

KESGRAVE TOWN COUNCIL BUSINESS PLAN 2021-24 FIRST ANNUAL REVIEW



1. Introduction

When the plan was implemented in October 2021, Council committed to carrying out a review of progress against its action plans on an annual basis. This is the first such annual review and it is published for residents, businesses, organisations and community partners for transparency and to enable all concerned to gain an appreciation of what Council thinks has gone well and what there is still to do.

Additional actions to those in the plan that were deemed appropriate to carry out in the last year have been included for completeness.

2. Community & Recreation (C&R)

The role of the C&R committee is to support engagement with other community stakeholders; oversee the management of our land and property assets and related services; engage with young people in supporting our youth provision; oversee Kesgrave Market, the Millennium Jubilee Hall and all community events; and liaise with other bodies in proactively contributing to solutions to the climate emergency, conservation work and public transport.

Public Open Space and Play Equipment

- a) We will consider providing a canopy or canopies in Rupert Fison Centre Square for the use of Kesgrave Market, social purposes (eg street cafes) and for community events.

Not yet actioned.

- b) We will look to improve the Town Square by providing additional planting, features and possibly a central feature.

Not yet actioned.

- c) We will make repairs and improvements to the Multi-use Games Area (MUGA) at Cedarwood Green with a view to recommissioning its use beyond dusk.

Action taken: New LED lighting controls and CCTV facilities, which enable the facility to be used for longer in the winter months.

- d) We will invest in improving the grass pitches and field at the Millennium Sports Ground.

Action taken: In conjunction with Kesgrave Kestrels Football Club and funding from the Football Association Foundation, a schedule of works was agreed and put in place to improve the quality of the pitches. This work has largely been carried out and will be completed by summer 2023.

- e) We will investigate the provision of recreational equipment at Long Stropps suitable for use by teenage children.

Action taken: Project underway and we expect to implement in 2023.

- f) We will investigate the provision of a hut for the sale of drinks, ice creams with table and chairs in one of our public open spaces.

Not yet actioned.

- g) We will review the case for the provision of a public lavatory including the best location, if feasible.

Not yet actioned.

- h) (new) We will maintain the levels of Town Council recreational equipment and enhance provision where feasible/possible, including provision on non-Council land.

Action taken: We have adopted ownership of the Dobbs Drift and St Agnes Way play areas from East Suffolk Council. As part of the handover, existing equipment was brought up to an acceptable standard.

The play area surface for the 'space net' at Oak Meadow had to be completely replaced at significant expense following damage caused by vandalism.

- i) (new) We will endeavour to keep graffiti to a minimum in our community.

Action taken: In conjunction with our schools, East Suffolk Council and Police we undertook a project for all underpasses in the Town to be re painted. A local artist was commissioned for this, who worked with groups of pupils from every school to create artwork designs, around the theme of Climate Emergency and Wellbeing, which the artist then painted on the underpasses. All underpasses are now complete except the Highschool underpass.

The Town Council's Estate Operatives monitor all public areas in the Town and report and remove any graffiti found. The Town Council works with local Police, the community and East Suffolk Council to identify repeat offenders and for appropriate action to be taken.

Highways and Public Transport

- j) When opportunities arise e.g. electricity provision is being upgraded or moved underground, typically in western Kesgrave, where lighting is still in the ownership of the Town Council, we will consider funding additional street lights to bring lighting levels up to modern standards and/or upgrade the lights to LED and install remote control units and additionally attempt to transfer ownership to Suffolk County Council.

Action taken: By "piggybacking" on Suffolk County Council's project to change all its street lighting to LED, the Town Council had their owned streetlights also upgraded to LED and connected to the control system which enables the lighting to follow the same lighting pattern as SCC (off at 11.30pm on at 6am). This has reduced the significant capital expenditure we would otherwise have had to pay by £70,000. It will also reduce our power consumption and has maintained or bettered the lighting levels in the associated areas.

- k) We will organise a project to have street signs cleaned and tidied up where sub-standard.

Action taken: Members of the Town Council's Estate Operatives Team have had training to enable them to safely carry out this type of work which will be scheduled during 2023.

- l) We will investigate the options for providing improved and greener community transport alternatives covering e.g. buses, taxis and volunteer/community transport schemes.

Action taken: We have met with 'Communities Together East Anglia' to discuss options and our specific needs and we will keep these under review.

- m) We will consider the provision of more bus and cycle shelters where practical and sufficient use can justify their provision.

Not yet actioned. However, funds are being put aside over time so we can consider this in future.

- n) We will monitor and support initiatives that improve parking, especially around our schools, and that help minimise parking on pavements and grass verges. This will include consideration of employing a parking warden if justified.

Action taken: We have had a meeting, on site at Heath School, with Suffolk County Council representatives and our District and County Councillors to observe the parking and speeding issues at peak school times. We are awaiting a report from SCC on practical solutions that can be implemented.

We have engaged with our neighbouring Community Speed Watch Team who have carried out speed watch along Bell Lane near to Heath Primary School. We will continue to work with them and looking for volunteers to have our own Community Speed Watch members to carry out speed checks in the Town. We are also working with Community Speed Watch to identify locations for Speed Indicator Devices (SID's), with a view to purchasing one or two to site and be managed in the Town.

We Are continuing to work with East Suffolk, Police/Police Community Support Officer (PCSO), schools and our County and District Cllrs to address parking issues in and around all our schools. This includes PCSO and ESC Parking Enforcement visiting all of our schools on several occasions to provide warning notices and discuss parking issues. The schools are also being encouraged to engage their pupils in speed and parking initiatives as well as sending out and displaying notices for parents. Some road markings and signage in and around the schools are not sufficient / legally enforceable and we are working with partners to address these issues.

Youth Provision

- o) We envisage maintaining the current Youth Provision arrangements via 4YP throughout the plan period and additionally we will investigate other provision where it enhances youth provision (eg outreach workers, internet café etc).

Action taken: The provision of the 'Hang Out' run by 4YP at the Millennium Jubilee Hall has been well maintained and numbers attending have been consistently very good.

We now have a Youth Outreach service, run by 4YP, where two youth workers are out once a week in the evening engaging with our young people. They provide valuable support and feedback for the young people. The youth workers are also guided by issues fed through by the Council office and the Police.

We have in partnership with East Suffolk Council and District/County Councillor, launched a youth drop-in café, once a week, run by 4YP called 'The Spot', held at Kesgrave War Memorial Community Centre. It is in the early stages, but it is hoped will establish itself during 2023.

- p) We will consider the provision of more teenage shelters.

Not yet actioned.

Conservation and the Environment

- q) We will create a Tree and Wildlife Conservation strategy to drive our conservation projects along with creating a maintenance schedule for our public open spaces including considering taking on responsibilities currently carried out by others on Council's behalf.

Action taken: We have introduced an outline strategy to improve certain areas and to work with East Suffolk Council and Norse to improve the level of service and the nature of the services we can call on. Specific elements that have been improved so far are:

- *Sections of Pilborough's Walk hedge have been improved with ivy removed, sensitive pruning and some planting.*
- *A project to enhance Cedarwood Walk has been received from a resident and has been carried out in partnership with Council.*
- *Jolly's Pightle has been sympathetically cut and grass raked off. It is hoped this will allow the wildflowers and grasses to re-establish themselves.*
- *The centre feature of Pergola Piece has been enhanced – the centre circle has been planted, the hedges cut down to improve visibility and an extra entry created.*

We are now looking at distributing bird boxes across our public open spaces.

Community Services and Support

- r) We will consider extending the provision of the resident's helpline established during the pandemic emergency.

Action taken: The Council office is a central point of contact for our residents, where we support and 'signpost' them with any matters / issues they may have (via face to face, phone or email). We also write periodically to more vulnerable residents to make them aware of events they can attend and to state we are still there to help if required.

- s) We will support Suffolk County Council (SCC) in its lease review of the provision of Library services within Kesgrave including its accommodation restrictions.

Action taken: We continue to work with the area of Suffolk County Council that oversees library development with a view in the medium-long term to expanding the limited space available for the many wonderful community projects undertaken by library management and its team of volunteers.

- t) We envisage maintaining the current Community Policing arrangements for the shared Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) throughout the plan period. We will also continue to pursue extending the standard hours of the contract into the evenings beyond 6pm to provide a service that fully suites local circumstances.

Action taken: Our partner Rushmere St Andrew Parish Council decided they no longer wished to continue to partnership fund a PCSO from April 2023. This decision triggered a review by us with Suffolk Police. We investigated the options of working with other parishes but without success. Council debated and concluded unanimously that funding the whole cost of a full time PCSO would not be value for money. Therefore, the contract will terminate on 31 March 2023.

The Council office has established a good working relationship with our Police Community Engagement Officer and will continue to work with them in engaging with our community by attending local schools, Town events, community groups.

- u) We will consider supporting and funding other Kesgrave organisations in providing facilities of benefit to the residents of Kesgrave, e.g. a community café.

Action taken: Small grants have been provided to organisations based in or supporting Kesgrave residents to help them continue. In particular, the Kesgrave Cadets now have storage facilities and access to office space at the Millennium Jubilee Hall. Further proposals will be considered as and when they are brought forward.

(new) Community Events

- v) We will continue to organise key community events each year and look to make improvements to each wherever possible and affordable.

Action taken:

- *The Family Funday in July was reinstated in 2021 with a large resident attendance and great appreciation for the provision of most entertainment facilities at no charge to them on the day. In 2022, the provision was enhanced further and this event has become a symbol of the community's positive response in the post-pandemic era.*
- *Other annual events in our calendar continue to be organised and where feasible enhanced: Christmas Lights Switch, Fireworks Display, Remembrance Service & Lighting of the Beacon, Santa's Grotto & Ice Skating, Tree of Reflection.*
- *We have established a partnership with Sport, Amenities, Recreation in Kesgrave (the SPARK charity) which provides a 50% contribution to the cost of running certain events and also toward other recreational and sporting needs especially play area facilities around town.*

3 Finance & Governance (F&G)

The role of the F&G committee is to regulate, set plans, manage and control Council's finances, resources and HR/staffing. This includes recommending to Council for approval an annual budget and precept in accordance with our Financial Regulations. F&G also oversees the running of our operations through the Officers and staff.

- a) We will introduce a policy for land acquisition and adoption and pursue all feasible opportunities to bring strategically important land in town under Council control and provide additional facilities of benefit e.g. cemetery extensions and allotments.

Action taken: We have implemented a policy for land acquisition and adoption. Certain initiatives are underway which we hope to report on positively in 2023.

- b) We will consolidate the good intentions expressed in our neighbourhood plan on environmental matters with the introduction of an appropriate policy which will set out our internal and wider community commitments and ambitions, including the adoption of solar panels, wind generators, heat pumps, insulation and improved air quality. Continue to engage with and support the ongoing Suffolk Climate Change initiatives and projects. Initially this will be the form of an engagement plan and short survey with our residents, after this we will strive to focus on key areas where we can make a meaningful difference.

In 2021 we engaged with Groundwork East and as a result:

- *created a climate change website to promote to residents what they can do to reduce their environmental impact: <https://www.kesgrave.org.uk/climatechange/>*
- *through our schools, we sent out leaflets to pupils providing simple advice on things they could do; and*
- *created a community online survey to obtain feedback on the current status of homes in terms of carbon footprint and encouraging improvement. This was followed up by a second survey to measure progress.*

In 2022 we made significant investments to reduce our power consumption and carbon footprint:

- *added solar panels to the Town Council office;*
- *significantly increased the solar panels on our Millennium Jubilee Hall (MJH);*
- *upgraded all our lighting to LED in the Council office and MJH;*
- *upgraded our streetlights to LED and arranged for them to be switched off over night; and*
- *upgraded the lights to LED at the multi-use games area at Cedarwood Green.*

- c) We will review and update all other Council policies ensuring compliance with any relevant legislation or recommended best practice; and establish a timetable to ensure all documents are reviewed as designated during the plan period.

Action taken: Completed in full.

- d) We will document an Emergency Plan to bring into action in the event of a serious interruption to Council's operations with a view to ensuring the speediest possible resumption of our services to residents.

Not yet actioned.

- e) We will continue to maintain our Council website and explore opportunities to be more engaged on social media channels.

Action taken: Website maintained with some engagement for our events via social media.

- f) We will investigate enhancing the information and facilities on Council's website and consider the provision of a printed Town Guide or Magazine to allow us to cover all resident demographics and audiences.

Not yet actioned.

- g) We will investigate removing the warding in Kesgrave and reducing the number of councillors from 16 to 14 in time for the 2023 Town Council Election.

Action taken: Following a consultation by East Suffolk Council (ESC), with effect from the elections on 4 May 2023, the number of council seats will be 14 (reduced from 16). There will be 7 in each ward (East and West). Due to the ongoing Boundary Commission County Council Electoral Review, ESC cannot consider our request for the wards to be amalgamated.

4 Planning & Development (P&D)

The role of the P&D committee is the provision of certain services related to planning applications and consultations where Council's role is to respond on behalf of our residents. This is either (mostly) to support cases that accord with planning policies (including those in the neighbourhood plan) or to object to those considered to be non-compliant.

In the last year the committee, which meets fortnightly, has reviewed around 100 resident and business planning applications and supported 95% of them. It has also reviewed and responded to over 20 requests for consultation from the Suffolk County Council Bus Service Improvement Plan to proposed changes in the National Planning System.

Throughout 2022, the Local Planning Authority, East Suffolk Council (ESC) which ultimately grants permissions, has referenced the policies in our neighbourhood plan in eleven cases. The office continues to play an important liaison role with the planning department at ESC to ensure the right balance is achieved between representing individual applicant interests and those of the neighbourhood that may be affected.

P&D in conjunction with the office also monitors initiatives to improve road safety and reduce speeding around Kesgrave especially around our schools and significant roads eg Dobbs Lane, Bell Lane, Ropes Drive and Penzance Road. This includes the provision of 'road crossings' across the main road (to access All Saints cemetery) and elsewhere. Junction improvements in particular at the Bell Lane/Foxhall Road and Doctor Watsons Lane/Main Road, along with 20mph speed limits and other safety measures/improvements around our schools.

Action taken: A number of initiatives have been actioned and carried out on this:

- We have been working with Rushmere St Andrew's Community Speed Watch to undertake speed checks in Kesgrave. The long-term aim is to have our own Kesgrave Community Speed Watch volunteers.*
- We have been discussing options that will help improve safety around Heath School and reduce traffic to the "20's Plenty" speed limit at school times. We are looking into providing more visible signage including the use of Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs).*
- In conjunction with East Suffolk Council, we have agreed to provide hi-vis jackets to children at our local schools. These will be on loan and passed on to other pupils when they leave the school.*
- We are reviewing the provision of potentially six SID locations around town to help highlight in real time to drivers their speed and secondly to gather statistics that will support further road safety improvements.*
- Following our strong and lengthy lobbying, the Foxhall Road/Bell Lane junction has been enhanced to provide a much greater visibility splay. This should help reduce the number and accidents and incidents that happen at this junction.*
- We are working with our County Councillor to have the verges cut back on the footpath leading to the bus stop on Main Road, opposite Cambridge Road.*

5 Operations

- a) Significant recent progress has been made in modernising and professionalising the estates operation including the provision of vehicular transport eliminating the risks associated with employee use of their own transport. We will investigate options to further enhance our operations including the use of electric vehicles, trailers and ride-on mowers.

Action taken: We have attended an electric vehicle day where various presentations and stands were on display on the current status of electric vehicles and charging. We will investigate the options further over the next year. Additional funds are also being put away yearly to build up a fund to purchase a replacement electric van.

- b) The administration of meetings was successfully adapted during the pandemic to digital means under applicable government restrictions. Subject to government legislation permitting its continuation it is our aim to facilitate hybrid meeting options (mixed in-person and digital attendance) as a means of encouraging resident participation and providing a degree of flexibility to assist with Councillor and Officer attendance.

Action taken: Unfortunately, this could not be progressed as the Government was unable to make parliamentary time to consider extending the temporary dispensation.

- c) Improvements were also made to the security and efficiency of our IT services with the distribution of Council email addresses to all Councillors and staff, together with the introduction of password control over access to digitally stored documentation. We will consolidate this progress with the introduction of an Email, Internet etc Policy and Procedure.

Action taken: An Email, Internet etc Policy and Procedure has been adopted.

- d) We will review the staff handbook in conjunction with our employment contracts to ensure compliance with Employment Law and other relevant regulations.

Review of handbook and appraisals planned for Feb/Mar 2023.

We will establish a list of all work carried out by the office ie inspections, surveys, safety checks etc.

Action Taken: full review carried out with a clear 'Risk Assessment' register, recording inspections, checks, surveys for all Play Areas, Council owned public spaces and buildings, including tree surveys and vehicle.

- e) We will offer a work experience placement to Kesgrave High School.

Not yet actioned.

- f) The current offices are restricted in relation to the space ideally required for efficient operation and community engagement, therefore action will be taken during the plan period to investigate any viable opportunities for expansion.

Not yet actioned.

- g) We will establish a project to computerise the Lawn Cemetery records.

Action taken: Work is almost complete on a spreadsheet to store this information.

- h) Consider employing another member of staff, or expanding the role of existing members of staff, to improve our communications and engagement with the residents of Kesgrave regarding events, environmental and conservation initiatives

etc, through the enhanced use of our website, news articles and social media platforms.

Not yet actioned.

6 Additional Actions

A plan is only as plan or the day it is written, and things do come along (like the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis or the Ukrainian appeal) that means resources have to be diverted to matters of even greater importance to residents, meaning that implementing our plans may have to be delayed.

The items below describe the developments over the past year that fall into this category:

- *We are monitoring the number and type of events we organise and enhance provision where a need (mental health, loneliness etc) is identified.*
- *We have run more frequent T-dances for seniors during 2022 and intend to maintain this for 2023.*