

Borough Councillor's report for Hawstead Parish Council.

March 2018

Local issues

Locality Funding

Hawstead indoor carpet bowls club has been successful in securing £500.00 of locality funding.

Boundary Changes

Local groups, councils and the public are being urged to have their say and help shape options on what the ward boundaries for the new West Suffolk Council could look like.

Both Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council have been backed by Government to replace the authorities with a new West Suffolk Council. With the order to create the new Council due in parliament later this month.

New council wards for the West Suffolk Council would have to be created as the suggested number of councillors should reduce, in line with guidance from 72 to 64.

People are being asked to look at the options which have been developed by the councils and are based on local information provided earlier this year as part of an informal engagement process.

At the moment these are just the councils' initial ideas for the ward boundaries and replies to this engagement process will help shape the options that will be put forward to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) in April.

The LGBCE makes the final decision and will hold its own consultation over the summer. However, residents and organisations can also put their own proposals forward to the LGBCE for consideration.

This warding review will not affect either the external boundaries of West Suffolk or of any parish or town council. It will use the current parish and town council boundaries as the building blocks to create the district-level wards which will have an electorate of around 2,000 people.

People can view the maps of the suggested wards and help to shape the options that both Councils will put in front of members and eventually send to the LGBCE by visiting www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/wardoptions.

Hard copies of the maps are also available to view at the Council offices in Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Mildenhall.

Even if a single council was not being created both councils were due to have their wards reviewed.

Note. Part of the proposals suggest Hawstead and Whepstead may become part of the Cavendish Ward

Borough

Historic moment as new West Suffolk Council goes to parliament

An order to create a new council to drive prosperity and jobs in West Suffolk will go before MPs after an historic unanimous decision made by Council Cabinet members.

Members of both Forest Heath District and St Edmundsbury Borough Council cabinets have met to agree the order following backing from both full councils last week.

The new authority, which also has strong support from local residents, businesses and public services, would replace both current councils.

A programme of engagement saw 70% of residents back the initiative in an independent poll and public feedback helped shape the final business case.

Both councils put the proposals forward which were also supported by The Rt Hon Sajid Javid, MP, Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government earlier this month.

The new council would better drive jobs, deliver services and continue investment to support local communities than the current arrangement. In addition it would generate around £800,000 in savings and efficiencies and help protect the additional £4 million of annual savings already produced by sharing services.

At the same time a new council would also better support, invest in and meet the challenges facing communities, such as increased population, demand on health care and housing as well as reduced funding nationally.

Both councils have also been making a strong case to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to make sure strong representation of local communities is maintained. *Continued on next page*

Forest Heath District Leader, Councillor James Waters, said: "This decision is a historic moment for our authorities as we create a new West Suffolk Council. I was pleased to see the amount of support there has been for this new council from councillors as well as partners and our communities. The speed at which this has moved from May last year to going to parliament following gaining the support of the Secretary of State has is a clear indication of the strength of our case. We are now leading the way in transforming local Government, ahead of some councils that started before us. It is also a strong recognition of the part we play now and in the future in helping drive the economy. Doing what is right for our communities is at the heart of what we do. Staying still is not an option if we are to meet future challenges and better champion our communities, both locally and nationally, as well as continuing to deliver high quality services. This means we are not only in a better position to have a louder voice but a real opportunity to find even more effective ways to work more closely and support our local organisations and residents. I look forward to hearing the debate in parliament and helping create this new single council."

St Edmundsbury Borough Council Leader, Councillor John Griffiths, said: "This is a new chapter in our work to find better ways of supporting our communities and driving jobs and prosperity. There has been overwhelming support for these proposals which puts us in a better position to meet the aspirations of our communities. We have listened to local residents and organisations who agree lines on a map or council structures should not get in the way of providing services or hamper us from seizing opportunities for continued investment in our communities. The case for creating a new single council was compelling and once again puts us at the forefront of transforming how local government works to benefit directly the people we serve. Not only can we continue to deliver high quality services but we can better champion our area, drive the local economy, jobs and prosperity in West Suffolk while tackling the challenges facing all public services. We now ask MPs to listen to local opinion and agree the order."

It is hoped that the orders will be laid in Parliament in March this year and elections for the new council held in May 2019

Open space, sport and recreational facilities provision

The council have been working towards updating our Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities Supplementary Planning Documents into a joint document for West Suffolk. The document will dictate the amount of provision housing developers have to contribute per dwelling built.

As part of this process, we have been compiling a database on all the open space, sport and recreational facilities in West Suffolk. The dataset base will highlight which types of provision are deficient in which areas, ensuring we get the right provision built in the right places.

We wish to contact parish and town councils, so they may help us with the database. We will be sending them a table of provision for their area and ask them to add, amend or remove information from this table via an online survey. We will be contacting them by the end of the week and will ask them to respond by 16 March 2018.

For more information please contact Josh Ashford at joshua.ashford@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Restaurant Hygiene

At a recent seminar, St Edmundsbury Environmental Health Officer Peter Gudde discussed the processes and powers involved. Whilst voluntary at the moment, a new scheme where a rating of 1 to 5 is displayed outside the premises will reassure the public that standards are being maintained. This was highlighted recently when Golden House Chinese takeaway in Bury St Edmunds receive a zero-food hygiene rating from council, and is now temporally closed.

Budget given green light by cabinet

St Edmundsbury cabinet have approved the proposed budget which include a freeze on St Edmundsbury council tax.

UKIP group on council dissolved.

The UKIP group on St Edmundsbury Borough Council has been dissolved after two members resigned from the group. Cllr Barry Robbins is St Edmundsbury's last remaining UKIP member.

Mike Chester

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