

## **EAST SUFFOLK COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2025**

**East Suffolk Council has agreed a historic, new approach to recycling collection, and with it, a commitment to greatly improve environmental outcomes for the district.**

This will see all households supplied with an additional wheelie bin or other container to separate paper and card from plastics, metal, cartons (including Tetra Pak) and glass bottles or jars. A weekly food waste collection service was also agreed.

This extra collection service allows the Council to adopt a three-weekly residual waste collection service, rather than the current fortnightly arrangement, without a reduction in the overall combined capacity of household bins.

Working together in response to Government legislation, Suffolk's district and borough authorities - Babergh, East Suffolk, Ipswich, Mid Suffolk and West Suffolk Councils - are all reviewing their waste and recycling services to meet new nationwide 'Simpler Recycling' requirements by 31 March 2026.

**In September, East Suffolk hosted the final stage of the Lloyds Bank Tour of Britain for Men.**

The final stage started in Lowestoft, and residents lined the streets to watch the race as it passed through Beccles, Framlingham, Aldeburgh and many more towns before moving on to Felixstowe for the finish.

Felixstowe also showed wonderful support in the lead up to the final stage with their Love Felixstowe festival, which proved to be a huge success with local residents.

**Last summer, East Suffolk Council set up a series of roadshows, in a variety of locations across East Suffolk, aimed at connecting with the local community.**

At each location, councillors and senior officers were on hand to listen to any concerns or questions from residents. Residents were also asked to fill out a survey about their local area. The roadshows proved to be a success, with good levels of attendance and plenty of people stopping to speak with us.

The information gathered from the roadshows and survey will help us create better outcomes for our residents and communities and shape the future of East Suffolk.

**Last winter, a network of venues offering residents a warm, safe space to socialise over the winter reopened for the third year.** East Suffolk Council's Warm Welcomes (formerly Warm Rooms)scheme saw more than 20 libraries, churches and community hubs providing a warm space and an opportunity to connect with other members of the local community. Warm Welcomes provide a safe and welcoming space where residents, including people who may be struggling with the cost of heating their homes, can come to meet with others and access information about additional support available.

**Meanwhile, numerous organisations across the district provided fun and enriching activities and food as part of a programme of experiences for children and young people over the Christmas holidays.** 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 filmmaking to drama and teamwork to

problem solving, as well providing opportunities for physical and social activity.

**Our innovative new Youth Council entirely comprising young people from across East Suffolk met for the first time this year, ensuring the ideas and concerns of younger people are heard.**

In November, 32 young people were elected to the new East Suffolk Youth Council. Following an induction day on Monday 18 November at which the new Youth Councillors were 'sworn in', the first Youth Council meeting took place at Riverside in Lowestoft on Monday 9 December.

The Youth Council's first motion, saw them call upon East Suffolk Council to devote greater resources and attention to youth safety and well-being. The Youth Councillors emphasised the impacts of social media and the Covid-19 pandemic upon youth, and the need for improved youth activities, services and support.

**East Suffolk Council has secured a provisional allocation of £5.9m to help improve the energy performance of social housing as part of the Government's Warm Homes Plan.** The Council was named amongst the local authorities and housing associations offered a total of £1.29bn to retrofit properties, across 144 nationwide projects, under the latest wave of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund.

**In a report submitted to government on Friday 21 March, Suffolk's five district and borough councils united to present an interim plan which would revitalise local government and put the needs of local communities first.**

The Councils said: "Our joint proposal demonstrates that a one size fits all mega authority will not solve the existing issue of large countywide services that will continue to drain money, require improvement and potentially lead to further cost cutting. Crucially, more than one unitary authority is the best way to meet these issues and would ensure strong democratic representation as one would be too remote for residents to be heard.

This ensures that services are designed and delivered in a tailored way built on local knowledge to meet the unique need of an area, its residents and businesses. It creates new councils able to deliver both value for money and better outcomes. It is about starting with a blank page and not simply bolting existing council services together. It makes sure the 'local' stays in Local Government for Suffolk."

**An innovative new commercial development has opened its doors in the heart of Lowestoft's PowerPark energy hub.** Delivered by East Suffolk Council, The Nexus is home to 16 modern business units for office and light industrial uses – positioned at the forefront of the region's renewable energy sector. With allocated on-site EV parking, the site includes units varying in size creating potential for a cluster of clean energy sector businesses and enhancing ongoing investment in the area, with easy access to the Port of Lowestoft, OrbisEnergy and East Coast College's Energy Skills Centre.

**A new fund has been established to provide immediate, short-term financial support to**

### **East Suffolk communities affected by future emergency events.**

Last year, 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. 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.

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.

### **East Suffolk Council is supporting the efforts of The Deben Climate Centre to deliver “a radical and ambitious plan to regenerate the Deben River for people and nature”.**

The Centre is an expanding coalition of residents, academics, local community groups, charities and organisations which plans to regenerate the River Deben Catchment through widespread community action.

The Centre’s programs to date have focused on testing water quality on the Deben, and several lecture series highlighting the local effects of Climate Change, the global food security crisis, and the startling loss of species and habitats.

Deben Climate founders Professor Peter Hobson and Eamonn O’Nolan said: “Ours is a radical and ambitious plan to regenerate the Deben River for people and nature and it is built on the collective will of a partnership between local people, community environment groups and other key stakeholders such as farmers and land-owners.

“We are thrilled to work with East Suffolk Council, and we recognise that successful projects like this require the support and expertise of skilled Local Government officers and members.”

### **Plans for a major development which will reinvigorate Lowestoft’s town centre have been given the green light.**

The Cultural Quarter project, which when complete will be known as Battery Green, is one of five transformational regeneration projects which received £24.9m from the Government’s Towns Fund in 2022 and will see the redevelopment of East Suffolk Council’s current Customer Services Centre and the former Battery Green multi-storey car park.

Designed by Norwich-based architects Chaplin Farrant, the development will provide a new cultural and community hub with studio space for creative businesses together with a leisure complex and restaurant.

The Cultural Quarter project is just one of many regenerative projects underway in the town, with a new seafront complex being built at Jubilee Parade and improvements at Royal Plain, Royal Green and South Quay Wharf.

**More than 80,000 people have logged onto free Wi-Fi while visiting East Suffolk towns during the first two years of a project to boost connectivity and business.**

The Digital Towns programme was launched by East Suffolk Council in June 2022 to support market towns through the installation of free public Wi-Fi, digital footfall counters and marketing platforms.

As well as more than 80,000 free Wi-Fi users, Digital Towns has attracted 20,000 promotional email subscriptions and logged millions of movements on footfall sensors designed to provide more insight into shopping habits to help towns and businesses improve the town centre experience.

Subsequently collected data has provided the impetus for new town websites, marketing resources and bids to extend free Wi-Fi zones.

**East Suffolk Council has developed a Tree and Hedgerow Strategy, seeking input from residents, community groups, and experts to identify key priorities and requirements for tree and hedgerow planting and management of existing trees across the district.**

Currently, forests cover just 12% of land in the UK, whereas Europe's total land area has forest cover comprising 47%. The Tree and Hedgerow Strategy would aim to enable 250,000 trees to be planted across East Suffolk, increasing canopy cover by 1%.

Landowners play the key role in protecting and planting trees and will be invited to suggest spaces suitable for tree planting. Ongoing work to map the tree canopy in East Suffolk will be completed, creating a map of council-owned land where there are opportunities for tree planting and feeding-in to Suffolk's developing 'Local Nature Recovery Strategy'.

**East Suffolk Council has pledged to extend its support for town centres with the launch of a new programme designed to foster long-term prosperity and sustainability.** Cabinet members approved an additional revenue budget of £537,000 to support delivery of the new Town Development Programme over three years from this month.

The renewed pledge builds on the work of the East Suffolk Towns Revitalisation Programme in delivering evidence-based actions plans, resources, and grant support for 12 key towns and villages to develop locally identified priorities since 2019. East Suffolk Council secured £900,000 of external funding and invested £270,000 for the programme to support town centres through delivery of covid recovery and resilience assistance, town apps, websites and branding, skills and training, capital improvements, and events development.

**Funding of over £400,000 has been agreed to extend a scheme which helps young people in East Suffolk to find employment.**

At a meeting of East Suffolk Council's Cabinet on 1 October, additional funding of £420,000 was approved to extend the Youth Employment Service (YES) from April 2025 to March 2028. Additionally, £190,000 in external funding has also been secured from Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS) which will support the creation of an enhanced service to help young people with more challenging needs.

Delivered by Inspire Suffolk on behalf of East Suffolk Council, YES is an innovative project

supporting local young people aged between 16 and 24 who are not currently employed or in education to receive job coaching, skills and employment training by providing bespoke online and face-to-face support. It also offers access to other support services and programmes.

**East Suffolk Council is investing £1 million in car park infrastructure, including new contactless payment terminals, EV chargers, new cycle racks and signage, as well as introducing a suite of new parking tariffs in the district.**

As part of an annual review of its fees and charges, the Council agreed to retain the 30 minutes free parking available in many council-owned car parks and to introduce several new tariffs to reduce congestion at peak times of the year.

To reflect the increased number of visitors coming to the district from further afield during the summer, new seasonal tariffs are being introduced in car parks in popular tourist destinations. Parking fees haven't risen in four years, and over that time the council has carried the cost of inflation. Parking in a council-owned car park still compares favourably with other similar locations, with council-owned car park fees being approximately 20% cheaper than alternative parking options, and our new charges still compare favourably to other tourism destinations and our neighbouring councils.

Other changes include the option to park for longer in short-stay car parks and reduced parking prices in car parks out of town centres to encourage people to park further afield and walk into town.

Contactless payment terminals will be introduced to give drivers more choice when paying for parking. This will be in addition to paying through a parking app or with cash.

**East Suffolk Council has pledged more than £64million towards delivering quality key services for residents while continuing to invest in projects for the benefit of local communities.**

In February, East Suffolk Council agreed a balanced Budget which allows for vital day-to-day services to be delivered alongside programmes developed to help improve the quality of people's lives.

The annual Budget is set against the framework of a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to ensure effective management of resources and support delivery of the Council's strategic action plan, Our Direction 2028.

More than £64m has been budgeted within the Council's General Fund to pay for services such as planning, leisure, housing and environmental services, waste collection and parking. The Council is committed to securing a balanced budget, not just through setting council tax, but by utilising opportunities to deliver service efficiencies and generate additional income, while maintaining an appropriate level of balances and reserves in case of significant variations or emergencies.

A balanced budget will be achieved for 2025/26 by using reserves, currently estimated at £5.3m. Meanwhile, a council tax premium on second homes, to be introduced from April, could generate around £9m in East Suffolk.