



## **Annual Report to Town and Parish Councils from Cllr Maurice Cook East Suffolk Council**

**May 2021**

The year of 2020/21 will only be remembered for the advent, duration and effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The main recollection may be the terrible death toll with very few among us not having lost close family members. However, it is also worth remembering the way in which the Country and its people responded to the challenges of dealing with the fatal virus. Not since the second world war has such a response from our health and emergency services, our County, District, Town and Parish Councils, our many charitable organisations and individual residents and neighbours been witnessed. Communities came together to protect and support each other and that was never more the case than in this Framlingham Ward.

From the outset the Town Council and all of the Parishes took completely voluntary responsibility for their own communities and the Hour Community in Framlingham deserves special mention for the quite magnificent service they have delivered to our residents.

East Suffolk Council's primary function was to maintain as many services as humanly possible whilst, decamping from offices to working at home, dealing with lockdown and social distancing and shortage of staff due to illness or isolation.

The Council also became the Agent for the Government to deliver financial support to the thousands of businesses across the district forced to close under lockdown restrictions. Details of individual grant schemes have been regularly reported and, in all, over 18,000 payments have been made to businesses large and small totalling over £104m. The Economic Development and Finance Teams continue to provide both Government funding and additional support from our own reserves as we emerge out of lockdown and back into business.

The Council's Communities Team has also played their fundamental part in looking after the wellbeing of our residents. Implementing Home but not Alone schemes, contacting every individual vulnerable resident to ensure they have basic support, providing means of communication, such as with the distribution of Grand pads, providing financial support through Hardship Funds to make sure everyone got the provisions and medicines they needed during isolation and, latterly, providing our EAST wellbeing bags.

The Framlingham and Wickham Market Community Partnership now absolutely proved its worth in helping to deal with Social Isolation, Creating Opportunities for young People and creating a new rural transport initiative. Whilst the introduction of the 'Katch' dial and ride rural bus pilot scheme between Framlingham and Campsea Ashe rail station has been delayed by the pandemic, the partnership has been able to provide extra financial support in tackling youth issues, helping to deal with mental health issues amongst the young and providing local grant schemes for a host of



opportunities. Of probably more significance is the Partnership bringing together multiple stakeholders with similar interests and providing a forum for mutual co-operation to achieve common goals.

It is to be hoped that the year ahead can see us all emerging from a dark time into a brighter future. It may well be a different kind of normal from that which we recall. 2020/21 will certainly not be a year we will be able to forget.

Stay safe and well.

Maurice