

**Annual Report to Framlingham Town Council from
Cllr Maurice Cook & Cllr Lydia Freeman
East Suffolk Council**

April 2022

The year of 2021 continued to be difficult as we all dealt the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic in its various strains. Through many false dawns, restrictions remained in place well into 2022 but, despite these, communities and businesses continued to adapt, as best they could, to make sure no-one was left alone to struggle through. Huge credit is due to the Town Council and all of the Parish Councils throughout the district for leading the efforts in their local communities.

East Suffolk Council also adapted work procedures and practices to make sure that services were maintained and, despite also suffering from staff shortages from time to time, largely achieved that, albeit with the occasional delays in some bin collections! In some respects, more efficient ways were found to conduct our business and these, I hope, will continue.

Since the start of the pandemic the Council has administered a range of business grant schemes to support our local businesses. During that period, just over £130 million was distributed to businesses across the East Suffolk district via 29,502 payment transactions. This gives an indication of the scale and complexity involved in delivering the schemes. Nevertheless, the outcome has been the survival of the vast majority of local businesses.

Additional support of some £7.9m in the form of Covid-19 Additional Rate Relief to Business rate payers is shortly to be announced and these measures, together with initiatives such as the recently announced 'Click Local' scheme will, hopefully, further ensure that our local businesses can continue to recover and thrive.

Individual Council Tax payers have also been supported through the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and, in addition to the £150 being made available by the government to reduce Council Tax bill in bands A-D, East Suffolk Council has provided up to £150,000 from an Exceptional Hardship fund to those most in need.

Across the East Suffolk district there are many significant and major projects either underway or on the horizon. Massive development is underway in Lowestoft with the new Gull Wing Bridge being installed and plans for the regeneration of the whole town. A decision on Sizewell C is expected shortly and Scottish Power's offshore windfarm proposals have been given the go-ahead. Acceptance of our bid for a Freeport at Felixstowe is another and all of these projects, whilst perhaps vital in terms of achieving our environmental targets and aspirations, nevertheless have great impact on our local communities. Achieving suitable and adequate mitigation from the developers continues to be the priority of all levels of local and nationally elected representatives.

More locally, we are delighted that work is now progressing well in the building of the Castle Community Rooms. This is a fine example of the good use to which both District and Local Community Infrastructure Levy funds can be put to benefit our residents and to provide an essential community asset for the future.

Following the transfer of responsibility for parking enforcement from the Police and County Council to East Suffolk Council, new charging arrangements have been introduced in the Town, for longer term parking in Fore Street and limited to two hours in Market Hill, specifically to prevent the blocking of these spaces, create more 'churn' and provide more opportunities for customers to support our local shops. All car parks enjoy 30 minutes free parking and there is no charge between 6pm and 8am.

Planning matters always create much correspondence and, most recently, we have added our support to the efforts of FTC and local residents in opposition to the application for 49 homes on Victoria Mill Road. This is ongoing and we will continue to support the Town in resisting developments which exceed those agreed to in the Local Neighbourhood Plan.

The management of traffic around the town and on-street and residents parking continue to be the most pressing issues and we will continue to work with all appropriate bodies to bring about improvement in these areas.