
March 2019 Borough Councillor report for

Hawstead Parish Council

Local issues

The overriding priority for the soon to be new West Suffolk Council is the imminent merger of St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath, followed by the local elections in May.

The new Council will take effect from April 1st, with the Shadow Council, which comprises the existing Councillors from the two councils, becoming West Suffolk Councillors until the local elections on May 1st. Those elected or re-elected will then be West Suffolk District Councillors.

One of the early agenda items for the new West Suffolk Council will be to discuss whether to apply for Borough status, with the option of a Mayor or Chairman, or to remain a District Council with a Chairman. A Third option is to apply to become a Royal Borough although this privilege is rarely granted.

Borough

A campaign is being launched to rename a Roman Britain treasure haul after the village it was found in. The treasure was found in West Row, but was named 'The Mildenhall Treasure', West Row will soon form its own Parish Council in May, following the boundary review carried out by Forest Heath, and they want to rename the treasure accordingly. Cllr Ruth Bowman is quoted responding as Chair of Mildenhall Parish Council.

St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council have agreed to align Hackney taxi fares as part of the creation of a new council. Cllr Lance Stanbury is quoted.

Bury St Edmunds cabbie Promise Moyo was jailed after being caught drink-driving and has had his taxi driver license revoked.

Figures show huge fall in rough sleeping across Suffolk and Essex. Although the report states the number of rough sleepers in St Edmundsbury has decreased since the last count last year, recording 4.2 rough sleepers per 10,000 household, it recycles a comment made by Cllr Sarah Mildmay-White some time ago in relation to the launch of the Looking for Change campaign. It does not reflect the current situation, with an increase in accommodation options and an outreach team in place to support rough sleepers. Our latest St Edmundsbury count shows 11 rough sleepers (compared with 20 in November quoted in this report).

A group is one step closer to securing community hub. A group of Chedburgh residents continue to object to change of use applications to St Edmundsbury for the last remaining pub in the community, which has been closed since 2016. They want to see it re-open as a community hub.

Forest Heath homes set to see seven years of Council Tax increases. About proposal for harmonising two Council Tax levels for the new single council, through a small rise for Forest Heath properties (£4.95 a year or just under 10p a week for Band D) with no change for St Edmundsbury.

Barley Homes, a development company jointly owned by Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury has received planning permission for its first project for 37 homes in Haverhill. Barley Homes have also been given a £200,000 loan by Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Borough Council to finance the project.

West Suffolk Councils demonstrates commitment to Mental Health

That is why, as part of its commitment to raising awareness as well as to its staff, West Suffolk councils has trained 12 Mental Health First Aiders.

A balanced budget has been agreed for the new West Suffolk Council, which will be created in April.

Members of the new West Suffolk Council will see their basic salary increase to £5,900.

In addition to the increased basic rate, the leader of the single council will be paid £5,168 more, with an allowance of £14,750. Cabinet members will be paid £7,375, and the chairmen of planning, and overview and scrutiny committees £5,310 in addition to their basic wage. The new allowances have been recommended by an independent body, councillors have subsequently approved the increase. Because of the drop in the number of members, West Suffolk will save £30,500 compared to current rates with the cost per taxpayer remaining roughly the same. Richard Cooper, chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel, said: "After looking at the evidence we believe that the total allowances should cost less than the original combined budget."

He added: "We believe our recommendations represent good value for money for West Suffolk."

On 1 April 2019 Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council will be replaced by a single new district council called West Suffolk Council. Elections for the new authority will be held on 2 May. While the new West Suffolk Council will entirely replace Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury, it will continue to deliver the same top-quality services while finding improved ways of supporting communities, businesses and the local economy. Our "make your mark" campaign is part of a national drive to encourage people to take part in local democracy and their communities. Follow this link www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/Council/Voting_and_Elections/make-your-mark or through social media #WestSuffolkElection for information about how you can stand to be a councillor as well as voting in the elections.

You will be able to find out information about such as what it is like to be a councillor, how to apply or be nominated, register to vote and make sure you make your mark on polling day.

If you do not fancy becoming a councillor there are also other ways you can make your mark by becoming involved in other community and local parish organisations.

Mike Chester

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