further 35,000 are being distributed via the national network of tourist information centres (TICs) and a seaside campaign.

"We cannot underestimate the importance of tourism to our local economy, with nearly one in ten of local jobs being tourism-linked, and the latest figures showing that £219.6m was spent by tourists in 2006. This Guide, now in its 34th year, has an important role to play in acting as a signpost across the world to what our district has to offer and keep its place as the top visitor destination in the county," said Councillor Colin Hart, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Tourism.

All the accommodation entries now have photographs, and they are now listed alphabetically by place name to make it easier for people to find their place to stay in the area that they want to visit. Among the information pages there are also now sections on sports and leisure and food and drink.

This year's print run is 65,000, which means since 1974 Suffolk Coastal is well on the way to distributing nearly two million copies of its holiday guides. Copies can be picked up from the Council's three TICs, or by post, from tourism centres across the country and via www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/tourism





Recycling News

Over 6,000 more homes to get new recycling service

In April, over 6,000 more homes in Suffolk Coastal will be getting an improved recycling service, making it easier for them to recycle more.

The wheeled bin recycling and refuse service allows residents to recycle paper, cans, foil, cardboard and plastic containers every fortnight in the special blue-lidded bins. The grey lidded bin is used for waste that cannot be recycled.

The areas included in the April expansion of the service are:

Aldringham, Brandeston, Creetingham, Hoo, Monewden, Kettleburgh, Bredfield, Dallinghoo, part of Framlingham, Dennington, Orford, Gedgrave, Hacheston, Parham, part of Kesgrave, part of Leiston, Ramsholt, Shottisham, Sutton, part of Marlesford, part of Rushmere St Andrew, part of Saxmundham, part of Trimley St Mary, and part of Wickham Market.

Collections will begin on April 14 and residents have been given an information sheet and calendar of when the collections will take place.

During 2007, just under 2,500 tonnes of paper, cardboard,



cans, tins, foil and plastic containers were collected from households with the blue lidded bins and sent for recycling instead of going to landfill. In addition, nearly 12,800 tonnes of organics (garden waste, cardboard, food waste, shredded paper) was collected in the brown bins and over 3,200 tonnes of separated paper was recycled from the kerbside collection.

The Suffolk Coastal recycling and composting rate for the second half of this year is 46.5%, well over the national average of 31%. The introduction of this next round of wheeled bins should see this percentage increase further.

All residents in Suffolk Coastal are able to recycle compostable waste including all types of food waste, garden waste, cardboard and shredded paper. Suffolk Coastal Services provides households with one brown bin free of charge, but residents can also purchase additional bins at a charge of £30 each per year.

For further information about this and other recycling services, visit www.suffolkcoastal/yourhome/waste or telephone 01394 444000.



Green Matters

Suffolk Coastal taps into water savings

As part of its ongoing commitment to become a greener and more efficient Council, Suffolk Coastal has carried out a review of its use of water at its main buildings.

The Council's Green Issues Task Group had identified water conservation as one of its priority areas for action and recently agreed to review its water consumption and identify ways in which demand can be reduced.

"We called in Anglian Water Services to carry out a water efficiency assessment at six of our largest sites, our main Melton Hill offices, our four sports centres, and Ufford Depot, to give us their expert view on how we were doing and how we could do better," said Councillor Sally Ogden, Chairman of

the Green Issues Task Group.

"The audit reports have provided us with a series of recommendations which could see us cut our water consumption significantly and produce annual savings of nearly ," added Councillor Ogden.

The improvements proposed include installing water saving devices in the cisterns and self-closing taps on wash basins. Although the proposed measures would need some initial investment, this would be paid for between almost immediately to up to five years at the various buildings.

It was reported that all the buildings were already on the best tariff for their level of consumption and no leakage was detected during the assessments.

The survey also showed that comparatively, the Melton Hill offices are already more efficient than the average, but that some savings could still be made and a further 12 per cent drop made in water used.

"To become more water efficient is not rocket science, nor is it necessarily expensive. The measures proposed will cost less than £4,000 but will generate savings of over £2,000 a year, and reduce our consumption of water at our buildings by up to 31 per cent.

"I would urge all businesses, and indeed our residents, to look again at their water consumption and see what they can do to protect one of the most valuable of natural resources, and cut their bills," added Councillor Ogden.