

# EAST SUFFOLK COUNCILLOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Cllr Stephen Burroughes



- **THE CHALLENGE OF 2021**

2021 continued to be a challenging year as we all dealt the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic in its various forms. Through many false dawns, restrictions remained in place well into 2022 but, despite these, communities and businesses continued to adapt, as best they could, to make sure no-one was left alone to struggle through. Huge credit is due to all Parish Councils for leading the efforts in their local communities.

- **CHANGING THE WAY WE WORK**

At East Suffolk Council we have had to rethink and adapt our work procedures and practices to make sure that services were maintained and, despite also suffering from staff shortages from time to time, largely achieved that albeit with the occasional delays in some bin collections! In some respects, more efficient ways were found to conduct our business and these, we hope, will continue. Many more meetings were held online, and this accelerated our digital transformation journey.

- **SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS**

Since the start of the pandemic the Council has administered a range of business grant schemes to support our local businesses. During that period, just over £130 million was distributed to businesses across the East Suffolk district via 29,502 payment transactions. This gives an indication of the scale and complexity involved in delivering the schemes. Nevertheless, the outcome has been the survival of the vast majority of local businesses.

Additional support of some £7.9m in the form of Covid-19 Additional Rate Relief to Business rate payers has also been announced and these measures, together with initiatives such as the recently announced 'Click Local' scheme will, hopefully, further ensure that our local businesses can continue to recover and thrive.

- **HELPING OUR RESIDENTS**

Individual Council Tax payers have also been supported through the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and, in addition to the £150 being made available by the government to reduce Council Tax bill in bands A-D, East Suffolk Council has provided up to £150,000 from an Exceptional Hardship fund to those most in need. Together with support from Government we are doing our best to support our residents.

- **LOOKING FORWARD**

Across the East Suffolk there are many exciting and significant major projects either underway or on the horizon. Massive development is underway in Lowestoft with the new Gull Wing Bridge being installed as we meet and plans for the whole town to regenerate. A decision on Sizewell C is expected shortly and Scottish Power's offshore windfarm proposals have been given the go-ahead. Acceptance of our bid for a Freeport at Felixstowe is another and all of these projects, whilst perhaps vital in terms of achieving our environmental targets and aspirations, nevertheless have great impact on our local communities. Achieving suitable and adequate mitigation from the developers continues to be the priority of all levels of local and nationally elected representatives.

- **PLANNING**

Planning is always an emotional and difficult element to manage in terms of responding to local feelings and expectations and always create a lot of correspondence. I will do my best to always fight your corner and support the priorities of our local communities. I regularly monitor applications coming through and where appropriate support Parish Councils in resisting over development which exceeds those agreed to in the Local Neighbourhood or District Local Plans.

- **EAST SUFFOLK UNITED IN SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE**

The Council has united to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and pledged to support any Ukrainians seeking refuge in the district. Local authorities Suffolk are working closely together to ensure they can deliver an effective, co-ordinated response to Government requirements to support Ukrainians seeking refuge in Suffolk. To assist this co-ordinated approach and to ensure those living and working in East Suffolk are kept informed of the Government's response to the crisis, a new position has now been created within our cabinet and as of Friday 1 April, Cllr Judy Cloke is the Assistant Cabinet Member for Refugee Support.

**Cllr Stephen Burroughes**

Member for the Kelsale & Yoxford Ward

Cabinet Member for Customer Services, ICT & Commercial Partnerships

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