

Castle Point Together

Inside your
autumn 2026
issue...

New Sensory
Garden

Investment in
playgrounds

Solby House
update

Major investment
in CCTV

Leisure facilities get a boost
New features for all the family

Changes to waste and recycling
Look out for the new blue recycling bags



Welcome to Castle Point Together

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Cover image:
Lucy Watts Memorial
Playground.



Investing in the facilities and services that matter most to residents

There's plenty happening across Castle Point and this edition gives a flavour of some of the work taking place to improve local facilities and support residents.

You'll read about improvements to local play areas, helping create modern and inclusive spaces for children and families to enjoy, alongside expanded CCTV coverage to help keep our communities safe. We also look at the continued success of our Choose Local campaign, which encourages residents to support the businesses that help our town



centres and local economy thrive.

Looking after our environment remains a priority. This issue also includes information about changes to waste and recycling services, helping us prepare for the future and make recycling easier for residents.

Together, these projects show how we are investing in the facilities and services that matter most to residents and helping make Castle Point an even better place to live.

I hope you enjoy reading this latest edition.

Cllr Dave Blackwell – Leader

Supporting healthier, safer and more connected communities

This edition highlights some of the many ways we are working with residents, local groups and partner organisations to support healthier, safer and more connected communities.

Inside, you'll find an update on plans for Solby House, where proposals are being developed to create a welcoming new community space at the heart of John Burrows Park. We also share news about activities and programmes designed to help more people get active and support their health and wellbeing.



You'll also find an update on the work taking place at Canvey Lake and details of a new Sensory Garden at Richmond Park, both of which will help improve the outdoor spaces that residents value so highly.

You'll also find out more about the role of the Mayor and the important work she carries out on behalf of communities across Castle Point.

If you would like to share your views on local issues, speak to your local councillors. See page eight for details of how to find and contact them.

Cllr Warren Gibson – Deputy Leader

Meet the Mayor – Cllr Kate Knott

Tell us a little about yourself

I was born in Rochford in 1963 and lived and worked in Leigh-on-Sea until 26 years ago, when my husband John and I moved to Daws Heath, Hadleigh, with our two children.

Since then, we've never looked back. Castle Point is a wonderful place to live, with a strong community spirit, beautiful open spaces and fantastic local businesses.

For much of my career, I managed an early years setting, supporting children and their families. Helping young children reach their full potential before starting school was my passion, and I remain committed to helping children and young people thrive.

I also have a lifelong interest in local history, particularly my family's connections to Hadleigh. As a member of the Hadleigh and Thundersley Community Archive Group, I've enjoyed learning more about our area's rich heritage.

“Castle Point is a wonderful place to live, with a strong community spirit, beautiful open spaces and fantastic local businesses.”

What inspired you to become involved in local government?

In 2024, I joined the People's Independent Party because I wanted to help protect the Borough's Green Belt for future generations and support local residents wherever I could.

Later that year, I was elected to represent Hadleigh St James Ward, which was both a humbling and rewarding

experience. Being elected Mayor in May this year was an incredible honour and something I never imagined I would have the privilege to do.

For residents who may not know, what does the Mayor's role involve?

As Mayor, I represent the Borough at civic, charity and community events across Castle Point and beyond. One of the most rewarding parts of the role is meeting the volunteers, organisations and community groups who work tirelessly to improve people's lives.

There have already been many highlights. One that stands out was officially opening the Lucy Watts fully inclusive playground in South Benfleet. Seeing children rush into the playground after the ribbon was cut was a truly special moment and a memory I will treasure.



What community issues are you particularly passionate about?

Children and young people remain especially close to my heart, which is why I am proud to support two charities during my year as Mayor: Send The Right Message (STRM) and the For Isla Foundation.

Fundraising for these charities

will be a key focus throughout my year in office, and I hope residents will join me in supporting their important work.

As Mayor, I look forward to meeting more residents, community groups, businesses and charities, celebrating their achievements and helping strengthen the connections that make Castle Point such a special place to live.



Artist's impression of Richmond Park Sensory Garden

New Sensory Garden coming to Richmond Park

A new Sensory Garden is set to be created in Richmond Park, providing a welcoming space where residents of all ages and abilities can relax, connect with nature and support their wellbeing.

The project is being delivered by Castle Point Borough Council in partnership with Trust Links and supported by a £5,000 sponsorship from Anglian Water.

The garden will feature wheelchair-friendly pathways, raised planting beds, seating areas and a gazebo, alongside colourful seasonal planting, fragrant flowers, herbs and fruit trees. A tranquil pond and will create a focal point for reflection and relaxation. Together, these features will create a peaceful environment for relaxation, reflection and mindfulness.

Children, families and community groups will also

be able to explore and learn more about nature through hands-on experiences, creating opportunities for learning as well as recreation.

Beautiful Sakura Cherry Trees will form a leafy route leading to the garden, while additional trees within the space will provide a stunning display of blossom each spring, adding colour and seasonal interest for visitors to enjoy.

The Sensory Garden will also support local wildlife. Carefully chosen plants will help attract pollinators, birds and other species, enhancing biodiversity and creating a thriving natural environment within the park.



Investment in play: new playgrounds take shape

Families across Castle Point are already enjoying the benefits of the Council's £1 million investment in local parks and play areas. The programme is delivering upgraded play equipment and improving outdoor facilities for residents across the Borough.

The new castle-themed play area at Hadleigh Memorial Park is now open and proving popular with local families and the new play area at Richmond Park features an exciting ship-themed play structure at its centre. The Borough's first fully accessible and inclusive playground has officially opened at South Benfleet Playing Fields. Now known as the Lucy Watts Memorial Playground, in honour of local disability rights advocate Lucy Watts MBE, it has been designed to ensure children of all abilities can play together

and enjoy a fun, welcoming environment.

The improvements don't stop there. Plans for new Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) are progressing well, helping to create even more opportunities for sport, recreation and active play across the Borough.

Together, these projects will create high-quality facilities for families to enjoy for years to come.





Choose Local and support local business

Whether you're looking for somewhere new to eat, a trusted local tradesperson or a great community event, **Choose Local Castle Point** helps you discover what's on your doorstep.

Castle Point is home to fantastic independent shops, cafés, restaurants, service providers, trades, markets and events. Choose Local Castle Point makes it easy to find local businesses, take advantage of special offers and support the local economy.

For businesses

If you run a business in Castle Point, joining the Choose Local business directory is completely free. More than 200 businesses have already signed up to showcase their products and services, promote special offers and connect with local customers.

Businesses can also join the Choose Local loyalty scheme, giving residents even more reasons to shop locally and

support independent businesses.

For residents

Discover the best of Castle Point by visiting the Choose Local website. Browse local businesses, explore upcoming events and enjoy exclusive offers from participating organisations.

Look out for the Choose Local 'We're In' badge online, on social media and in shop windows to spot businesses offering special deals and rewards.

Get involved today

Visit the Choose Local website www.chooselocalcp.co.uk to:

- Find local businesses and services
- Explore events taking place across the borough
- Register your business on the directory

Follow Choose Local Castle Point

- Facebook: Choose Local Castle Point
- Instagram: @chooselocalcastlepoint



Local businesses in Hadleigh

Major CCTV investment to enhance community safety

Residents will soon benefit from a significant upgrade to the Borough's CCTV network, with new cameras set to be installed as part of a major investment in community safety.

The £1 million project is being funded through the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Safer Streets Fund. It will help prevent and detect crime and antisocial behaviour, while also providing greater reassurance to residents, visitors and businesses.

Locations for the cameras have been carefully selected using police crime and antisocial behaviour data, advice from CCTV specialists and feedback from a local member panel. This approach ensures the new system is targeted at areas where it can have the greatest positive impact on community safety.

The upgraded network will support Essex Police and the Council in tackling crime and antisocial behaviour by

helping to support incident investigations and deter offending. It will also contribute to creating safer, more welcoming public spaces for everyone who lives, works or visits Castle Point.

Once installed, the cameras will be monitored from the Southend CCTV Monitoring Centre, which operates in partnership with Southend City Council. This arrangement will provide professional monitoring.

Installation work is expected to begin this autumn and will be delivered in phases. The project is currently scheduled for completion by the end of February 2027.

This significant investment demonstrates the Council's and the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's ongoing commitment to working with partners to improve safety, reduce crime and antisocial behaviour and help residents feel more confident in their communities.





Progress continues at Canvey Lake

Work on a long-term plan to improve and protect Canvey Lake is continuing.

Monitoring and testing have taken place throughout the year to help build a clear picture of the Lake's condition and support future plans. Good progress has been made, but the long period of hot, dry weather this summer created challenges. Low rainfall and high temperatures affected water quality and made conditions more difficult than expected.

Surveys of water quality and silt levels have been completed, providing important information to help shape the proposed dredging programme later this year.

The Council has applied to the Environment Agency for the permits needed for the work and to Essex Highways for a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO), which may be needed to help manage the

Public Right of Way network while the work takes place.

Before dredging begins, the Council will hold drop-in sessions for residents who may be affected. These sessions will give people the chance to learn more about the project and ask questions.

The Council remains committed to improving and protecting Canvey Lake for residents, visitors and local wildlife.

For more information visit www.castlepoint.gov.uk/w/canveylake



Leisure facilities get a boost

Residents across Castle Point can look forward to even more opportunities to get active and have fun, with investment in new leisure facilities and attractions across the Castle Point Active venues.

New Disc Golf course opens at Waterside Farm

A brand-new Disc Golf course has officially opened at Waterside Farm on Canvey Island, offering residents a free and accessible way to enjoy the outdoors.

Disc Golf is played in a similar way to traditional golf, but instead of clubs and balls, players throw a flying disc towards a target basket. The aim is to complete each hole in as few throws as possible.

The course is suitable for all ages and abilities. It is completely free to use, with no booking, membership or previous experience required. Discs can be borrowed from reception at Waterside Farm Leisure Centre.

Bouncy castles at The Paddocks

Families on Canvey Island can also enjoy new jungle-themed bouncy castles at The Paddocks Community Centre.



The two new inflatable attractions include a bounce-and-slide unit and an obstacle course. As well as regular drop-in bounce sessions, the inflatables are also available to hire for children's birthday parties at weekends.



Pool inflatable for Runnymede

Meanwhile, Runnymede Leisure Centre is set to welcome a large inflatable obstacle course in its main swimming pool this autumn.

The new attraction will offer dedicated weekend sessions and additional sessions during school holidays, creating an exciting new experience for swimmers of all ages, particularly families and younger visitors.

For more information visit www.castlepointactive.co.uk





Important changes to recycling collections starting this autumn

Castle Point Borough Council is making changes to household recycling collections as part of the Government's new national recycling requirements.

To meet the new requirements known as the Simpler Recycling Requirements, we are introducing a **separate collection** service for paper and card.



What is changing?

At present, residents place all recycling, except glass, into pink sacks provided free of charge by the Council.

Under the new system:

- pink sacks will be used for all recyclable materials except paper and card. They will also be expanded to accept soft plastics and plastic film, helping residents recycle even more of their household waste.
- blue sacks will be introduced specifically for paper and card.

We will continue to provide recycling sacks free of charge, with deliveries being made directly to residents' homes before the new service begins.

When will the changes happen?

The new service will be introduced in two phases across the Borough:

Phase one

- starts: **2 October 2026**
- applies to: properties that currently receive collections on a Friday

Phase two

- starts: **2 November 2026**
- applies to: properties that currently receive collections on **Monday to Thursday**

Residents will receive their new blue sacks up to one month before the changes take effect in their area, together with information explaining how to use the new service.

Why are the changes being made?

Separating paper and card from other recyclable materials improves the quality of recycling collected and allows more materials to be successfully processed and reused. The addition of soft plastics and plastic film to pink sack collections will also give residents more opportunities to recycle items that are often placed in general waste.

The changes form part of the Council's ongoing commitment to improving recycling services, reducing waste and helping create a cleaner, more sustainable Borough.

Further information, including guidance on what can be placed in each sack, will be provided to residents ahead of the rollout.

For more information visit www.castlepoint.gov.uk/recycling-changes

Solby House plans continue to take shape

Exciting plans for the future of historic Solby House are progressing well, with the building set to become a welcoming space at the heart of John Burrows Park.

Current proposals include a new café, flexible function and meeting spaces, full accessibility to both floors, a Changing Places facility and public toilets.

The restoration will be carried out sensitively to respect the building's historic character while creating a modern space that can host local groups, activities and community events.

Once complete, Solby House is expected to provide a space for residents to meet, connect and take part in a wide range of local activities.

The project team is continuing to develop the final design. Subject to the approval of the plans, the aim is to open the restored building in late summer 2027.



Concerned about a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)?

Castle Point Borough Council has a new Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Policy. An HMO is usually a property where three or more people from different households share facilities such as a kitchen or bathroom.

HMOs make up only a very small number of homes in the Borough but it is important that they are safe, well managed and fit for people to live in. The new Policy explains the standards that landlords must meet and how the Council checks that these properties are being run properly.

The Policy covers things such as fire safety, property maintenance, rubbish and recycling and making sure landlords manage their properties responsibly.

If you are worried that a property may be an unlicensed HMO, or you have concerns about the condition of a shared rented house, you can report it to the Council. Every report is looked at by the Environmental Health team.

To view the Policy visit:

www.castlepoint.gov.uk and search Houses in Multiple Occupation Policy.

Report a suspected HMO online at:

www.castlepoint.gov.uk/report-an-hmo-contact-form

Need to contact your local councillor?

Your local councillors are elected to represent the people who live in their ward. They can help with a wide range of local issues.

If you have a question, concern or suggestion about your area, getting in touch with your councillor is often a good place to start. They can listen to your views, provide advice and, where appropriate, raise issues on your behalf with the Council.

Not sure who your councillor is? It's easy to find out online. Simply enter your postcode to see which councillors represent your area and how to contact them.

Find your local councillor at: www.castlepoint.gov.uk/councillors