



Annual Report to Town and Parish Councils from Cllr Carol Poulter East Suffolk Council

May 2021

The year of 2020/21 will be remembered for the advent, duration and effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The main recollection may be the terrible death toll with some among us having lost close family members or friends. 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 been witnessed from our health and emergency services, our County, District, Town and Parish Councils, our many charitable organisations and individual residents and neighbours. Communities came together to protect and support each other and that was never more the case than in my Council Ward of Wickham Market.

From the outset the Parish Councils and people in our towns and villages immediately took responsibility for their own communities and it has been heart-warming to see how people in our area have responded to the unprecedented circumstances imposed on us by the Covid-19 pandemic.

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

The Council also became the Agent for the Government in delivering 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 an essential role in looking after the wellbeing of our residents in numerous ways. They have implemented Home but not Alone schemes and contacted every individual vulnerable resident to ensure they have basic support. They have also provided the means for people to communicate such as with the distribution of the very popular Grand pads and provided financial support through Hardship Funds to make sure everyone received the provisions and medicines they needed during isolation. In addition to this they have more recently been distributing our EAST wellbeing bags.

The Framlingham and Wickham Market Community Partnership has now 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 that the Partnership brings together multiple stakeholders with similar interests and provides a forum for mutual co-operation to achieve common goals.

2020/21 will certainly not be years that are easily forgotten, and I hope that the year ahead will see us all emerging from a dark time into a brighter future

Stay safe and well.

Carol