

WEST SUFFOLK FUTURE - STATEMENT OF INTENT FROM LEADERS OF FOREST HEATH DISTRICT COUNCIL AND ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council are together at the forefront of supporting and championing local communities, driving jobs growth and promoting our area. At the heart of what we do is helping and enabling our residents and businesses to achieve their priorities.

We have jointly responded to the many changes in both local and national government by transforming the way we work through shared services. This has saved millions of pounds while enabling us to continue to deliver high quality, value for money services and engage closely with communities to achieve much improved outcomes.

Our shared services work now gives us the stability and a golden opportunity to look what is the right structure in the future to give us a **better ability** to:

- Deliver services vital for our communities while at the same time drive forward an ambitious vision of growth, jobs and economic prosperity for our unique area.
- Future proof for the next decade and beyond - so we continue to have a firm financial base and stability to meet the challenges faced by our communities such as health, need for homes and reduced national funding
- Consolidate the savings and efficiencies we have made and make even more that can be reinvested in working with and benefiting the communities we serve.

Accordingly, we ask both councils to investigate the creation of a new single council in west Suffolk to better meet the inevitable challenges ahead, drive jobs and prosperity while working ever closer with our communities to achieve their goals.

Councillors, as currently, will continue to play a vital and indeed enhanced part and drive forward open democracy.

A single council should bring real and lasting benefits to all residents in the area. It would give us a **greater ability** to:

- Be stronger and financially resilient to surpass the challenges of reduced public funding and any changes to local government.
- Be the right size to continue to support our local villages, towns and communities but with a larger and stronger unified voice to more effectively lobby Government and attract internationally recognised businesses.
- Have a unified strategic vision for the whole area enabling us to be even more pro-active and able to capitalise on commercial opportunities.
- Continue the shared service working that has saved millions and build on this to deliver even better value and savings to invest back into high quality services and local community initiatives.
- Be better placed to offer extra support in many areas particularly working with communities to improve health and wellbeing.
- Have the leadership available to work more effectively with partners and others to manage increased growth, jobs and challenges that will drive the local economy and benefit our communities.
- Make sure we can provide more and the right kind of homes for our residents and cut unnecessary red tape for local businesses and traders.
- Keep the same boundaries as the Borough and District Council our communities call home while having the long term stability to deliver high quality services.

There are obviously many details and issues that need further examination. That is why we are asking as part of this work that a steering group be set up across the two councils to examine these issues going forward. We also need to look at how any new organisation would work with current and future partners as well as deepening existing relationships. Our communities are at the heart of what we do, and if this goes forward, any future decisions will be informed by wider engagement with our communities, partners and businesses.

We are asking you to support the start of the process of looking at options of moving this ambition forward so they can be fully examined by both of our councils.

CLLR JAMES WATERS

FOREST HEATH DISTRICT COUNCIL

CLLR JOHN GRIFFITHS

ST EDMUNDSBURY

BOROUGH COUNCIL