

Aldeburgh - February 2016 Cllrs T-J Haworth-Culf & M Jones.

Preferred Bidder for Melton Hill Announced

We have selected a preferred bidder from the developers wanting to buy our existing Melton Hill headquarters site.

Active Urban Property Group (AUPG) has been selected following a thorough and detailed process to identify best value for local Council Tax payers, as well as Suffolk Coastal District Council.

This selection has now been approved by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Resources, under the terms of the authority delegated by Cabinet in September 2014.

A detailed Head of Terms letter is currently being drafted to be sent to AUPG for its agreement, which the intention of us exchanging contracts by the end of May 2016.

The plan is to create about 70 new homes on this site, of which about 33% will be affordable homes (subject to planning permission). The company intends to start its planning and design process immediately. This will include it engaging in a 12-week community consultation process to inform the layout and design proposals.

It is important to stress that the capital receipts from the headquarters and Cedar House sites combined will cover the cost of our new headquarters in Melton. So the project will be effectively cost neutral.

We will be able to move to the new building without incurring any debt or imposing any additional burden on the Council Tax payer. This means that the reduction in the running costs of our headquarters, estimated at rising from £200,000 initially to £500,000 in the long term (17 – 20 years), will create financial benefits for the Council and local people for years to come.

Name Chosen for New Headquarters

On an allied subject, the Accommodation Programme Board has also chosen '**East Suffolk House**' as the name for the new headquarters building in Melton, because it felt this name makes a strong statement about our continuing partnership work across East Suffolk, with our colleagues in Waveney.

Port Health Information Management System (PHILIS)

The recent success of Port Health in signing a 3-year contract with Southampton City Council to licence the use of PHILIS (the Port Health information management system) at Southampton Port Health Authority is a great example of the entrepreneurial, business-like approach we are increasingly taking at Suffolk Coastal. With the addition of Southampton to the PHILIS 'family', the UK's four largest seaports (with responsibility for around 80% of all containerised goods imported into the country) are benefiting from the software system that was developed in-house by this Council.

The roll-out of PHILIS to the second largest Port in the UK and the ongoing success of this software has generated significant additional income for the Council and has

enhanced the reputation of Port Health and the Council within the import community and with the central government agencies.

Cabinet – Tuesday, 2 February

Budget: No doubt, you will already have been receiving questions about the budget and the fact Suffolk Coastal may have to put up Council Tax for the first time in six years.

The draft Budget for 2016/17 was examined at Scrutiny last Monday, before being debated at Cabinet on Tuesday, ahead of the finalised recommendations coming before Full Council at the end of February.

We are still working on this, and there are some final calculations to be done, but at this stage we are looking at potentially having to put up Council Tax by just under 2% (1.99% to be exact).

This is disappointing, as we have kept Council Tax frozen at 2010 levels, but needs to be put into context – 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.

The reality is that our funding from central Government has been cut by 40 per cent in the last five years. In the same period Suffolk Coastal also froze its portion of the Council Tax, leading to a reduction in our net budget of £3.7 million.

Now Government is removing the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) over the next four years – which will mean a significant cut in our core funding of over £2million by the end of the Parliament. Another essential part of our funding, the New Homes Bonus is also likely to be cut. Taken together, funding from these sources reduce from over £3.6m in 2015/16 to around £500,000 in 2019/20.

Although we knew we were going to face some reduction to our budget, this settlement is worse than we had expected.

While Suffolk Coastal remains committed to continuing to find innovative ways of making savings through increased partnership working and improved efficiency, we need to make sure that we are in a position to protect frontline services, help provide more affordable homes and support economic development in the District.

Affordable Housing

We have always said that one of the key priorities for this Administration is to provide more affordable homes in the district.

Young people and elderly people looking to downsize are struggling to stay in their local communities and are being forced out by the lack of affordable housing.

This is a complex area where, even when we do our part by giving developers planning permission, we cannot force them to build – so many affordable homes are not built, despite our best efforts. The existing system is simply not working well enough to meet our needs and the needs of local people.

We have decided to take a bold and innovative approach to this issue and are examining proposals to invest £1.68million of the Section 106 money we have built up over the years into unlocking the development potential in the District to provide more affordable homes.

We are now looking to bring in new specialist staff to help us decide the best ways of using this money, but it may be that Suffolk Coastal may effectively become a developer, buying land to build affordable homes on, getting them built and then selling them to the people that need them.

We will obviously have to work closely with colleagues on the Town and Parish Councils, as well as developers, to get this moving, but this is an exciting new innovation for Suffolk Coastal and shows our commitment to making things happen in this area.

National Living Wage

As a Council, Suffolk Coastal is embracing the new National Living Wage, which becomes law from 1 April.

All our directly employed staff earn above the level of the National Living Wage. However, we will have to see what the effects of this change will be as it works through, as it also affects the staff of our partners and contractors, so some of the costs could impact on our budget through these services costing us more in the future.

Merger Speculation

There has been some media coverage, suggesting that talks between Suffolk Coastal and Waveney to merge the two councils are 'at an advanced stage'. This is not the case. Below is the statement we have issued on this issue:

'Suffolk Coastal and Waveney have been successfully working in partnership since 2008, when we appointed a joint Chief Executive. 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.

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.

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.

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.'

Emergency Planning

In light of the recent National headlines, and from our own District's experiences, about communities being affected by emergencies, we are keen to support and enable the progression of Emergency Plans across the District.

Although we have had a positive response in terms of communities taking up the offer of first aid courses and winter maintenance training, we would very much wish to support further provision of emergency planning across communities, Towns and Parishes.

Some very good plans are already in place typically with coast-facing communities, including Shottisham, Boyton, Aldeburgh, Nacton, Levington, Orford, Snape and Waldringfield, but wider provision covering inland communities is required.

The Council, through its Enabling Communities Strategy, is able to provide some funding support to enable the development of plans and provision of an emergency pack for use by communities in the event of a community emergency. Officers at SCDC within the Active Communities Team and the Council's Emergency Planning Officer would be pleased to provide further information and advice to support communities with their emergency provision aspirations.

On Street Parking

The current situation with on-street parking is that the county council administer where the restrictions appear, with the Police enforcing the regulations and the money from penalty tickets going to central Government.

We are now in discussions with the Police and Suffolk County Council to try to resolve this situation and have suggested that responsibility should be devolved to Suffolk Coastal to manage and enforce on-street parking regulations. Nothing has been decided at this stage, but we will update you if the matter is resolved.

Website Development

As you are probably aware, we have been working to move the Suffolk Coastal and Waveney websites on to the same platform. This will coincide with a change to the look and feel of the sites to make them more interactive and useful to customers.

In the light of the development work happening with our partnership, and reflecting moves such as the adoption of the eastsuffolk email addresses, creation of a joint East Suffolk Annual Report last year and now the publication of the first East Suffolk Business Plan, we have decided it would make sense to have one 'east Suffolk' website.

Work is now on-going to migrate the content on to this one site, and to design the new look and feel, ahead of the website hopefully being up and running in the spring.

As we've said, this is a very busy time for the Council, with a lot of innovative projects taking shape and many important decisions to be made.

Get ready for important elections

Voters in Suffolk Coastal will go to the polls for the election of a Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk on Thursday 5 May.

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) oversees the running of local police forces, including appointing the Chief Constable, setting the local budget and deciding what the priorities should be for the police in their area.

Electoral Services at Suffolk Coastal - You must be registered to take part in May's elections. To make sure you don't miss out on having your say on polling day, Suffolk Coastal residents will need to register.

It's easy to register if you haven't already done so online, at: www.gov.uk/register tovote. Registering only takes a few minutes and you'll need your date of birth and National Insurance number. Alternatively customers requiring assistance with registering can contact our customer services team by calling 01394 444422.

Stephen Baker, the Chief Executive of Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils, has once again been appointed as the Suffolk Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) for the PCC election on 5 May 2016.

He will have overall responsibility for co-ordinating and running the election across the whole of the county, although local Returning Officers at District/Borough level will have responsibility for overseeing arrangements in their areas. Stephen was also the PARO for the first PCC election in Suffolk in November 2012.

Ben Brook, Head of English regions at the Electoral Commission, said: "Anyone not yet registered to vote should do so as soon as possible so they will be able to have their say on issues that directly affect their day-to-day lives. It's important that anyone who is eligible to be on the register, but has not yet registered, does so. The deadline to register to vote is Monday 18 April 2016."

For more information, visit: www.suffolkparo.org.uk

said: "The change in name befits the impact of the scheme in the county as a whole and highlights the importance of access to the Energy Coast."

Suffolk Coastal businesses rewarded for good hygiene

In December, 21 Suffolk Coastal based food businesses were awarded a Food Hygiene Rating of 5 - meaning these businesses have very good standards of food hygiene.

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) helps identify those food businesses which take their food hygiene standards seriously - and helps you choose where to eat or shop for food.

The scheme is run by local authorities in England, Northern Ireland and Wales and applies to restaurants, pubs, cafes, takeaways, hotels, supermarkets and other food shops.

Officers from Suffolk Coastal's Food and Safety team check each food business for the following:

- how hygienically the food is handled - how it is prepared, cooked, re-heated, cooled and stored
- the condition of the structure of the buildings - the cleanliness, layout, lighting, ventilation and other facilities
- how the business manages and records what it does to make sure food is safe

At the end of the inspection, Suffolk Coastal's food safety officers give the business a rating between 0-5. The top rating of '5' means that the business was found to have 'very good' hygiene standards. Any business should be able to reach this top rating.

In December, the following Suffolk Coastal received a '5 / very good' rating:

- Main's Restaurant - Yoxford
- Harries Catering - Kesgrave
- Gressland Court - Kesgrave
- Costa Coffee - Woodbridge
- Melton Day Nursery - Melton
- Mandarin House - Saxmundham
- The Cake Shop - Woodbridge
- Pump Street Bakery - Orford
- Woodbridge Deli - Woodbridge
- Barley Mow Inn - Witesham
- Trimley St Mary County Primary School - Trimley St Mary
- Woodbridge School - Woodbridge
- Broke Hall Primary School - Rushmere St Andrew
- The Maybush Inn - Waldringfield
- Rendlesham Day Nursery - Rendlesham
- J R Creasey - Peasenhall
- East of England Co-op - Woodbridge
- The Turks Head - Hasketon
- Shawsgate Vineyard - Badingham
- Subway - Woodbridge
- Jolly Sailor Inn - Orford

Where is the sticker? All food businesses are checked by the Council's Food and Safety Team to ensure they are compliant with food hygiene law and so if a business is not displaying a FHRS sticker, it might be they have something to hide! Food businesses with poor food hygiene standards will have a rating of 0 (urgent improvement necessary), 1 (major improvement necessary) or 2 (improvement necessary).

People are encouraged to take food hygiene seriously when choosing where to eat and so if the FHRs sticker is not visible, always ask 'where's the sticker?' You can also check the rating of over 440,000 food businesses online at <http://ratings.food.gov.uk>.

Checking the ratings sticker before entering the premises can help people make an informed choice, as can checking the rating online before booking. With Valentine's Day & Mothers Day approaching, many people will be heading out for a romantic meal and so this is an ideal time to get into the habit of checking the sticker.

All food businesses are capable of achieving the top FHRs rating of 5 (very good) and having a top rating can attract more customers. Food establishment owners should make sure their FHRs sticker is proudly on display on the door, the menu and in any advertising.

New healthy food award launches in Suffolk

Suffolk Coastal has welcomed the introduction of a new food award which will help customers to make healthier choices when eating out at Suffolk's restaurants, pubs and cafes.

The 'Eat Out Eat Well' award recognises a food businesses' commitment to providing healthier food choices and any restaurant, pub, cafe or food retailer in Suffolk is eligible to apply. Customers can look out for the 'Eat Out Eat Well' symbol when choosing where to eat.

To qualify for the 'Eat Out Eat Well' award, businesses must be assessed by Environmental Health officers and show their commitment to providing healthier choices. This includes keeping fat, sugar and salt to a minimum, making fruit and vegetables widely available and basing main meals on starchy carbohydrates. The level of award is based on a scoring system that takes into account the type of food on offer, cooking methods, and how businesses promote healthy choices to their customers.

The award was launched at Center Parcs in Elveden, which has been presented with a silver award. Representatives from Vertas were also at the launch to receive a gold award. Vertas is responsible for catering in a large number of Suffolk schools and council facilities, including Cafe East at Waveney's Riverside offices.

Cllr Tony Goldson, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Health and ward councillor for Waveney said:

"I am delighted that this prestigious food award has come to Suffolk, and very happy that Center Parcs, as one of Suffolk's largest businesses, has been one of the first to sign up to the scheme.

For caterers, this is about making a commitment to deliver healthier choices for customers who want to enjoy eating out, but with their health in mind. The emphasis is on choice; now people will have the confidence when they see the Eat Out Eat Well logo that they can enjoy healthier options as well as good food."

Karen Davies, Consultant Dietician at Live Well Suffolk said:

"When it comes to a healthy diet, balance is the key to getting it right. This means eating a variety of foods in the right proportions, and consuming the right amount of food and drink to achieve a healthy body weight.

Having a treat now and again is enjoyable, which is why many people eat out, but it is important to have the option to eat more healthily, which is why this award is so welcome."

Cllr Steve Gallant, Suffolk Coastal District Council's Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health, said:

"Suffolk Coastal is rightly famous for the high quality of cuisine in this area. With more of us eating out more often, it is only right that people should be offered healthy options when they are dining out. Suffolk Coastal fully supports this initiative to encourage pubs, cafes and restaurants to provide a healthier selection of dishes for people to choose from on their menus.

This scheme aims to reward food businesses that offer foods low in fat, salt and sugar, as well as having fruit, vegetables and starchy carbohydrates available and adopt healthy methods for preparing food such as grilling rather than frying. With the growing problem we have with obesity nationally, I am sure discerning diners will soon be looking for the Eat out Eat Well symbol, as well as the Food Hygiene Rating, when making a booking to eat out."

More details about the award, and how to apply :
www.healthysuffolk.org.uk

Right to rent goes live across England

On the 1st February 2016,, Right to Rent went live across England. This means all private landlords, including anyone subletting or taking in lodgers, need to carry out quick and simple checks <https://www.gov.uk/check-tenant-right-to-rent-documents> on all new tenants to make sure they have the right to rent property in the country.

The roll out of Right to Rent has been informed by input from a panel of experts from trade bodies, local authorities, and housing charities and the Equality and Human Rights Commission and backed up by stakeholder events with landlords and agents. Landlords need to check identity documents for all new tenants and take copies. A wide range of documents can be used for the checks, and the Government has worked closely with housing and homelessness charities to design a document list which can accommodate different individual circumstances. This includes where people do not have traditional identity documents such as a passport.

There are resources: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/landlords-immigration-right-to-rent-checks> available to help landlords comply with the new rules, including an online checking aid <https://www.gov.uk/landlord-immigration-check> landlords can use to guide them through the process and to request a check on anyone who has an outstanding case with the Home Office.

For more information about making the checks go to www.gov.uk/righttorentchecks

Please accept TJ's apologies for the March meeting due to a simultaneous Cabinet Meeting

.....