

Report for Stradishall Parish Council. Monday 1 November 2021

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

## **Covid-19**

Suffolk has just been granted the extra national resources that it asked for to help fight the rising number of cases of COVID-19 that we are facing.

West Suffolk Council (WSC) was part of the Suffolk Local Outbreak Engagement Board discussions that backed this request to Government and was on the call with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Vaccines and Public Health Maggie Throup on Friday 29 October when the additional support, funding and resources to help the NHS avoid unsustainable pressure, were agreed.

The additional support includes:

- Extra localised COVID-19 testing, often known as 'surge testing'
- Logistical support to maximise vaccine take up and help deliver door knocking campaigns
- Additional control measures in schools
- Communications funding and support
- Fast tracked escalation of issues through the Government's emergency response decision making processes

## **The environment**

West Suffolk Council (WSC) has been named Regional Council of the Year in the Energy Efficiency Association, East of England Energy Efficiency Awards, for its work in helping residents and businesses cut carbon emissions and save money.

The award has been given for a number of areas of their work for example insulation of park homes across West Suffolk.

The award also recognised the Solar for Business scheme. WSC installed more than 10,000 solar panels at 63 business premises, saving them a collective £125,000 a year in reduced energy costs and cutting their carbon emissions by 900 tonnes per year. The scheme is free to businesses with the Council taking care of installation and maintenance costs while it also delivers a small income to the Council. The scheme is being promoted via the media and social media to encourage more businesses to take up this brilliant scheme.

Alongside this work, West Suffolk Council also offers Greener Business Grants which can see local businesses awarded up to £1,000 for eligible energy efficiency measures. This was again recognised in the award.

All of this sits alongside the Council's wider work to reduce its carbon emissions to net zero by 2030. They have invested in renewable technologies to provide electricity and heat as well as purchasing 100 per cent renewable electricity for their buildings, working to address and improve air quality, installed more electric vehicle charge points in Council owned car parks with more to be installed very soon and last year planted 1,500 trees.

There is still much more that the Council want to do to deliver even more cuts to carbon emissions as well as helping residents and businesses save money.

To find out more about Solar for Business, the Greener Business Grant or other support available to call 01284 757622 or email [environment@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:environment@westsuffolk.gov.uk)

For more on the wider environmental work of the Council, visit [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/protecting-our-environment](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/protecting-our-environment)



**We can help your business cut carbon emissions and its energy bills**

We've installed over 10,000 solar panels at West Suffolk businesses cutting their carbon emissions by 900 tonnes a year and saving £125,000 off their energy bills.

We take care of all the set-costs, installation, monitoring and maintenance

Find out more about Solar for Business on 01284 757622 or email [environment@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:environment@westsuffolk.gov.uk)

**West Suffolk Council**

### **Community Chest 2022-2023**

The deadline for applications has now closed.

If you are interested in applying next year, please see the guidance for this year's application: [Community grants \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk)

### **Consultation**

There is only one consultation running at the moment - West Suffolk Green Infrastructure Strategy and the proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme are open until 15 October 2021 and 5 November 2021 respectively. For further information, see [Current consultations \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk)

### **Funding to support households**

The Government has recently announced funding to support households with housing costs. This briefing note sets out the key funding streams and the criteria used for the allocation of the funds.

In all instances where households are struggling with their housing costs, they should be encouraged to speak to the housing team about their situation who will then identify the best option for financial and other support (if applicable). For other financial advice, WSC will continue to refer customers to the Suffolk Support and

Advice Service (SASS), a service set up specifically to support individuals and families to access support since the onset of the pandemic.

The following funding is available for the housing team to allocate, and they will do this sequentially to ascertain if the household situation meets the criteria of the individual funds.

- 1. Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)** – This is not a new fund and has been around for many years. Eligibility for DHP is assessed by Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) but the housing team also have an input. This will be the first fund to be considered by the housing team and must be spent by 31 March 2022.
- 2. Household Support Fund (HSF)** – This is a new fund announced by government on 30.9.21. This is paid to upper tier authorities (Suffolk County Council). The vast majority of SCC's £5million allocation will go to free school meals; holiday clubs; and a targeted approach to the most vulnerable in the county (details of this element of the funding should be directed to SCC. Of the £5million, £1 million has been allocated to district housing teams across Suffolk (the amount per district has yet to be agreed) to help with housing costs. This must be spent by 31.3.22.
- 3. Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) – Winter 2021 Covid-19 rent arrears financial support** – announced on 23 October 2021 under the headline 'support for vulnerable renters', this is a top up of the council's existing Homelessness Prevention Grant. Of the £65 million additional funding, West Suffolk has been allocated £137,593, on top of our existing allocation of £656,214. The government's expectation is that we use the fund to maximise homelessness prevention for low-income private renters in COVID-19 related rent arrears in particular. Whilst there is no deadline for the allocation of this funding, there is an expectation that the top up award is allocated over the winter.

### **Survey launched as part of Haverhill town centre improvements**

Shoppers and businesses are being asked to have their say on temporary measures used in Haverhill to encourage people to back local traders while staying COVID safe.

Partners want to capture views while they are fresh in people's minds to inform any relevant improvements for the town centre that may come forward in the future.

As from the 25 October 2021 the High Street and associated roads returned to their pre-Covid state. the pre-existing Traffic Regulations Order which sets out how the highway can legally be used will fall back into place. This includes restricted access in the High Street between 10am and 4pm except for Blue Badge and permit holders. There will also be restricted access for all traffic in Queen Street between 10am and 4pm. Camps Road adjacent to Pea's Market Hill will return to two-way traffic. Civil Parking Enforcement officers will be enforcing this as per the previous regime.

A survey has been launched and partners are keen to understand the views of town centre users such as shoppers and local businesses on the temporary changes to the town centre, including a barrier enforcing the traffic rules. The views from the survey will be shared with all town centre partners. It can be found at [Haverhill town centre temporary road closures \(smartsurvey.co.uk\)](https://smartsurvey.co.uk) and will be live from 20 October to 5 December.