

**Annual Report to Sweffling Parish Council from
Cllr Maurice Cook & Cllr Lydia Freeman
East Suffolk Council**

May 2022

The year of 2021 continued to be difficult as we all dealt the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic in its various strains. Through many false dawns, restrictions remained in place well into 2022 but, despite these, communities and businesses continued to adapt, as best they could, to make sure no-one was left alone to struggle through. Huge credit is due to all Parish Councils for leading the efforts in their local communities.

East Suffolk Council also adapted work procedures and practices to make sure that services were maintained and, despite also suffering from staff shortages from time to time, largely achieved that albeit with the occasional delays in some bin collections! In some respects, more efficient ways were found to conduct our business and these, we hope, will continue.

Since the start of the pandemic the Council has administered a range of business grant schemes to support our local businesses. During that period, just over £130 million was distributed to businesses across the East Suffolk district via 29,502 payment transactions. This gives an indication of the scale and complexity involved in delivering the schemes. Nevertheless, the outcome has been the survival of the vast majority of local businesses.

Additional support of some £7.9m in the form of Covid-19 Additional Rate Relief to Business rate payers has also been announced and these measures, together with initiatives such as the recently announced 'Click Local' scheme will, hopefully, further ensure that our local businesses can continue to recover and thrive.

Individual Council Tax payers have also been supported through the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and, in addition to the £150 being made available by the government to reduce Council Tax bill in bands A-D, East Suffolk Council has provided up to £150,000 from an Exceptional Hardship fund to those most in need.

Across the East Suffolk district there are many significant and major projects either underway or on the horizon. Massive development is underway in Lowestoft with the new Gull Wing Bridge being installed as we meet and plans for the whole town to regenerate. A decision on Sizewell C is expected shortly and Scottish Power's offshore windfarm proposals have been given the go-ahead. Acceptance of our bid for a Freeport at Felixstowe is another and all of these projects, whilst perhaps vital in terms of achieving our environmental targets and aspirations, nevertheless have great impact on our local communities. Achieving suitable and adequate mitigation from the developers continues to be the priority of all levels of local and nationally elected representatives.

Planning matters always create much correspondence and we will continue monitor all applications and to support Parish Councils in resisting developments which exceed those agreed to in the Local Neighbourhood or District Local Plans.

With our very best wishes for the future and we look forward to continuing our work and support with you.