

September 2018 Borough Councillor report for Hawstead Parish Council

Local issues

Results from the Boundary Commission review will be available October 23rd.

Borough

St Edmundsbury Borough Council is engaging with the public and partners around the role that civic leadership will play in the new West Suffolk Council. Many of you have had your say and are encouraging people to also make their views known.

The website is <http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/civicleadership> it includes the link to the online engagement as well as information and FAQs. **NOTE This link is now closed.** Verbal update at tonight's meeting.

St Edmundsbury in country's top five for walking

Figures released by the Dept of Transport show that St Edmundsbury has had one of the five largest increases in the country of adults walking at least once a week,

The figures, collected through the 2017 National Travel Survey, show that people in St Edmundsbury on average walked 10.1% more in 2016/17 than the year before. Women are a little more likely to walk, and to walk further than men.

Cllr Jo Rayner, St Edmundsbury Borough Council Cabinet member for Leisure said,

'I am delighted with this result not least because one of our priorities is for resilient families and communities that are healthy and active. The borough has some very special landscape and heritage, ideal for regular walking, and rewarding in terms of mental and physical benefits.'

As well as providing Green Flag accredited parks and open spaces, St Edmundsbury supports opportunities to get together to walk, with events like the Suffolk Walking Festival, (Parkrun which can be run, jogged or walked) and the Health Walks Programme.

Cllr Rayner said,

'Walking may well be the most accessible form of exercise and while it requires little kit, I believe initiatives like step counting could be a factor in the overall increase seen nationally. I think the thing that has made a real difference in West Suffolk is our joined-up approach of working with health, the voluntary sector and other agencies. The more normal it is to walk each day, the more people will do it. So congratulations to everyone regularly out there, and if you are not, why not give it a go?'

Another great way to start walking/running in Bury St Edmunds is to follow one of the four 5km circular signposted walking/running routes available, all of which are free to use and easily accessible.

The recent launch of the latest route to be developed by Abbeycroft Leisure was in Southgate and it was made possible with locality funding from Councillor Richard Rout and a grant from Suffolk Community Foundation's Suffolk Fund.

The free to use routes are designed for maximum accessibility and convenience to encourage a broad range of participants and groups, particularly those who would not normally take part in organised physical activity, by being able to walk or run the route on any day of the week at any time of the day.

The routes in the Bury St Edmunds area are:-

Moreton Hall, Southgate, Northgate and St Olaves, Westgate

Maps of the routes can be found here <http://acleisure.com/health-wellbeing/runwalk>.

Community groups, charities and voluntary organisations in West Suffolk could benefit from over £300,000 of funding that is being made available.

West Suffolk councils are inviting applications to its Community Chest fund. The funding is available to projects that can improve the lives of West Suffolk residents by helping communities to support themselves.

Initiatives to combat loneliness, provide support networks to parents, and befriending schemes designed to break down stereotypes and bring generations closer together, have all helped West Suffolk residents as a result of Community Chest funds awarded in recent years.

Since it was launched in 2015, Community Chest has also helped locally trained volunteers work with families before they reach crisis point and to help young people feel more a part of their local community.

Cllr Robin Millar, Forest Heath District Council's Cabinet Member for Families and Communities said: "We know that loneliness has a huge impact on health and that parents sometimes feel isolated. We know that family crises can have a profound impact on children, echoing throughout their lives long into adulthood. Some of the answers to the biggest challenges that we face in society and in life, lie in strengthening families and empowering communities. They are also a great birthplace of ideas, inspired by people's own experiences and their passion to help others. Community Chest is about unlocking these instincts, working with local groups and charities and investing in our families and communities to make life that much better."

Cllr Robert Everitt, Cabinet Member for Families and Communities at St Edmundsbury Borough Council said: "Many of these issues are things that we all recognise – teenagers that don't feel they belong, parents struggling with the daily challenges of raising children, loneliness and isolation and the perceptions that different generations may have of one another. All of them left unchecked, can have a damaging impact on the quality of life that people experience, so prevention is undoubtedly better than cure. Fortunately we know that many local charities and groups already have ideas to address these issues and so we would encourage them to come forward and bid for some of the Community Chest funding that is now available."

Applications are open from now until 5pm Friday 28th September 2018. Decision on applications are due to be made by late December and successful bids will be paid in April 2019.

For more information or to apply for a Community Chest grant visit

www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/community/community-grants.cfm

West Suffolk councils held an Electric Vehicle (EV) roadshow in the arc shopping centre at Bury St Edmunds on Saturday, August 25, where it was highlighting the financial, economical and environmental benefits of Evs.

The solar farm owned by Forest Heath Council is more than £42,000 above its profit target after two years.

Landlords will be able to get advice about changes to the law at the West Suffolk Landlords Forum next month.

Changes to the law around Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and the need for Energy Performance Certificates (EPCS) are both coming in.

Both matters will be discussed when the forum meets on 5 September from 4pm to 6pm at West Suffolk House in Bury St Edmunds.

The forum will also discuss the support available to help bring long standing empty homes back into use and the measures that have been put in place, including a guaranteed rent scheme, to mitigate against the possible impact of Universal Credit on landlords and their tenants.

Those attending the event will also be able to discuss when the need to keep homes warm during winter particularly for older or vulnerable tenants, and the support that can be accessed to help with this.

Cllr Sara Mildmay-White, West Suffolk councils Cabinet Member for Housing said: "We know that a great many of our local residents rent their homes and that one of the best ways that we can support them is by working with landlords. That is why we set up the forum at the beginning of this year.

"It offers somewhere where landlords can raise their concerns, ask about the support that is available to them or their tenants and get advice or updates on their own legal responsibilities to their tenants. It will also enable us to work more closely with landlords to try to ensure the availability and suitability of homes to meet the growing demand."

The forum is free to attend, is open to all private landlords in the West Suffolk area, whether they own a large portfolio of properties or just one or two, and offers an opportunity for private landlords to meet, share knowledge and good practice.

Book your place by emailing landlords@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Call to 'use or lose' town centre shops. Two long established stores in Bury St Edmunds, Intersport and Laura Ashley have announced they are closing, also the Debenhams group appears to be having problems.

Barley Homes update. Barley Homes, an initiative jointly setup by St Edmundsbury, Forest Heath and Suffolk County Council (SCC) in 2016 to increase housing stock, has suffered a setback with SCC withdrawing. The remaining partners are in discussion regarding the subsequent reduction in landbank and funding. The intention is to progress the existing projects.

Mike Chester

Borough Councillor for Hawstead-Whepstead-Rede-Chedburgh-Chevington