

Stradishall Annual Parish meeting – Monday 10th May 2021

Joint report from Karen Richardson and Marion Rushbrook, West Suffolk District Councillors.

2020 and so far, 2021 have been a strange few months for everyone. West Suffolk Council (WSC) officers have done an amazing job. Most staff had to immediately relocate from working in the office to home working. Staff were also deployed to other departments where work loads increased due to Covid. In particular, the Families and Communities Team were taking care of our vulnerable residents and where residents were shielding due to underlying health issues.

One Friday evening around 4pm we received a call from one village identify a resident who did not have their medication and were short of food. The officer called us and said he would not go home until the issue was sorted! Within an hour the resident had received both!

It has been amazing to see how residents, groups and town council/parish councils have all worked together to take care of the town, residents and the community.

West Suffolk Council were proactively contacting businesses that had to close to let them know they were entitled to grants. I believe they are currently issuing the fourth grant for businesses to re-open. They have been paying the grants promptly which has obviously been appreciated by the businesses.

Now the shops are re-opening WSC are encouraging residents to shop and support local businesses. It was good to see markets were deemed as important and a lot of planning has allowed for most market days to go ahead.

Our black bin collection was seamless – there were staff shortages due to some being ill or shielding but priority was given to this vital service.

Recycling centres have closed due to staff shortages for a few weeks last year but with a lot of work they were opened again but with a booking system. This seems to work well and may now be left in place – having used the Haverhill service we have found this a good system.

The Home, But Not Alone free phonenumber was launched on 3 November 2020, supporting vulnerable people in our communities who may be struggling with the impact of coronavirus, it was paused in August because of low demand and the lifting of COVID restrictions and re launched again in November 2020

The telephone number is freephone 0800 876 6926 and will be staffed from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. They provide an emergency number for outside these hours.

This Home, But Not Alone service compliments The Suffolk Advice and Support Service phonenumber (0800 068 3131) which helps those with debt, benefits employment or housing worries. This phonenumber, also delivered by the Collaborative Communities COVID-19 Board, is staffed by the Citizens Advice Suffolk Alliance, which includes the eight Citizens Advice Bureaus across Suffolk, and Anglia Care Trust and Ipswich Housing Action Group. Call handlers use resources and information from across many Suffolk organisations and specialist providers, which can be tailored to individual needs.

The Council's put a lot of work into the winter homelessness, emergency accommodation across West Suffolk was increased to ensure there were enough beds to cater for homeless people while also maintaining COVID-19 safety measures. The Council has invested its own money and been

successful in securing Government grant funding to provide additional accommodation, including extra hotel rooms for the winter months.

In the summer of 2020, the Council secured the use of 15 temporary cabins to house people who may otherwise be out on the streets, and these will remain in use over the winter whilst alternative housing is found for residents.

Although the number of people rough sleeping can vary on an almost daily basis, at the end of 2020 there were 10 people known to be rough sleeping in West Suffolk. The Council continue to engage with people who are rough sleeping and encourage them to take up the support and accommodation available.

Anyone who sees or suspects someone is rough sleeping, that they report it to www.streetlink.org.uk

We hope 2021 will continue to improve for all residents and businesses. With the vaccinations being rolled out and people on their second jab it is reassuring for the months ahead, but we still need to keep safe and be aware of this virus.

Best wishes

Karen and Marion