

COASTLINE

The Newsletter of Suffolk Coastal District Council

Issue 26, Winter 2005

Give Health Services more Time to sort out Budgets

Suffolk Councils have renewed their call to the Government to protect residents by giving local health trusts more time in their urgent battle to balance their budgets.

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

“The blame for this financial crisis does not lie directly with the Government but it does have the ability to expand the time given for the overspend to be paid back, and this could be done in a way that could soften the impact on local residents,” said Councillor Sherrie Green, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

Cllr Green recently joined an all-party delegation from Suffolk to meet the Health Minister Rosie Winterton to present first-hand the strong concerns of local people about the drastic programme of savings proposed by the PCTs.

“The Minister was insistent that the overspend had to be paid back and that there was no more money available, but on the time issue she was not so insistent. The councillors, along with our MP John Gummer, strongly urged the Minister to look at these major health issues as the people of Suffolk do not deserve to suffer in the

future because of the past mistakes in budgetary management,” added Cllr Green.

The PCT proposals would see a reduction in local services to a ‘core’ level, with restrictions on service development. Among the changes that would affect Suffolk Coastal residents are the closure and sale of Felixstowe’s Bartlett Hospital and Annex, the removal of in-patient beds at Hartismere Hospital and its closure and sale, fewer beds at Aldeburgh, and the closure of three older people’s mental health day hospitals. The Council is concerned that local carers will not be able to immediately cope with the additional demands caused by the removal of local hospital community beds.

Another Government Health Minister, Lord Norman Warner, recently said that one quarter of the total NHS deficit last year was in Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. “In the last five years there has been a 50 per cent increase in funding. If people can’t manage their finances in these circumstances then it’s a very sorry state of affairs,” Lord Warner was reported as saying in the Evening Star.

Christmas Rubbish Dates

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

If you normally have your black sacks collected on a Monday or Tuesday, please store your rubbish until the following week when it will all be taken away on your usual collection day, January 2 or 3. However, if you were due to have your papers collected on December 26 and December 27 please keep them until January 9 or 10. Brown wheeled bin garden waste collections will not take place on December 26 or 27, or January 2 or 3. The next

collections for garden waste will be January 9, 10, 16 and 17 respectively.

Christmas sees more rubbish than ever – please put your sacks out by 7.30am on your appropriate morning, and also take a minute to see what can be recycled! Paper can go in the green crate for the fortnightly collection – but cans and glass bottles should go to your nearest mini recycling centre, while plastics can go to one of the County’s recycling centres. Call 01394 444000 if you want more information.

Suffolk Coastal’s offices will be closed to the public from 4.45pm (4pm for the cash office) on Friday, December 23 through to 8.45am on Tuesday, January 3. There will be the normal emergency cover provided across the holiday period – call 07771 816535 if it is urgent.

A Healthier Woodbridge?

A new leaflet has been issued to help people in Woodbridge be fitter and healthier with the minimum of expense and effort. Launched with a healthy lifestyle stall in The Thoroughfare, the campaign has been supported by Suffolk Coastal’s health coordinator Sharon Jarrett, the Woodbridge Town Centre coordinator Marion Wells, Finch’s Fruit and Veg shop, The Kitchen Company, Millview House B&B, and Fairtrade for Woodbridge.

On the afternoon of the launch of ‘Woodbridge – a healthier town’ leaflet, over 25 people including the Mayor of Woodbridge took part in a Stepping Out Health Walk along the riverside from Kyson Point.

Helping you Clean up after Your Dog

There's good news for dog owners as Suffolk Coastal is selling rolls of 50 bags for 50 pence so that they can clear up any mess left by their pets. The bags can be bought from the Council's offices at Melton Hill, from the Tourist Information Centres in Aldeburgh, Felixstowe and Woodbridge, Suffolk Coastal Services' depot at Ufford, and also at libraries across the district. The key message is bag it, tie it, bin it – clean up after your pet.

TIC the Place for Christmas Cards

For people who prefer to send charity Christmas cards there are over 40 designs for 20 different charities now available from Suffolk Coastal's Tourist Information Centres (TICs) at Felixstowe, Woodbridge and Aldeburgh.

The Cards for Good Causes range include charities such as the British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research, RNIB and Shelter. Aldeburgh TIC is also selling Advent calendars and candles, wrapping paper, gift tags and much more, while Felixstowe TIC is selling local calendars. The TICs are open 9am – 5.30pm Monday to Friday and 9.30am to 5.30pm on Saturdays.

“Christmas is a time for giving and I am pleased that our TICs are stocking these cards as the charities concerned will receive at least 81p of every £1,” said Councillor John Perry, Cabinet Member for the Economy.

Some Christmas Dates in Woodbridge

Woodbridge's annual Yuletide programme involving more than a hundred singers, musicians and street performers, starts on Sunday, December 4 from 10am to 4pm, when a Christmas Street Fair will

fill the Thoroughfare with more than 100 stalls. There will also be music and other entertainment, and almost all the shops will be open.

There is late-night opening until 8pm of the Market Hill shops on Wednesday, December 7 with free mulled wine offered at the King's Head to anyone making a purchase.

On Friday, December 9, from 4pm, Santa and his elves will be in the Thoroughfare with a sledge-load of presents. There will be a children's fancy-dress competition, starting at 4.15pm outside the Red Lion. Then the children, carrying lanterns, will parade with Santa and saxophone group Stax of Sax. The winner of the competition will switch on the Xmas tree lights outside Mackays.

Right up to 6pm, the Thoroughfare and Church Street will hark to the sound of over 60 singers and musicians from local schools, plus the choir of St John's Church. A Morris dancing troupe, a balloon artist, a roundabout, Punch and Judy, and a candy-floss stall will add to the festivities.

On Thursday, December 22 Santa will be back with more gifts for children, honouring a 54-year-old tradition – 'Carols on the Hill' - on Market Hill from 6.30pm.

Suffolk Coastal - how to contact us

Planning Advice 01394 444403 or 01394 444423

Council Tax 01394 444855

Housing Benefit 01394 444838

Business Rates 01394 444544

Port Health 01394 614933

Office Hours

Monday to Thursday 8.45am - 5.15pm

Friday 8.45am - 4.45pm

Cash Office

Monday to Thursday 9.00am - 4.30pm

Friday 9.00am - 4.00pm

General Enquiries 01394 383789

Refuse and recycling 01394 444000

This is also the number to call for Street Cleansing, Abandoned Vehicles, Car Parks, Pest Control, Public Conveniences, Coast Protection, Ground Maintenance - all provided by Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd.

Leisure Centres

Felixstowe 01394 670411

Brackenbury 01394 270278

Leiston 01728 830364

Deben Pool 01394 384763

These are managed by Suffolk Coastal Leisure Community Association Limited.

Tourist Information Centres

Aldeburgh 01728 453637

Felixstowe 01394 276770

Woodbridge 01394 382240

Suffolk Coastal District Council,

Council Offices, Melton Hill,

Woodbridge IP12 1AU

Fax: 01394 385100

Minicom: 01394 444211

E-mail: scdc@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Website: www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Emergencies outside office hours: 07771 816535

* Suffolk County Council is responsible for Education, Social Services and Highways

Decision due soon on South Seafront Plans

As CoastLine went to press, the South Area Development Control Sub Committee was due to make its decision at its Thursday, December 8 meeting about the revised plans for the leisure-focussed scheme to regenerate 17.5 acres of derelict land at Felixstowe's South Seafront.

In November, the councillors on the committee agreed to pay a site visit to see first-hand what the impact would be of the proposals drawn up by the Council's partner Bloor Homes.

“Over 500 people visited our special three-day exhibition of the revised plans held in September when there were views expressed both for and against. There does seem to be more of a consensus that something must be done now once and for all with the site,” said Councillor Rae Leighton, Cabinet Member with responsibility for the South Seafront.

“The revised plans offer a much needed injection of leisure facilities and other services for residents and visitors alike, all funded by a modern, creative approach to the housing part of the scheme,” added Cllr Leighton.

Visitors to the exhibition could leave comments and the display has since been at Broadway House. The full plans are at the Town Hall and library in Felixstowe, as well as the Council's main Melton Hill offices in Woodbridge. There is also information about the plans on www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

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

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

A detailed Flood Risk Assessment prepared by TA Millard East Anglia Ltd demonstrates that the site is developable according to the strict criteria of the Environment Agency, and even allowing for the effects of further climate change. Major £5 million improvements to the sea defences are also set to occur next Spring.

The revised plans include more leisure and green space than before, with a bigger and better choice of play equipment, a refreshment kiosk, and new modern toilets. There will also be 261 additional car-parking spaces that, according to over 270 surveys carried out at peak Sunday times, will be sufficient to meet demand.

Just under one-third of the site is planned to be used to build 158 homes, 51 fewer than previously proposed, mostly in three-storey terraces, with 16 homes of the same design available for rent from a housing association.

Comments on the application can be made up until the day before the committee meets, and can be sent by post, quoting the application reference of 05/1723, to Development Control, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Melton Hill, Woodbridge IP12 1AU or email

DCadmin@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

The revised plans show that the Martello Tower will be the main focus for the central area of the park and at least £220,000 has been allocated by Bloor Homes for the repair and refurbishment of the Tower in close liaison with English Heritage. The Council hopes it will eventually be converted into an arts centre but there is a great deal of restoration work that needs to be done first, which would be funded by the residential part of the scheme.

Suffolk Coastal has resolved that more public works be included, funded by Bloor Homes, when further money becomes available through a profit share agreement.

There could be a place for a small theatre/community centre in the planned multi-million pound regeneration of Felixstowe South Seafront, but any proposal would need to be backed with a fully detailed business plan.

Calls for such a facility came after a blaze hit the Herman De Stern building, but the Council says any such suggestion would have to be very careful not to undermine the viability of the Spa Theatre, or limit the prospects of a proposed 200 seat theatre at the Deben High School which has recently gained arts status.

The revised plans for the leisure-focussed development of the South Seafront site do not currently include any firm proposals for that part of the site, although a 25,000 square foot area is earmarked as a potential restaurant/café if a suitable business comes forward. This does mean that there is still some flexibility to consider and accommodate other options that could either complement or replace the possible restaurant/café.

The shell of the Herman De Stern building is still too structurally dangerous for experts to confirm whether or not it needs to be demolished, and as CoastLine went to print there had also not yet been a decision from the Council's insurers.

Go-Ahead given for Twin Bin Collection

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

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

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

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

“Further radical changes to our refuse and recycling service are therefore inevitable as the financial and environmental impact of doing nothing cannot be seriously considered. We are therefore planning the phased introduction of the twin bin scheme

incorporating better recycling and composting services,” added Cllr Nunn.

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

In other districts it has been proved that problems with keeping kitchen waste for up to two weeks can be avoided by residents taking the preventative action of wrapping their food waste before putting it in the non recyclables bin.

November’s decision by Suffolk County Council to grant planning permission to Bioganix Ltd for a composting plant at Parham should be great news for anyone worried about the smell of old food when they switch to fortnightly rubbish collection. The new fully enclosed composting facility would mean that in the future all food waste could be put in the ‘green waste’ bins, so that food waste would still be taken away every week as it is at present.

Your Views on Recycling

Thanks to all those who responded to the last CoastLine’s request for views on the way ahead for our recycling and waste management services. The vast majority were in favour of proceeding with the changes that the Cabinet has now confirmed but there were some views against, and many interesting comments. Here is a short summary selected from some of the letters and emails:

If recycling facilities were improved my black refuse sack would be almost empty and collection could be cut down to even once a month. (Rushmere St Andrew)

I am indeed ready for the twin bin scheme - let's get on with it without any more delay. (Blythburgh)

We would be extremely unhappy if non-recyclable waste were to be collected only fortnightly. (Westleton)

I am ready for twin bin collection - a great idea and I hope it can soon happen. (Leiston)

I would certainly like to see twin bin collection. (Melton)

As I am housebound I would welcome a twin bin scheme especially for plastics and bottles. (Woodbridge)

Many people would make an effort to recycle if they had a means of collection/disposal, therefore this twin-bin idea would be excellent. (Trimley St Mary)

Is any thought being given for an appropriate size of bin for elderly – one that is capable of being manhandled? (Woodbridge)

I would welcome a twin bin scheme – recycling should be compulsory (Badingham)

We would like plastics, cardboard, cans and glass collected (Cratfield)

We are a young family with two small children and the simple answer is Twin Bins - yes. (Saxmundham)

*In my opinion a twin bin scheme would be very useful.
(Felixstowe)*

If we all had our own bins it would be so easy and an excellent way to teach our children to re-cycle as it is fun! (Framlingham)

I have many friends in Ipswich who have a fortnightly collection of 'waste for landfill' and they are not happy, especially in the summer. (Martlesham Heath)

I would love to be able to have plastics, tins and foil, glass and cardboard collected from home. Have spoken with friends and other parents at New Street School and the resounding response is yes please.

Previously I was an Ipswich resident and experienced fortnightly collections of landfill waste, which I do not consider to be hygienic particularly in the summer

Protecting Your Coastline

Members of the Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee paid a visit in November to see first-hand the serious coastal erosion difficulties that the Council is taking urgent steps to tackle.

Suffolk Coastal has been working non-stop with its various partners, including the Environment Agency, local town and parish councils and the local community to put in place schemes to provide better protection along the whole coastline.

“The **East Lane, Bawdsey** project has deservedly grabbed a great deal of attention in recent months because of the serious amount of erosion that it has recently suffered but we are hopeful that at long

last real help is on hand,” said Councillor John Hammond, Committee Chairman.

Plans drawn up by Suffolk Coastal and the Environment Agency were scuppered last year when the Government introduced new rules on how it would allocate its funding for such schemes.

However, it is hoped that the recent decision by English Heritage to value its Martello Tower at £5 million plus will push the required coastal defence works up the Government’s priority list so that it should be carried out in 2007/08.

The Environment Agency has confirmed that it has funds to complete works within the next two years to defend the low lying area of land north and to the immediate south of East Lane to a 1 in 100 year standard of flood defence.

Suffolk Coastal has funded three sets of emergency works over the last couple of years, latterly with significant financial support from local residents but has argued strongly that national funding should be available to provide long-term cost-effective protection.

Previous editions of CoastLine have highlighted the coastal protection efforts around Felixstowe. There is a £5.2 million estimated price tag on the works now urgently needed to be carried out replacing the groynes along **South Felixstowe**, the formal plans for which have now been submitted to the Council.

Fortnightly inspections have monitored the beach and the groynes, a number of which have collapsed or had to be demolished for health and safety reasons. There is a real risk of further damage this winter and steps have been agreed to undertake emergency measures as and when required.

The area at serious risk from either flooding or erosion runs southward from the War Memorial and includes the Port, residential and commercial property. A submission has been made to the Government and it is hoped that work will get underway in Spring next year.

The greatest risk for **North Felixstowe** is that of beach lowering, and Suffolk Coastal's Cabinet has agreed a strategy that includes increased beach monitoring, ongoing maintenance of the timber groynes, and periodic topping up of the beach levels with dredged sand and gravel when necessary.

The seaward end of the timber groynes will possibly by 2015 need strengthening with rocks to prolong their lifetime and help prevent the movement of the beach. A longer term groyne modification scheme would probably cost around £1.1 million. In the central area between **Jacobs Ladder** and **Bath Tap**, Cabinet has approved increasing the height of the landward end of the reef structures and the length of the reef spur arms to protect the point from waves.

Two additional fishtail groynes will be built between the point and Bath Tap, and the existing two fishtail groynes will be modified. The beach level will also be topped up, and the sea wall raised within the next 10 years to combat sea level rise and the increased strength of storms.

The defences around **Cobbolds Point** need urgent action and have been costed at £1.1 million, which is now awaiting Government approval. There is a longer-term £3.1 million of groyne replacements planned for between Bath Tap and the War Memorial.

The Council has also set aside £15,000 to support an experimental project at **Dunwich**, and has backed an action plan being drawn up for **Thorpeness Village**.

“This Council is leading the way in the battle to protect the district from the increasing threats of coastal erosion and flooding and my committee support and recognise the quality of the strategies that have been drawn up to protect our coastline.

“Suffolk Coastal is ready with its partners to put in place a programme of action and I hope that we are successful in receiving the backing from the Government’s Department of Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs to press ahead,” added Cllr Hammond.

Meeting Targets

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

In November, Cabinet received the latest quarterly performance and financial report that puts the spotlight on how the Council is delivering on services.

“We are achieving some important successes in key services – for example, our housing benefits team have been delivering good to excellent services when compared to national targets and are well up on this time last year,” said Councillor Ray Herring, Leader of the Council.

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

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

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

Committed to our Customers

Some of Suffolk Coastal’s senior figures took part in National Customer Services Week by taking to the Council’s main reception areas in October to meet and help residents with their enquiries.

“The aim of the week was to highlight and recognise the importance of good customer relations and those in our teams who are front-line ambassadors to the public. This is the first year we have participated in this national initiative and several of the Council’s top managers volunteered to help provide our front-line services,” said Councillor Doreen Savage, the Cabinet Member responsible for customer services.

“Providing a quality, friendly and efficient service is at the core of what this Council strives to do, as can be seen by our much improved, customer-friendly reception area at Melton Hill,” added Cllr Savage.

New Heads at Council

As part of Suffolk Coastal's ongoing commitment to service improvement, there are two new faces on the Council's corporate management team. Karen Kennedy (above left) has joined the Council as Head of Customer and Strategic Services, and Phil Ridley (above right) has taken on the new post of Head of Planning Services, which was created after the merger of planning policy, conservation and development control.

The rest of the senior managers in full are Stephen Baker (Chief Executive), Jeremy Schofield (Strategic Director), Tony Osmanski (Strategic Director), Alan McFarlane (Finance), Liz Delany (Community and Economic Services), Hilary Slater (Legal and Democratic Services), Mike Eaton (Housing and Benefits), and Phil Gore (Health).

The restructuring of the Council's senior management has seen a saving of £158,000.

Blooming Marvellous

The district again harvested more than its fair share of awards from this year's Anglia in Bloom award ceremony thanks to the expertise of Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd (SCS).

The best drought garden went to Martlesham's millennium garden, and the best small town to Chief Executive Stephen Baker serving a customer Saxmundham, while silver awards went to Woodbridge, Felixstowe and Martlesham in the middle, coastal resort and small town awards respectively, and the more prestigious silver gilt ranking went to Leiston cum Sizewell and Saxmundham in the best small town section.

The best local authority display certificate went to Suffolk Coastal for its 3D Galleon display at Felixstowe, while Saxmundham also got certificates for least litter, local involvement, community project and hanging baskets.

These excellent results are testimony to the hard work and commitment of the various town and parish councils, their local communities and SCS.

Want help from the team behind the award-winners? SCS can offer help to residents or businesses who want gardening or landscaping work done. Call Tim Collard on 01394 444003 for details or email tim.collard@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

National Award for Recycling Partnership

Suffolk Coastal was recently recognised in the National Awards for Excellence in recycling and waste management.

ITV newscaster Mary Nightingale presenting the partnership trophy to representatives of the winning Suffolk Recycling Consortium said: "There are many inspirational ideas represented by our 27 finalists today. But, ideas are one thing, the delivery of these ideas and achieving recycling targets needs inspirational people.

“I would like to congratulate all the finalists here today and I would also like to say a huge well done too, to their colleagues many of whom have also played a part in the delivery of successful projects.”

Almost 140 entries were received for the 2005 awards. The unique Suffolk partnership has led to dramatic increases in recycling levels through an alternative route to procuring a waste contract. Judges were impressed by the contract procedure adopted and that

the programme had helped push up recycling rates. Malcolm Duesbury of Suffolk Coastal Services Ltd was present at the prestigious ceremony to receive the award on behalf of the Council.

SCS delivering Success

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

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

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

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

Suffolk Coastal's Budget Planning 2006/2007

There have been more indications that Suffolk Coastal is providing quality services with a range of good news in recent weeks, with the latest performance statistics showing significant improvements.

The Council has also recently won separate national awards for its support of sea safety and its central role in a Suffolk-wide recycling partnership, while funding has been gained in another countywide partnership to promote better food safety among local businesses.

The Council has also been told that it has retained its prestigious Investor in People status because of its commitment to staff training and development. At the same time, Suffolk Coastal is working on its commitment to bridge next year's £1million budget gap, and a survey has revealed that the Council was the eighth most successful in the country last year for finding efficiencies.

In the last edition of CoastLine we asked for people to send in their views on what services we do well, where we could reduce spending, and how we could improve or make our services more efficient. Thanks to all those who have sent in their ideas and here is a cross-section of the comments we have received so far.

Put car parking out to contractors. (Trimley St Mary)

I have no complaints. My concern is about affordable housing. Radical action is needed – i.e. no second homes, prefabricated housing, compulsory purchase of land. (Yoxford)

We think the 'marathon runners' who accompany your collection vehicles are excellent and CoastLine is an excellent publication. Start collecting plastic rubbish. (Sweffling)

Don't keep us waiting when we telephone you. (Grundisburgh)

Our local dustmen are excellent, efficient and cheerful. (Dunwich)

Reduce staff by introducing further computerisation. Do not remove perfectly adequate refuse collecting vehicles. Provide better communal recycling units. Reduce expenditure on tourist information and tax collection. More private investment in leisure centres. Invest in coastal protection. (Aldeburgh)

The previously excellent dustbin services are now over-developed. Too many brochures are produced and tourism is over done in our area. Do more coast emergency planning. (Aldringham Cum Thorpe)

How much does it cost per year to send out this probably unread magazine? Not doing it would save money. (Anon)

Refuse collection is excellent. Stop people advertising on road verges and traffic signs, as it is distracting to motorists. (Tunstall)

People trapped on fixed low income cannot afford these huge Council Tax bills. (Bucklesham)

Do more litter removal. (Walton)

Less bureaucracy and less money on staff. (Grundisburgh)

Stop wasting money on cycle lanes. Improve public footpaths, make sure they are clear and waymarked. (Wickham Market)

You do all services well. We must have affordable housing to keep 20-40 year olds in the district. Use and support charities as much as possible. (Felixstowe)

If you would like to add your voice to the debate and help us draw up next year's budget, then you can visit the Council's special budget page on its website -

<http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourcouncil/budgetconsultation/>

- where there is also a budget game which helps you set your own budget and set your own priorities. You can also write to us using a special Freepost address so you do not need to put a stamp on your envelope or postcard. Please send your comments by January 31, 2006 to

Freepost RYLA-BTTE-CKTR, Suffolk Coastal District Council (Budget 2006), Melton Hill, Woodbridge, IP12 1AU.

Explaining our Spending

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

We are trying to provide a short summary of the accounts from last year – covering details such as revenue, cash and capital. It includes our key financial information such as our gross expenditure, our main income sources, and the way the gap was filled via the Council Tax, and our share of grants and business rates that the Government give us. Also included are summaries of our balance sheet, cash flow statement, reserves, plus capital expenditure.

We would like to hear from you with your thoughts on the usefulness of the content – does it go into too much detail, or not enough? Have we been successful in trying to explain some of the jargon involved with accounts?

The summary can be seen on the Council's website by visiting **<http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourcouncil/performance/>** where the full accounts can also be viewed. Comments on the usefulness of the leaflet can be sent to the Council's finance team at Melton Hill, Woodbridge IP12 1AU or email accountancy@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Hard Work is bridging Council's Financial Gap

Suggestions by staff from across the Council has helped Suffolk Coastal identify some £400,000 worth of additional efficiencies and income over and above the tremendous efforts achieved last year as it aims to bridge a £954,000 gap in next year's budget.

Suffolk Coastal's Leader has been seeking suggestions from local residents, businesses and voluntary organisations, as well as staff and councillors, as the Council battles to balance its budget while still providing the range and quality of services that residents expect.

"Since 2001, this Council has managed to save around £5 million out of an annual budget of under £13 million. Government statistics show that last year we achieved the eighth highest amount of savings of councils like us across the country, but we know we still have to find more," said Councillor Ray Herring, Leader of Suffolk Coastal.

"Once again, each and every service has had a look to see how it can make itself more efficient or increase its income. I congratulate everyone involved who has identified a reduction of almost £400,000 off next year's budget.

Other factors including government performance grant for identifying benefit fraudsters have helped reduce the budget gap by £191,000 so our gap is now £377,000. Our review of car parking charges could make a significant dent in that figure," added Cllr Herring.

Four consultation meetings have recently been held across the district with members of town and parish councils and the local business and voluntary community to explain the Council's position and seek suggestions on the way forward.

The last edition of CoastLine also asked for the views of residents, and a special budget game has been set up on the website – <http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourcouncil/budgetconsultation/> – to attract fresh ideas.

“We are once again seeing increasing demands for our services, more responsibilities from the Government while our fixed costs such as energy and fuel costs rise because of factors outside of our control and with no clear sign that Government grants are going to take full account of our local needs.

“We are not complacent and this latest package of proposals I think successfully attempts to further fine-tune the way we provide our services in a way that may mean a few changes but that also safeguards the vast majority of our services and the residents we provide them to,” added Cllr Herring.

The Council-wide review that has identified a further £400,000 of efficiencies and income highlighted that by streamlining business processes almost £100,000 worth of vacant posts could be deleted and the use of contract staff could be reduced. The increased use of modern technologies is also helping to reduce costs across the board.

One important suggested change would see the monthly date of payment for Council Tax brought forward by 10 days to the start of the month, which would mean an additional £59,000 a year of income through additional earned interest to help fund services.

Just over £100,000 of increased income could come from a mixture of managing the increasing demand for popular services such as beach huts and attracting more users to an existing or new service.

Car Park set to boost Recycling

Limited rises in car parking charges are being seriously considered by Suffolk Coastal as one of the many potential efficiency and income increases to help it continue to improve its priority services for local residents.

Councillors on the Overview and Scrutiny Committees were the first to discuss proposals which include two different options that would raise between an additional £160,000 and £313,000 a year.

“Historically, we have used the money from car parking to pay for their maintenance and their key role in traffic management in our town centres, and also to improve our town centres. This proposed limited increase will go directly towards helping the environment by meeting the cost of improving our recycling services,” said Cllr Ray Herring, Leader of the Council.

“It is cheaper to park at our car parks than in neighbouring areas, and that will still be the case with either of these two options. We are trying to get the balance right between making any increases affordable and the need to invest in even better recycling services that our residents want.

“I have warned that we would face some tough choices if we were going to still be able to provide improved services while bridging our budget gap, and we are looking at every possible source of potential additional income and all our areas to improve efficiency. Increasing our car parking charges is almost inevitable unless there are significant changes in the amount of grants we get from the Government,” added Cllr Herring.

District's Latest Skatepark in Leiston

Leiston has got its own skatepark which is already proving to be a big hit with local youngsters who have been making tracks to the Victory Road recreation ground.

The project was overseen by the Leiston Community Partnership, and was backed with £52,000 from the Government's Living Spaces Programme, £16,000 from Leiston Town Council, and support from the Suffolk Coastal Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

Suffolk Coastal gave a £13,000 grant for the project, and also used £40,000 from its Playspace scheme which came from money set aside by developers of recent housing projects around Leiston.

The park was designed by the town's young skaters, led by Andrew Pegg, who met regularly in CYDS to agree what they wanted, and which was turned into reality by Jo Johnson and Blakedown Landscapes.

Trust refreshes the Partners that Other Banks won't reach

The new team running the Sorrell Horse pub in the heart of Shottisham are there thanks to the help of Suffolk Regeneration Trust which agreed to lend some of the funds required by Pauline Caswell and Clive Chambers.

Suffolk Regeneration Trust (SRT) is a not-for-profit organisation established to contribute to community regeneration in Suffolk by filling gaps left by conventional finance companies.

“There are many individuals with great business ideas who are unable to raise the funds they need to get started. Some may be able to get a loan from a high street bank but fall down when it comes to having to at least match the amount loaned. Many others struggle to get anything whatsoever from traditional financial sources,” said Leanne Castle, an SRT business development manager.

For more information about SRT go to their website at www.suffolkregenerationtrust.org or call 01284 731780.

Funding agreed for Improved Play Facilities

Suffolk Coastal’s innovative Playspace scheme will help fund improvements to play areas at Seaton Road, Ferry Lane and Adastral Close in Felixstowe, and support for new changing rooms at Kings Field, Aldeburgh.

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

Seaton Road will see £27,000 spent bringing the play facilities up to current standards and also more attractive for teenagers. Half the money will come from Playspace and the rest from the Council, with a similar split meeting the £3,000 cost of a new item of play equipment for Ferry Lane.

Cabinet agreed Felixstowe Town Council’s request that only £10,000 be paid of the £25,000 needed to modernise the Adastral Close play area and that Suffolk Coastal help the local residents association identify other potential sources of funding.

The Aldeburgh Community Sports Trust will get £20,000 from Playspace to help add changing rooms to a planned community centre. The Trust has gained over £100,000 from six other sources including the National Lottery.

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

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

Tap into the Sustainable Development Fund

Up to £400,000 could be paid out by the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) that offers grants for innovative, sustainable projects to local community groups, schools, businesses, conservation organisations and individuals in our protected landscapes.

The money is aimed at Suffolk and Essex's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths and Dedham Vale have awarded their first small 'fast-track' SDF grant to the CoastLink bus service which connects rail services at Darsham station and other scheduled bus services in the area to some of the most beautiful, but less accessible, parts of our local AONB, such as Minsmere RSPB Reserve and Dunwich Heath.

Funded by the Government, the SDF aims to encourage individuals, community groups, schools and businesses to develop projects aimed at achieving more sustainable ways of living in our most beautiful countryside.

If you want to find out more about what SDF has to offer you can visit

<http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/downloads.asp?PageId=76>

or you can get an application pack from the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Unit by calling 01394 384948 or e-mailing mail@suffolkcoastandheaths.org.uk

Councillors on Parade at RAF Woodbridge

A party of senior councillors led by the Council's Leader, Councillor Ray Herring, paid a recent site visit to see first-hand the work on the £82 million redevelopment of RAF Woodbridge.

Colonel Tony Barton took them on a tour of the ambitious project that will deliver an important new centre for our defence forces, with facilities for use by the local community, while protecting the environment.

With a regiment of around 600 men waiting to move in, Col Barton explained that they were a big community which is about to become part of an even bigger one. Col Barton has been keen to build up relationships with local organisations and has already met up with many local service providers to find how they can work together.

The confirmed future for the base has already been recognised as being good news for local schools because of the increase in numbers that will result, while Col Barton said he was trying to encourage better bus services to and around the base. He will also be taking a more active role in the issues that affect the district as he will be joining the Suffolk Coastal Local Strategic Partnership.

The 69-hectare site is in the middle of Rendlesham Forest, and major efforts have been made by the developers Skanska to keep disruption to a minimum.

At the visit, Cllr Herring said that the Council recognised the importance of the base to the district, as well as its strategic role for the country.

New Community Partnerships

Three community partnerships drawing up projects to bring about real improvements to the quality of life in the towns of Framlingham, Leiston and Saxmundham have been given a £10,000 boost.

The funding comes from the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) and has been given the go-ahead by the Suffolk Development Agency that has recognised the potential in the scheme.

“Suffolk Coastal Community Partnerships is the collective name for three groups hoping to learn from Wickham Market’s successes and attract funding for, and interest in, new projects in their areas,” said Councillor John Perry, Cabinet Member for the Economy.

In March EEDA funded workshops held with representatives of the three towns by the Wickham Market Partnership who spelt out how community participation had shaped its goals, and how external funding opportunities worth over £1 million were identified.

Since then, the Grants Task Group of Suffolk Coastal agreed to provide £6,000 towards the development of the new partnerships, who have also gained backing from the three local town councils.

“Thanks to this latest contribution, all the funding is now in place for a development officer to be recruited to give these three budding partnerships the support so they can learn from Wickham Market, attract funding from regional and national sources, and have a positive impact on their communities,” added Cllr Perry.

The three towns have already accumulated a list of projects that they want to bring to fruition over the coming years to boost the quality of life in their areas.

“These partnerships are about making a difference in our communities based on using the involvement and support of our local people to unlock the national pots of resources that can be used to put in place the projects our residents want and need,” added John Rayner, Town Clerk of Leiston Town Council and current secretary of the Leiston Community Partnership.

Advice Day targeted at Elderly People

Suffolk Coastal’s benefits team was one of many local organisations at a recent special event in Felixstowe organised by the Royal British Legion to provide a one-stop information shop for elderly people.

“Our benefits team gave advice on how those claiming benefits can get help to pay their rent or Council Tax. Our officers were able to give an on-the-spot quotation of the help someone is entitled to,” said Councillor Chris Slemmings, Cabinet Member for Housing.

“Surveys show that there are still many people, especially among our elderly population, who do not know what they are entitled to claim. It may well be that they are scared about the potential paperwork, but our staff is ready to offer whatever assistance is needed. Congratulations to the RBL for organising this important event,” added Cllr Slemmings.

To find out more about what help to pay your rent or Council Tax you are entitled to, contact Suffolk Coastal's benefits team on 01394 444838.

Suffolk Coastal's benefits team has also been working closely with the Pension Service Local Service, part of the Government's Department for Work and Pensions, to ensure that older and vulnerable people are aware of what entitlements they can rightfully apply for.

Free checks are on offer which are designed to provide a full review of what entitlements such as Attendance Allowance or Pension credit that the individual is entitled to, along with help in completing the relevant application forms. Suffolk Coastal has been using its records to let relevant local people aged 60 and over know of this helpful offer that could mean some important extra money for those who need it most.

The Pension Service Local Service can visit at home, and are happy to carry out the entitlements check with a friend or relative present. If you would like to have an appointment then email sally.cornwell@thepensionservice.gsi.gov.uk or write to the Pension Service Local Service at St Felix House, Silent Street, Ipswich IP1 1TF.

•Good news for those living around Aldeburgh or who can get into Ipswich. Suffolk Coastal's benefits team will be at two more free information events. On Thursday, January 19 they and others will be at the Fairfield Centre in Aldeburgh between 10am and 3pm, and at the County Council's HQ Endeavour House, Ipswich on Wednesday, January 11 between 2pm and 8pm.

Free Bus Passes?

There are concerns about the free bus passes that will be available for elderly and disabled people from April 2006. Suffolk Coastal estimates that it could cost £685,751 next year to provide the passes but the special Government funding might not be enough to meet demand.

“The Government is not providing enough money to meet the full cost of its latest ‘promise’. We will face real problems if the scheme proves more popular than we predict and what is meant to happen after 2009 when the Government is set to cut its funding off is anyone’s guess,” said Councillor Stephen Burroughes, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Rural Issues.

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

Suffolk Coastal issued 10,438 half-price bus passes last year, with just over a quarter of those eligible applying for one.

It is expected that about 13,000 will be attracted by the new-style pass. If applications outrun resources, then it could have a serious impact on the Council’s financial position as each pass costs over £50.

Full details will be in the Spring edition of CoastLine or keep an eye on the local press or the Council’s website for news once the final scheme has been announced.

Expert Advice for Landlords

More and more people are becoming landlords as they take advantage of a potential investment opportunity and Suffolk Coastal is keen to keep them as informed as possible about the legal obligations that face them and their tenants.

This autumn saw free expert advice and information on offer at Suffolk Coastal's annual seminar for landlords and agents held in a packed Council Chamber at the Council's Melton Hill offices.

“Landlords have an increasingly important role to play in providing quality rented accommodation for the people of the district and this Council is ready to help them. These events offer landlords a chance to learn something new and we hope to build on the success and hold them more regularly,” said Councillor Chris Slemmings, Cabinet Member for Housing.

If you are a landlord, or are thinking of becoming one, contact Suffolk Coastal for helpful information by calling 01394 444838 or emailing benefits@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

New Hotline launched

‘You hold the key’ is the message of Suffolk Police’s new Community Intelligence Hotline which can be called on 0800 783 9112 and covers all of Suffolk Coastal.

People should call with reports of anti-social behaviour – for example youths gathering in a street and causing problems for residents, or particular problems near licensed premises. Call 0800 783 9112 also with news about discarded needles or associated drug paraphernalia being left in public spaces, or regular

suspicious activity at an address, or nuisance drivers congregating or causing a disturbance.

The hotline is for recorded messages so anyone who needs a police officer urgently – if a crime is in progress or life is in danger – should always ring 999.

Lock Up Your Bikes

A three-month Suffolk Police campaign is encouraging people to take better care of their bikes after research showed that over 90% of the 343 pedal cycles stolen in east Suffolk between March 1 and August 31 had been left unlocked, meaning that £50,000 of thefts could have been prevented!

“Even we were shocked at the value of cycles stolen in the area this year. Our drive must be to encourage people to lock up their cycles, even if they are leaving them unattended for just a few minutes. With over 90% of stolen bikes left insecure it is easy to see how a £10 lock could save a lot of heartache,” said Detective Chief Inspector Phil Aves.

Police are also encouraging cyclists to take personal safety measures, such as ensuring they have lights and wear reflective clothing. Officers are also taking action with those cycling without lights or on pavements.

Sobering Message on a Mat for Drinkers

Thousand of beer mats have been distributed to pubs and clubs throughout the district as part of the ongoing Nightsafe campaign to tackle alcohol-related violent crime and anti-social behaviour which saw a fall of 2.5 per cent in public place violence in this area from April to August.

The beer mats come in two designs. One asks ‘When you leave this pub tonight will you... and on the reverse gives options a) Go home safe? b) Forget where you live? c) Have an argument? d) Visit casualty? e) Get arrested? The other says ‘Look what I picked up last weekend... and gives an on-the-spot fine, a criminal record and a pub ban as some of the options.

Police are working in partnership with other agencies, including Suffolk Coastal, residents and licensees, to promote sensible drinking as part of Nightsafe. Additional police patrols are happening where and when resources allow and further activity is planned as the new licensing regulations come into force and in the run up to Christmas.

Tackling Under-Age Drinking

A new Nightsafe poster features, collapsed on the pavement from the effects of alcohol, a young girl who is vulnerable, alone and worse-for-wear.

Detective Chief Inspector Phil Aves says that under-age drinking is increasing, is an issue none of us can afford to ignore, and that it relates to both boys and girls.

“The poster asks who should be taking responsibility. Should it be the drinkers? Do parents know and are they supplying the alcohol? Are friends letting others get too drunk and then leaving them alone? Are people over 18 buying drink for those under 18? Is the licensee taking all the steps to prevent under-age sales and are retailers being vigilant? The truth is we all have a role to play in dealing with the issue,” said DCI Aves.

Intoxicated drinkers are very vulnerable in terms of criminality and personal safety. Local Police officers deal regularly with the

consequences – including allegations of rape and assault. Do parents realise their child may really be this vulnerable?

Call the new Community Intelligence Hotline – 0800 783 9112 – if you have information about where young people are acquiring alcohol or where there is a particular problem. The Nightsafe campaign sees police working with partner agencies to tackle alcohol-related violent crime, disorder and damage.

Port signs up with Council to offer even Better Service

Following a review of its business processes, Suffolk Coastal's Port Health team have signed an important agreement with the Port of Felixstowe. A Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) setting out clear objectives and joint working arrangements for the timely and efficient inspection of containers at Felixstowe will help maintain its position as the premier Port for the importation of containerised food.

“We very much appreciate the enlightened approach by the Port of Felixstowe to joint working practices, and this MoA represents an important step in the official acknowledgement of our partnership,” said Councillor Sherrie Green, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Well-being at the signing ceremony on September 23.

“Over 300 containers a week are subject to Port Health examination at Felixstowe. Given this volume, and the increases we expect to see in the future, it is essential that we are able to ensure that EU regulations are adhered to, with minimum delay. The good relations we enjoy with the Port will ensure that customers continue to receive excellent levels of customer service, and will facilitate shorter turnaround times for their shipments,” added Cllr Green.

Duncan Morgan, director of operations at the Port said: “This will further improve service levels, and help to secure the Port’s leading position in the handling of food products.”

“This increased efficiency will serve to make Felixstowe even more attractive, and will have a knock-on benefit for the whole logistics’ chain,” said Simon Fraser, Chairman of the Felixstowe Port Users Association.

Before the signing ceremony, councillors had an opportunity to see first-hand the checks carried out by the Port Health team at the Port’s temperature controlled examination facilities.

Safer Food means Better Business

Thanks to a successful collaborative bid led by Suffolk Coastal’s Food and Safety Team, food businesses in Suffolk will benefit from a package of support measures designed to help them comply with new food hygiene laws that come into force on January 1, 2006.

Business briefings on the new regulations and coaching sessions in food safety management will be on offer for local catering businesses after Suffolk Coastal linked up with other councils in the county to win £90,000 of grant funding from the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

“We are now able to offer a free package of support under the banner of Safer Food, Better Business that we think will guide people so they can comply with the new legislation,” said Councillor Sherrie Green, Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

“As well as free briefings, workshops and one-to-one coaching, we are producing a special newsletter, distributing a FSA fact pack and creating a special website with help from onesuffolk.

“New laws always seem quite daunting but basically these are aimed to reduce the risk of food poisoning by putting more emphasis on businesses having in place the simple checks and measures that will deliver better food safety,” added Cllr Green.

All food businesses in the district should receive information, including a special newsletter, by Christmas but if you want to find out more call Suffolk Coastal’s food safety team on 01394 444357, email foodsafetyteam@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk or visit www.onesuffolk.co.uk/saferfood

Conditional Approval for Wind Farm at Parham

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

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

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

“National planning guidance makes it clear that this district should be playing its part in encouraging more renewable energy schemes. This application makes a small but still significant impact on that

national need for alternative sources of energy on a site which has been identified as one of the most appropriate in the county.

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

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

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

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

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

“This has been an extremely detailed and complicated application that has attracted over 700 responses and I would thank everyone who has taken the time to air their views. The Committee has gone

through a great deal of evidence before making its decision on the planning merits of the application,” added Cllr Jowers.

Suffolk Coastal is now considering an application for onshore connection works at Sizewell to a proposed offshore wind farm. To find out more and how you can comment visit the Council’s website

www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/devcontrol/applications/offshore/

Local Youngsters get heard with Amplifier

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

Amplifier offers informal tuition in rock, pop and urban music to 11-25 year olds across Suffolk.

Nearly 80 sessions have been held locally, including Felixstowe, Leiston, Kesgrave, Saxmundham, Framlingham and Woodbridge, with about 125 young people benefiting from the workshops.

“This really exciting project is aimed at getting young people to develop their musical talents, pick up useful tips, and maybe form new creative partnerships. For some, this might just be a diverting ‘middle eight’ during their life, but for some it could be an overture to a new and successful career,” said Councillor Maggy Wilson, Suffolk Coastal’s Cabinet Member for Community Well-being.

Big Read was a Big Draw

Over a hundred children enjoyed story telling sessions inspired by George Orwell's Animal Farm and drawing sessions with animals acting as models during the Big Read – Big Draw Bonanza held at the end of October at Easton Farm Park.

The event was part of Big Read month, and was such a success that Suffolk Coastal's arts officer Rachel Nightingale, the farm and the artist Jevan Watkins-Jones are seeking funding to hold a monthly arts and crafts club at Easton. If you are interested call Rachel on 01394 444294 or email rachel.nightingale@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Art for Christmas?

Looking for something special to give as a present? Then, the Arts and Crafts Fair at Waldringfield Village Hall in School Lane may well be the place to go on Saturday, December 3 from 10am to 8.30pm, and Sunday, December 4 from 10am to 4pm.

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

Admission is free for children and £1 for adults, and the event has been set up by Deben Arts with support from Suffolk Coastal's arts and heritage development officer, Rachel Nightingale. To find out more call 01394 672362 or 01473 736602.

Saxmundham celebrates the ARTS

All age groups recently flocked to the third Saxmundham Arts Festival with a feast of attractions organised by the new

Saxmundham Arts and Recreation Trust that appropriately began with a food fair of mainly local produce plus a marching jazz band at a packed Market Hall.

Puppet performances were a big hit with children, lots of who also took part in a poetry competition. The entries were so good that they will all soon be published by the Trust in a special anthology.

The theatrical spotlight shone on Ricky Blain, of Great Glemham, who thoroughly entertained with two one-man plays, while other events included a Cinema Day with *Akenfield* and *Casablanca* drawing good crowds, a Talent Show, the Advent Singers, and a Children's Storytime, plus art exhibitions by the Saxmundham Art Club and *acr gallery* from Yoxford.

Peggy Cole, of Akenfield, met local people and signed copies of her books, while Doreen Roberts, a Saxmundham poet and resident, apparently sold all her copies of her recently published story for children aged 9 to 90. Saxmundham Museum had 'open house' all week, and the Brook Farm Resident's Association sponsored a terrific 60s/70s 'retro' dance which filled the Market Hall. The week finished on a glorious morning with a duck race on the River Fromus!

Plans for next year's Festival are already underway - if you have an idea for an event please tell the Trust through the Town Clerk at Saxmundham (01728 604595) or Rachel Nightingale, Suffolk Coastal's Arts and Heritage Development Officer (01394 444294) or a member of the Trust (01728 603553). On behalf of the Trust, Marian Andrews offers a thank you to all supporters and sponsors for their continued involvement and interest.