

EAST SUFFOLK COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

Cllr Stephen Burroughes – JANUARY 2023



- **APPROVAL GRANTED FOR £2.75M FROM GOVT'S UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND**

East Suffolk Council has been allocated £2.75m from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to invest across two and a half years in initiatives that will address inequality and contribute to levelling up.

The funding will be used to support high streets, local businesses, workforce and community skills development, as well as supporting those struggling with the cost of living crisis. In April 2022, the Government launched the UKSPF to support its Levelling Up agenda by building 'pride in place' and increasing life chances across the UK, focusing on communities, and supporting local business, people and skills. The East Suffolk Investment Plan contains a number of key programmes, based on new and existing schemes, to be delivered either locally or collaboratively with other local authorities. More details can be found here.

Additionally, the Council has been allocated £1.129m under the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), part of the UKSPF, which aims to support small business and community infrastructure in rural areas.

- **WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP OFF-ROAD CYCLING EVENT RETURNS TO TRINITY PARK**

An action-packed championship cycling event returned to East Suffolk in December. More than 600 riders, representing 20 different nations, descended on Trinity Park for the UCI Masters Cyclo-Cross World Championships, racing along a purpose-built circuit featuring obstacles, bends, muddy slopes and bridges. Supported by East Suffolk Council and staged at the same venue for the first time last year, the event sees riders aged 35 or over, who no longer compete in an Elite Professional Team, pitted against each other across five age groups containing many former pros, Olympians, national champions and some of the best Cyclo-Cross age category riders the world has to offer, including European Champion (50-54), Cordula Neudörffer.

The weekend of competition also featured open races for riders of all ages, as well as a Special Olympics Cyclo-Cross event. Schools in the Ipswich and South Suffolk School Games partnership also came together for a morning of cycling activity organised in partnership between Active Suffolk, British Cycling, East Suffolk Council and Elmy Cycles, and involving the Suffolk RoadSafe partnership, Suffolk Constabulary, schools outreach organisation Kinetic Science, art organisation Rock Paper Scissors, British Cycling and Loose Cannon's Conditioning.

- **DIGITAL SPRINGBOARD LAUNCHED TO PROVIDE DIGITAL BOOST FOR BUSINESSES**

A new online service has been introduced to provide a digital boost for businesses in East Suffolk. Launched on behalf of East Suffolk Council by not-for-profit company MENTA, the Digital Springboard offers access to support, resources, workshops and grants for businesses hoping to create or improve online presence. The project is the latest component of a wider Digital Towns programme already being rolled out across East Suffolk with the installation of free-to use public Wi-Fi linked to footfall counter technology and accompanying analytics.

The ambitious programme has been funded by the New Anglia LEP's Innovative Projects Fund, the Getting Building Fund, and East Suffolk Council internal funding, and aims to strengthen the local economy and improve connectivity within the district's market towns.

Alongside masterclasses on various digital themes, the launch of a 'Digital MOT' profiling tool will provide analysis and insights for businesses on their current digital capabilities, while businesses that progress through the programme will also be able to apply for a small Digital Grant to support their business growth journey.

The Digital Springboard website is simple, quick, and fun way to access the full programme including free resources, one-to-one support and events, to help people grow their digital skills and business reach. The Digital Springboard can be found by following this link.

- **SUFFOLK COUNCILS' SUCCESSFUL BID FOR HOUSING FUND POT**

Suffolk's local authorities are delighted to have been awarded funding by the Local Government Association to commission a vital, county-wide housing strategy review. The £20,000 pot will kickstart a programme which aims to increase the number of genuinely affordable properties available to meet those in housing need. The Housing Advisers Programme grant is designed to support councils seeking to innovate and will fund the provision of bespoke expert support to councils.

Suffolk's successful bid was led by East Suffolk Council, which will work with Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Babergh District Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and West Suffolk Council – identifying opportunities to bridge the gap between supply and demand.

Working together as the Suffolk Housing Board, the councils have identified 900 properties available for rent, 5,000 properties marketed for sale, 1,000 long term empty homes and 6,000 second homes. And yet, despite this, there are currently a significant number of households living in unsatisfactory, unsuitable accommodation, experiencing, or at risk of homelessness.

The Suffolk Housing Board has agreed to establish a project which will agree proposals that remove barriers to accommodating people, as well as gaps in policies where accommodation solutions could be encouraged. The councils will use this opportunity to join up their approaches, exploring ideas such as resource pooling, funding empty home renovations, early engagement, legal advice and community engagement.

- **MORE TIME FOR PUBLIC TO HAVE SAY ON MASTERPLAN FOR LEISTON TOWN CENTRE**

Consultation on a masterplan and supporting framework for the centre of Leiston has been extended in response to the encouraging level of feedback so far received. The Leiston Town Centre Masterplan Framework Document had been due for publication at the end of December 2022. However, due to the volume of feedback received to date, a further public consultation period will be launched in January to allow as many people as possible to contribute. The design team, having worked closely alongside East Suffolk Council's Economic Regeneration team, wants to ensure that there is sufficient time for ongoing consultation work and consideration of draft proposals.

The updated timeframe for delivery of the project will include further public online consultation to consider the draft masterplan and supporting framework, starting in early January, with publication of the final Masterplan Framework Document set for the end of March.

The development of the work is being led by East Suffolk Council, working in partnership with Leiston Town Council, Leiston Community Land Trust, Leiston Together and Suffolk County Council.

The masterplan and supporting framework will include improvements to public spaces and better connectivity between key locations, as well as enhanced cycling and walking routes, while also being used to identify redevelopment opportunities over the next 10 to 15 years and to help attract investment.

LDA Design, commissioned by East Suffolk Council to deliver the masterplan, brings extensive knowledge and experience to the project, and recently completed a Traffic Management Strategy for Leiston, which will also inform the work.

- **NEW AND IMPROVED BEACH ACCESS RAMP UNVEILED AT FELIXSTOWE SEAFRONT**

Local residents and visitors to Felixstowe can enjoy improved access to the seafront following completion of a new ramp. Work began in autumn to install a replacement ramp at the South Seafront, linking the pavement along Sea Road and Orford Road to the beachfront, over the sea defence wall.

Located within Flood Zone 2, to the northern extent of Martello Park, the ramp will also provide a safe escape route in the event of the sea wall gates being closed in bad weather.

Wider by about one-and-a-half metres and longer by about five-and-a-half metres, the ramp also features the addition of steps from the beach on the southern elevation and a landing area within the mid-section along the Martello Park side, as well as slip resistant material and railings.

Designed by Framlingham based architect, Hollins, the main structure was built off-site in Great Blakenham by Elliston Steady & Hawes (Building) Ltd, before installation began on-site in September – overseen by local authority commercial partner, East Suffolk Norse.

The development forms part of wider ongoing investment in the South Seafront area, where the Martello Park has already delivered new homes, a play area and new car parking facilities, while East Suffolk Council has also invested in the development of a contemporary café, the refurbishment of two public shelters, and the long-term maintenance of an historic Martello Tower.

Meanwhile, work continues on a new Seashore Village and activity park further north along Sea Road.

Further along the East Suffolk coast, at Lowestoft's South Beach, a new boardwalk was completed earlier this year to provide year-round access for people with disabilities, particularly wheelchair users, as well as people with pushchairs.

Cllr Stephen Burroughes

Member for the Kelsale & Yoxford Ward

Cabinet Member for Customer Services, ICT & Commercial Partnerships