**COP 27, Egypt and Us.**

The COP27 conference was held in a far away country, Egypt, and we were kept up to date by numerous TV programmes. But what are we doing here, in this part of Suffolk?

As a Councillor on East Suffolk Council I can tell you what we have been doing and I know other Councils in Suffolk have been engaged in a similar exercise.

The environment is one of the principle foundations of the East Suffolk Council’s first administration. Cllr James Mallinder was given the task of devising and developing a meaningful environment policy. His vision has been important across the last four years, making sure environmental considerations are an integral part of the formation and delivery of policy across East Suffolk.

East Suffolk council, declared a climate emergency as soon as possible. We know we needed to lead by actions not just words, to question the status quo and to make bold changes in how the council functions. The environment is not just about the trees we see outside – it is also about jobs, employment, houses, consumption and waste. So, ESC’s environmental policy works alongside business, not acting as a separate pressure.

Development can be positive if it uses fewer resources more efficiently and leaves a smaller carbon footprint. It is not a binary relationship. We do not choose a tree over a house; instead, they must, and should, work together. It is crucial in local government that themes and visions thread across all divisions. The environment should not be locked in a silo, so we are embedding environmental considerations in all policy formation and council decisions.

We need to move away from talking about just the effects of the more environmentally friendly ways of doing things, such as increasing recycling or driving an electric car. We also need to look at how we can change long-term behaviour, such as buying and wasting less in the first place, or adopting more sustainable forms of travel – such as cycling or walking – where possible. The key is to encourage residents to think about alternative ways of behaviour, and at East Suffolk we lead by example. Our successful ‘pardon the weeds we are feeding the bees’ campaign and a total review of our fleet of vehicles (hydrotreated vegetable oil used as fuel for our refuse trucks and introduction of electric cars) to name two of our important policies.

All District councils, in particular, have an important role to play in leading by example and empowering local communities to do something. Here at East Suffolk, we have placed the environment at the heart its function. No matter how small the changes in our behaviour, any should be celebrated. It’s these small changes that will make a real and lasting difference over time.

Colin Hedgley, Chairman.

District Councillor for Carlford Ward.