

District councillor's report, July 2014

1. Local employment

2 Sisters Food Group, having closed its plant at Haughley Park in December with the loss of 450 jobs, is re-establishing a factory on part of the site, which will create 200 new jobs.

Icheban, the Earl Stonham-based sushi producer (now locally owned) has taken on 140 new staff since Christmas, many from Haughley, and is investing heavily in the factory with the support of a £185,000 grant via the LEP.

The unemployment rate in Mid Suffolk District is down to 1%, compared with 3.1% in Ipswich and 1.3% in Babergh. Vacancy rate for shops in Stowmarket town centre is down to 5% compared with the national average of 10.6% (and 8.9% for the East of England).

2. Grant schemes

A variety of grants towards village halls and sports facilities are being processed, most notable being Stradbroke's project to co-locate the library, post office and a community café (helped by an MSDC grant of £17k). In addition, MENTA '@the hub' on the recreation ground in Stowmarket was launched on June 14 to help young people gain experience and work opportunities; and the Harleston Information Plus Job Club, although located outside our district, is the centre that Mid Suffolk residents from the north of the district use, and it will also provide an outreach service in Debenham.

3. Lights Out

An invitation to everyone in the country to turn off their lights from 10pm to 11pm on August 4, but leaving on a single light or candle for this shared moment of reflection to mark the hour that Britain entered the First World War on 4 August 1914. Councils are being asked to turn off lights on as many local and civic buildings.

4. Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013

The Council team, at very short notice, has taken over the function of supervising the licensing of scrap metal dealers from Central Government, including environmental enforcement and tackling metal theft.

5. Energy from Waste site, Great Blakenham

Both Mid Suffolk and Babergh started tipping their residual waste into the new Energy from Waste (EfW) plant on June 10, and the first waste was due to be burned in mid-June. Over the coming weeks the amount of waste coming to the site will gradually increase, before (it is expected) reaching full capacity by the end of July. Following the initial commissioning period it is hoped that all residual waste from Mid Suffolk and Babergh will be disposed of at the plant, without the need to resort to landfill.

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