

A Joint Report to Hasketon Parish Council from the Suffolk Coastal District Councillors for Woodbridge Ward March 2016



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Melton Hill Development

As reported last month Active Urban Property Group (AUPG), www.activeurbanproperty.com, were selected as the preferred bidder for the Melton Hill site.

The community planning process will be starting shortly. There will be a Stakeholder Launch Meeting, to which Woodbridge Town Council will be invited, which will be followed by a Community Planning Weekend.

The final proposal will then go through the normal planning process.

Budget for 2016/17

Also as advised last month SCDC is increasing its portion of the Council Tax bill for this coming year (2016/17) by just under 2 per cent (1.99% to be exact). Whilst this is disappointing, the increase will be less the £3 (or about 25p a month) for a Band D property, with their Council Tax rising from £149.40 to £152.37 a year.

SCDC will continue to work to reduce its costs. For example, the move to the new headquarters will be funded by the sale of the existing site at Melton Hill and the sale of Cedar House, so there will be no extra burden on the tax payer. Council Tax payers we then will reap the benefits of a smaller, more efficient building, which will lead to year on year savings in running costs of up to £500,000 a year.

Devolution

Meetings between councils in Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire (including Peterborough) with senior national politicians and civil servants continue.

Possible Merger of SCDC and WDC

The following press release was issued on 4th March

The future working relationship between Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils is being examined – with the possibility of a merger being explored.

Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils have been working increasingly closely, since appointing a joint Chief Executive in 2008. This partnership has been key to the Councils' ability to make £16million efficiency savings since 2008.

Now, at a Simultaneous Cabinet Meeting on Monday, 14 March, leading councillors from both Councils will consider a report examining all the options for the future from forming a wider partnership with one or more other district/borough councils through to formally merging Suffolk Coastal and Waveney into a single district council for East Suffolk.

The report concludes: 'Both councils are committed to ensuring that East Suffolk is in the best possible position to respond to, and take advantage of, these emerging opportunities and challenges.....The Cabinets are now asked whether they want SMT (the joint Senior Management Team) to develop a draft business case for the formal merger of the two district councils.'

It is stressed these proposals are still at a very early stage. Any merger could not happen without a lengthy democratic process, including public consultation, which would run until 2019 at the earliest.

In a statement, the Leaders of Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils, Cllrs Ray Herring and Colin Law, said:

"Suffolk Coastal and Waveney have been successfully working in partnership since 2008. We were the first councils in Suffolk, and among the first in the country, to adopt this approach. This partnership working has played a key role in both councils' ability to drive down costs and provide more efficient frontline services, giving local tax payers better value for money.

However, in the current economic climate, when Councils are being forced to put up Council tax for the first time in six years, we recognise that we need to continue to explore new and innovative ways of making savings."

The Councils currently have a joint Business Plan, issue joint performance and annual reports, use a joint 'east Suffolk' email account for staff and are developing a joint east Suffolk website – now they are looking at whether there are clear benefits and further efficiencies from building closer working links.

"If the councils decide to explore the possibility of a merger, because it is felt this will help us to deliver better services and provide better value for money, this would have to be agreed by both Full Councils, as well as there being public consultation and the Boundary Commission being involved.," said the Leaders. Any such proposal would be subject to a lengthy and full democratic process, which would be in the public domain over a period of years and would not be implemented before the 2019 elections."

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While we share staff and have a joint Business Plan, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney remain two sovereign councils, with separate Leaders, Cabinet and Full Councils, which represent their respective areas. There are no current plans to merge the councils, however we are looking at how we can continue to develop this partnership and will consider all the options open to us.

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Customer Service Improvements at Woodbridge Library

Work has started to develop and upgrade SCDC's Customer Services presence in Woodbridge Library. This is part of the Council's commitment to provide better Customer Services, dealing with issues at the first point of contact, by moving to provide more services in the heart of the community at the current shared facility within Woodbridge Library.

Work on the project started on Monday, 22 February, and should be complete by the end of March. This investment supports the planned move to new, more cost efficient accommodation in Melton during autumn 2016.

This will effectively create a 'one stop shop' for Council issues at the Library. The improved Customer Service Centre will be the face to face point of customer contact for Suffolk Coastal, with more staff being based at the library and able to deal with more enquiries. Customers will also benefit from services that the library provides including printing services, internet access and free WiFi.

The development will incorporate a new shared helpdesk for library and council staff, a new private interview room and a quieter dedicated area for accessing computers and for reading or study.

The library and Suffolk Coastal Customer Services will remain open during the work, and there should be minimum disruption to customers, but there may be some intermittent noise at various times.

Love East Suffolk

This is a scheme which rewards local people for caring for the environment. The new incentive-based community litter pick scheme 'Love East Suffolk' has been launched by Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils to encourage more volunteers to help keep our environment clean and tidy. The scheme ties in with the 'Clean for the Queen' campaign which aims to get everyone involved in cleaning up Britain in time for The Queen's 90th birthday.

SCDC are inviting new and existing community groups of volunteers to register to help clean up around East Suffolk. They will not only have the pride of achievement, but also receive a small financial reward of £20 to thank them for their support. Groups will then be entered into a prize draw, with the chance of winning £200 to support a local community group or charity, which is being funded by Norse. Both Suffolk Coastal Norse and Waveney Norse can provide volunteers with equipment including sacks, disposable gloves, and loan sticks and hoops to groups, as well as arranging for the litter to be collected.

For more information: www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/envprotection/love-east-suffolk

Celebrate the Queen's 90th in style

The Government has produced a guide to help communities organise their own street party in time for Her Majesty's official birthday weekend in June. The guide sets out all the things you need to think about and what information you will need to let us know. Organising a street party just for residents and neighbours is very simple and you don't always need a licence. Top tips for holding a party are to plan early and get yourselves organised.

To read the full guide on organising a street party, visit: www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/streetparty

For more helpful tips, advice and support for organising a successful street party, visit: www.streetparty.org.uk and The Big Lunch website: www.thebiglunch.com

Cllrs Colin Hedgley, Geoff Holdcroft & Patti Mulcahy