

Stradishall Parish Council Monday 7 November 2022

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

We continue to ask everyone to keep an eye out for people around them who may be struggling with the current issues we are living with. Direct anyone who needs assistance to the relevant bodies that may be able to help. We know our local food banks are being stretched and it is only early November. West Suffolk Council (WSC) website has a residents section, which contains links to get support, grants etc (under the *Resident* link). For those who do not have access to the internet Customer Services is available Monday to Friday on 01284 763233, opening hours 08.45–17.00.

West Suffolk Council is working with colleagues across Suffolk to support individuals as well as ensuring community and other groups are able to support and have help to meet their own costs. They have some external funding, via the Collaborative Communities Board, to help community groups and more may be on the way. A really useful source of advice is the cost of living page on our website. This links to sources of local and national support: [Cost of living \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/cost-of-living). WSC remains committed to supporting their communities throughout this winter, including warm spaces, access to food and financial support.

WSC are also looking at how we can support those community groups who run public buildings such as community centres, village halls, libraries, churches and the work that they will be doing over the coming months to help people stay connected, stay warm, and provide other support and activities to look after people's health and wellbeing. Ultimately, this is to help residents reduce some of their daytime energy costs and help reduce respiratory illnesses.

Locality Budget

We are now halfway through West Suffolk Council's (WSC) financial year and the three of us funds to spend on our town and parishes

WSC Families and Communities Officer can help with any questions or concerns you have in relation to the spend, as well as assisting you with questions and paperwork.

West Suffolk Parish and Town Forum

The Parish Conference will be held on Wednesday 16 November at 5.45 for a 6pm start. WSC are continuing to hold them virtually, through Microsoft Teams as they have seen an increase in attendance and participation. The agenda is being confirmed but the three likely topics are Cost of living, Community Emergency planning and District elections.

If you would like to join the event please confirm your attendance by email: families.communities@westsuffolk.gov.uk by **9/11/2022**. The Teams meeting link will be sent through to all that have emailed to confirm their attendance on the **11/11/2022** and will only be sent through to you if you have confirmed your attendance so please make sure to do this before the date above.

West Suffolk planning applications: unavailability of 'Public Access' system

Please be advised that the Public Access system will be unavailable **from 8 November until 11 November** due to essential work.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused. If you have any queries, please contact prs.systems@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Avian Flu

Most people know this is now in our area, if you come across any issues contact WSC customer service (if the bird is on WSC land). Should there be a larger issue call **DEFRA helpline on 03459 335577** and report.

Consultation

Proposed changes to Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023-24.

This online consultation is open from 18 October to 18 November 2022 to take part online visit: **Have your say**

Audience: Council Tax payers, advice and advocacy organisations, registered providers, recipients of local Council Tax support, parish and town councils, public sector partners

As part of WSC work to ease the cost of living for communities it is looking at possible options to increase for one year the discount for Council Tax given to people on low incomes.

This is known as the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

In light of the national challenge of the cost of living the council seeks to engage with the public and stakeholders on options with a consultation which is open until 18 November 2022.

The changes would be temporary and would take effect from 1 April 2023. If implemented, these changes would mean that for 2023-24 only the maximum discount a working-age resident could receive on their Council Tax would increase from 91.5 per cent to either 95 per cent or 100 per cent (depending on the final decision). This would reduce the amount that many Council Taxpayers have to pay and could result in some working-age residents paying zero Council Tax. From April 2024 the maximum discount would automatically revert back to 91.5 per cent. The proposed changes do not affect pensioners, who are covered by a different element of the Council Tax discount scheme which already offers a maximum discount of 100%.

Paper copies are available on request from liz.barnard@westsuffolk.gov.uk or 01638 719454.

Feedback from the consultation will be considered by Cabinet on 6 December 2022 making its recommendation to full Council on 13 December. If agreed, the changes would come into effect for one year from April 2023.

At the moment these are just draft proposals which the council will want to hear people's thoughts on before they are considered to be taken forward. It is part of a range of ways the council is supporting communities including those with the highest risk of financial hardship as a result of the current cost of living crisis.