

## **Susan Glossop District Councillor**

Report for the meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024 of the Flempton cum Hengrave parish council

I would be pleased to hear if any grass cutting done by West Suffolk has been ok this season at Flempton cum Hengrave

There will soon be information about the recycling and waste services changes which is legislated by the Environment Act 2021 and due to be in place by 2025

The new electric vehicle (EV) chargers are due to be fitted at The Guineas Shopping Centre car park in Newmarket and Parkway car park in Bury St Edmunds over October.

Work is due to start at The Guineas Shopping Centre car park from 14 October 2024 and Parkway car park in Bury St Edmunds from 21 October 2024.

This new infrastructure is part of a district-wide effort to meet the Council's strategic priority of supporting sustainable growth and a resilient environment and is funded by West Suffolk Council and the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV). Through this project, residents living near the chargers who do not have access to off street parking have a solution to charging their EVs. The chargers can also be used by the council's fleet vehicles when working in communities and towns, for example car park patrol vehicles.

The Guineas Shopping Centre car park in Newmarket will have a total of four dedicated EV charging bays located near to the car park entrance, two of which replace those removed earlier in the year from the multi-storey car park.

Parkway in Bury St Edmunds will also have four dedicated parking bays with EV chargers located on the surface car park behind Cineworld. Residents on Chalk Road South will be contacted by UK Power Networks (UKPN) before work starts outlining any roadside disruption. Any disruption is anticipated to be minimal and the road will remain open.

Drivers are being advised to follow the signage on site to alternative spaces within both car parks. We are managing the works so that we can keep the car parks open throughout and disruption to a minimum.

This work complements the launch of West Suffolk Council's new fleet of electric vans and sweepers, alongside the installation of electric vehicle chargers at West Suffolk Operational Hub and Haverhill House Good Morning

I am adding this funding information in as parish councils can apply as long as the funding is for is not an item the parish council should fund from the precept

We are delighted to write to you this morning to notify you of a new capital fund for communities that is opening today. Please find attached a letter giving full details of the fund, along with the guidance and application form.

This funding is part of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) provided by Defra to local authorities and West Suffolk Council has created a Communities Capital Grant Fund using its REPF allocation to support activities that specifically address the particular challenges faced in rural areas. The fund is available to our rural communities (in line with Defra guidance).

The application process opens today and will close on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at 5.00pm. Grants of between £500 and £5000 are available for capital projects. If you are aware of any community groups within your ward that are seeking capital funding then please do send the guidance and application form to them. We have also sent details, guidance and the application form to all parish and town councils today.

If you or any community group would like further information or a discussion about the fund then please do not hesitate to contact the Families and Communities Team: [families.communities@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:families.communities@westsuffolk.gov.uk)

## **Homelessness**

I would like to share the experience of some of our residents who have faced homelessness.

I want to tell you about Jane and James. They hadn't missed a payment on their rent but still they, and their three children were being made homeless

"It was an awful time. It put a lot of pressure on us as a family. We could feel ourselves drifting apart. We were on our knees," Jane said.

They were served a no-fault eviction notice by their landlady who wanted to sell the Bury St Edmunds home they had been privately renting for eight years.

Worse still, they found that private rents for similar houses had increased dramatically during that time and beyond what they could afford.

Their story illustrates the importance – and the challenge that lies ahead of us, in trying to help deliver more housing that people can genuinely afford.

Later this month, Council will discuss our Housing, Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Part of the strategy looks at the role of the council in trying to ensure more people can better afford a place to live. The strategy will also build on existing work to tackle homelessness.

Thankfully, Jane and James' story has a happy ending. Our housing service placed them in temporary accommodation with a private sector landlord in Haverhill, and then helped them find a home they could afford in Newmarket.

"We just fell in love with it straight away. It's been the making of our family. We've had amazing help and support from the council every step of the way," Jane said.

They were one of 108 West Suffolk households in the past year who the council has helped out of temporary accommodation and out of homelessness into a settled permanent home of their own.

Our emphasis continues to be on prevention wherever we can. In the year to 1 October, the council successfully intervened to help prevent 156 West Suffolk households from becoming homeless. That represents a 44 per cent increase on the 108 preventions on the same period just two years ago.

Prevention isn't always possible. The council has been continuing to invest in temporary accommodation and on 1 October, we had 80 households in temporary accommodation. The housing strategy will look to build on this vital support, not least through our work with landlords through the West Suffolk Lettings Partnership.

The council now manages 49 units of temporary accommodation with a mix of houses, flats and single rooms. It also has another 28 units specifically to support rough sleepers and also uses 36 units of temporary accommodation managed by housing associations, as well as emergency bed and breakfast accommodation.

### **Sarah's story**

Sarah first discovered her partner hadn't been paying the rent was when they received an eviction notice.

"We'd been having a lot of problems for a long time. One night, he'd been to the pub, and I tried to end it with him. It didn't go down too well. He accused me of cheating on him. He punched the headboard near me. I ran into the bathroom to get away and he kicked the door down. I had to run out of the house," she said.

Things got worse and West Suffolk placed her and her young daughter in temporary accommodation, worked with her to clear her half of the rent arrears and then helped her into a new home.

"I left with next to nothing, just five bags of stuff. It was the worst time of my life, but it was the support that got me through on those real dark days when I just didn't think I could do it anymore."

"I can never explain how amazing those ladies in the housing team are."

"When you are scared of what's going to happen and where you are going to be - they always had the time to talk to me and I think that means the world when you feel your whole life is falling apart."

These real-life stories illustrate the difficult and diverse role of the council's housing service supporting people across West Suffolk on a daily basis when

they are at most in need. It's a service that, regardless of our individual politics, I think we should all recognise and be proud and thankful for.

We have made short films about Jane and James, Sarah and Peter, another resident who we have helped out of homelessness.

You can hear more on Jane and James' story at <https://youtu.be/WaXs-AQF8QY>

You can see more on Sarah's story at <https://youtu.be/SZO7yJ8ElpQ>

And for Peter's story see <https://youtu.be/HqKU32eX5fc>

If you know someone at risk of homelessness please refer them to our website at [www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/find\\_a\\_home/homelessness.cfm](http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/find_a_home/homelessness.cfm) which also includes contact information.

I'm sure members will be keen to have an update with regard the number of people we have rough sleeping in West Suffolk currently. This is just to say I am preparing an update to share with you next week.