

District councillor's report December 2022

Christmas and New Year bin collection days

Monday 26th December collection two days earlier Saturday 24th December

Message from Cllr John Griffiths

I am writing to you to update you all and provide details on Suffolk's provisional devolution deal.

Yesterday West Suffolk hosted the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) Lee Rowley MP who attended a ceremony near Bury St Edmunds where he and Suffolk partners officially signed the provisional "minded to" deal.

A separate "minded to" deal between the Government and Norfolk County Council was also signed on the same day. A written ministerial statement will then be tabled in the House of Commons and the full text of the deal will then be published on gov.uk

If approved, the full deal will put money and powers over building, regeneration, and skills into the hands of Suffolk. The County will also have devolved power over Adult Education spending in Suffolk, so we can shape provision in a way that best suits the needs of the local economy. We will also receive support to build new affordable homes on brownfield sites, as well as more capital funding to improve energy efficiency in homes.

The deal will also see Suffolk County Council handed control of £500 million of funding guaranteed for the next thirty years. Working in partnership with West Suffolk Council, district, and borough councils as well as other stakeholders this will enable Suffolk to drive growth and plan for the long-term with certainty as we look to level up and unlock our economic potential.

The deal sets out the Government's plans to devolve more power to Suffolk through:

- **Investment:** It will bring decades of funding worth almost £480 million to improve the lives of Suffolk's residents and spend on their local priorities.
- **Housing:** The deal will provide £5.8 million to regenerate brownfield land into beautiful, affordable homes and drive economic growth across the area; Suffolk will also receive greater compulsory purchase powers.
- **Education:** The agreement devolves the Adult Education Budget so they can shape provision in a way that best suits the needs of residents and the local Suffolk economy.
- **Transport:** An integrated transport settlement starting in 2024/25, to support the area to improve key transport infrastructure priorities.
- **The Environment:** The new deal will help Suffolk deliver on its ambitions to be the country's greenest county with £3 million to improve energy efficiency in homes.

This devolution deal is the first of its kind between the Government and a county council, with a partnership of district and borough councils, making it a truly historic moment for Suffolk. It is the first step towards an exciting future for our great county.

The deal also includes provisions to directly elect the leader of Suffolk County Council. As you know, the Government is committed to a single figure directly accountable to the electorate. This fulfils that obligation whilst still retaining our current structure and does not require the bureaucracy of a Mayor and combined authority.

As discussed previously this is a "minded to" decision and will require full public consultation before the matter returns to be voted upon by Suffolk County Council in early Autumn 2023. If agreed to proceed, the election of the directly elected leader will take place from May 2024.

I intend to share with you fuller details in the coming days.

Best Wishes

John

Cllr. John Griffiths
Leader, West Suffolk Council

Homelessness

Our primary aim is to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place. We do this by working with residents from an early stage and in the year up to the end of October, we were able to help prevent 212 households from becoming homeless. We also had another 626 who we did help through temporary accommodation and back into a more settled and permanent home.

Rough sleepers

People who are homeless and sleeping outside are also referred to as rough sleepers. As of 1 November, we had nine rough sleepers in West Suffolk. You may recall this number was 36 when we first established our rough sleeper service in 2018.

In terms of the nine we have currently – firstly I should warn that the figure fluctuates regularly as people become homeless or are accommodated, as well as when people lose or leave their place of accommodation. The 1 November is a snapshot figure and like other councils up and down the country, this month will see a team of staff go out to physically count, verify and check up on our rough sleepers which will then inform the Government's figures.

We are of course working hard to help each of these nine people who are rough sleeping. Of the nine, all but one have previously been accommodated and/or refused help. The one that hasn't been offered accommodation has sufficient income for private rent and we have provided information to him so that he can secure his

own accommodation. With regard the other eight, our service, which includes specialist in mental health and addiction support, is continuing to engage with all of our rough sleepers to try to help them.

We have the accommodation and support in place to help but as before, we can only help people when they are ready to be helped. Sadly, some people are not always ready to accept our help and others have been accommodated and then lost that accommodation due to their actions. We won't give up, however, and we will continue to do everything in our power to encourage our rough sleepers to take up the accommodation and support that is available to them.

How to help anyone that you suspect is rough sleeping

If you know or suspect someone is sleeping rough, the quickest way to report it to the Council's rough sleeper service is using Streetlink www.streetlink.org.uk – the service then gets an alert and they will go and speak to the person (if they aren't already) to try to get them the help that they need.

The Council also works with the charity Bury Drop In, which helps people who are homeless including people who are rough sleeping. Bury Drop-In not only helps get food and a warm drink but also a roof over their head, support, improved health including access to dental services, education, clean clothes, a job and to reconnect with their families if they want to.

Looking for change

West Suffolk Council is one of a number of partners that supports Bury Drop In's Looking for Change campaign. The campaign encourages people not to give money to people that they see on the streets. This is because sometimes the people presenting themselves as rough sleepers to people out shopping, are accommodated while in other cases the money they receive is being spent on feeding their addiction, making it harder to get them to engage with the support and accommodation available – in effect keeping them on the streets. Where people are accommodated it may jeopardise their accommodation undoing some of the good work that has taken place to try to help them.

Looking for Change instead challenges people to think about the reasons why they give – and instead give to the charity. The money is then used to help people who have previously been rough sleeping, who have subsequently stayed in temporary accommodation while they got support for any mental health or addiction issues that they may have, and who are ready to move into more settled and permanent accommodation.

In Bury St Edmunds, people can support the campaign through a text by typing BSE followed by the amount (so for £5 type BSE5) and send to 70085. You can also donate online at <https://burydropin.echoleft.com/fundraising/bury-looking-for-change/donate>

In Newmarket, the campaign which was launched by the Newmarket InterFaith Forum and Bury Drop In. People can support the campaign through a text by typing NKT followed by the amount (so for £5 type NKT5) and send to 70085. You can also

donate online at <https://echoleft.com/fundraising/newmarket-looking-for-change/donate>