

## **EAST SUFFOLK COUNCIL REPORT**

**JULY 2024**

### **New Deputy Leader of East Suffolk Council**

Cllr Paul Ashton has been appointed the new Deputy Leader of East Suffolk Council.

A statement from the Leader of the Council, Cllr Caroline Topping:

“I am very pleased to confirm the appointment of Cllr Paul Ashton as the new Deputy Leader of East Suffolk Council.

“Following the departure of Cllr David Beavan from the national Liberal Democrat party, Cllr Ashton has been confirmed as the local party’s new lead. Therefore - in line with our formal agreement, which followed the creation of the new Green, Liberal Democrat and Independent (GLI) Administration - Cllr Ashton is now appointed to the Deputy Leader role.

“Paul is already a vital member of our Cabinet, who I have enjoyed working closely with, and he brings a wide range of strengths and skills to the role.

“Meanwhile, Cllr Beavan will remain a valued Cabinet colleague in his capacity as an Independent councillor here at East Suffolk Council; and will continue his important work, including as our Portfolio Holder for Housing.”

### **Free holiday activities and food this summer**

Filmmaking, theatre, cooking, sport, mindfulness, STEM and outdoor adventure are just some of the free activities on offer during the school holidays across East Suffolk this summer.

Numerous organisations across the district are providing fun and enriching activities and food as part of a programme of experiences for children and young people over the coming weeks. There are 46 programmes on offer with over 7,700 places available.

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme has been funded by the UK Government for three years providing over £200m per year for enriching activities for children and young people, particularly those in receipt of free school meals. The HAF programme is overseen by Suffolk County Council and coordinated locally by East Suffolk Council.

Holiday activities are varied and can introduce young people to new experiences and skills, from dance and drama to cooking and filmmaking, as well providing opportunities for physical and social activity.

In Suffolk, the programme is targeted at those eligible for benefits-related free school meals, and other vulnerable children, or those with additional needs who would benefit from accessing the programme.

Each funded holiday activity also offers a free meal, and places are redeemed by eligible families through the booking system Eequ. Families can select the programmes and dates they wish to attend, and which young people will be attending. The booking system will ask about HAF eligibility, and the booking will be reviewed and approved by the HAF team at Suffolk County Council.

Book a place now at <https://eastsuffolk.co/haf>

### **New planning guidance for healthy environments**

A new planning document has been adopted in East Suffolk to help guide the delivery of healthier built environments.

The Healthy Environments Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides guidance on delivering more inclusive and higher quality living environments in East Suffolk, to improve the health and wellbeing of people of all ages, abilities, and incomes.

The SPD provides guidance on a range of topics including the provision of green open space, play provision, trees and landscaping, active travel infrastructure, healthy key buildings such as homes, schools and workplaces, dementia-friendly design, community facilities and more.

The SPD was subject to public consultation during its preparation and the comments received helped to inform the scope and content of the final document. The Consultation Statement, which has been published alongside the SPD, sets out the Council's response to the comments received and the changes that were made to the SPD in response to comments.

### **Providing essential habitats for wildlife through revised scheme**

A conservation scheme which created 100 spaces across East Suffolk for the benefit of wildlife is to be enhanced, with a new look and a focus on increasing the biodiversity value of the wild areas.

Building on the success of Pardon the Weeds, and learning from local and national examples, East Suffolk Council is now revising the scheme, by increasing the number of sites and improving the biodiversity value of key sites. The scheme, which will officially launch later this year, will be rebranded as 'Nature at Work', with new recyclable signs to replace the Pardon the Weeds signs, many of which had become damaged over the years.

As well as reduced grass cutting, Nature at Work will aim to improve the biodiversity value of wild areas, ensuring key sites are seeded and actively managed. The project will also involve local schools and community groups and an informal Facebook group will be set up giving people the chance to engage with others, offering advice and seed/equipment exchanges. It may also be possible to involve local landowners, businesses and housing associations in future to add sites not owned by the Council.

### **Providing mental health information across East Suffolk**

Information is being distributed across East Suffolk to help people improve their mental health and find local support services.

A new booklet, entitled 'Well Minds East Suffolk' has been produced by East Suffolk Council and contains an extensive range of mental health advice, information and details of local support services for people of all ages in need of help with their mental health.

10,000 booklets have been produced, funded by the Community Partnership Board and two local Community Partnership groups as part of their Well Minds East Suffolk programme which is also providing free mental health training for voluntary and community organisations.

The booklets are being delivered to community settings across the district, including libraries, community centres and the Council's network of Warm Welcomes.

### **Half a million pounds for communities in new emergency response fund**

A new fund has been established to provide immediate, short-term financial support to East Suffolk communities affected by future emergency events.

In February, as part of the 2024-25 Budget setting process, East Suffolk Council created a Resilience Reserve in response to the severe disruption caused by Storm Babet last October. Now, Cabinet members have agreed how this £500,000 pot will be managed, through a newly established Resilience and Emergency Response Fund (RERF).

The RERF is designed to ensure East Suffolk Council can be more flexible and responsive to cover reasonable additional costs incurred by town and parish councils during an emergency event.

In the aftermath of Storm Babet, East Suffolk Council established the East Suffolk Flood Recovery Group, that provided a physical presence in Framlingham and Wickham Market to assist and deal with affected residents enquiries and clean up in the aftermath.

Although longer-term grants were available under central Government's flood recovery framework, a gap was identified to support the immediate and urgent needs of residents and communities; for example, provision of skips through East Suffolk Services to remove damaged household items and costs (food, bedding, clothing) for displaced people using the emergency centre set up in Framlingham's Community Hall.

Examples of support that could be provided by the fund include temporary accommodation costs for up to 48 hours, disposal costs for damaged furniture, carpets or flooring, and support for voluntary groups to assist and co-ordinate recovery activities.

In addition to the RERF, a dedicated council officer will be appointed, to build upon our existing emergency response capacity, providing a communication, co-ordinating and enabling role for our town and parish councils, communities and residents before, during and after future emergency events.