



STEPHEN JAVES

Chair, Lowestoft Place Board

Stephen was appointed Chair of the Place Board in 2020 and reappointed for a further term in 2025.

Stephen served as Chief Executive of Orwell Housing Group for 27 years until 2018, setting strategy, policy, and the tone of the organisation, while focussing on delivering solutions to care for people in an increasingly challenging world, particularly supporting an ageing population. Under his leadership, Orwell grew from a turnover of £750,000 to £70m, establishing a thriving care division for older people, young people, and individuals with learning difficulties, while expanding development services and creating a subsidiary to deliver homes for sale.

In 2007, Stephen founded Eastern Procurement Limited, a specialist procurement company for large-scale maintenance contracts.

Since retiring, he has continued to provide business advice and coaching to organisations in law, finance, and construction, and serves as a Board Member of the James Paget University Hospital.

Stephen brings extensive leadership experience, strategic insight, commercial acumen, and board-level expertise, with a lifelong commitment to guiding organisations through growth, driving innovation, and delivering meaningful community impact.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

James Paget University Hospital: Non-Executive Director and Deputy Chair



EMMA RATZER, MBE

CEO, Access Community Trust
Deputy Chair, Lowestoft Place Board

Emma is an award-winning social entrepreneur with over seventeen years of experience growing her organisation from a small local charity supporting the homeless to a Sunday Times Top 100 Employer with over 150 staff. The team delivers vital services across Health and Wellbeing, Education, Community Social Enterprises and Supported Accommodation.

With extensive expertise in Mental Health and Strategic Business Management, she was awarded an MBE in 2019 for services to Suffolk and named Third Sector's CEO of the Year in 2020, recognised for her leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic and initiatives such as PINK Orange.

As the Place Board Deputy Chair, Emma offers deep knowledge of community needs, mental health and social enterprise. Her strategic leadership and experience in delivering high-impact partnerships ensure the Board's regeneration plans are inclusive, sustainable and deliver real results for Lowestoft's residents. She is committed to reducing social isolation, improving wellbeing, and creating long-term opportunities that strengthen the local economy and community resilience.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Chief Executive Officer of Access Community Trust
Norfolk and Waveney ICB, VCSE Board member



PAUL PADDA

Principal and CEO East Coast College

Paul has been part of East Coast College (formerly Great Yarmouth College) since 2013, joining initially as Programme Manager for mathematics and English, with additional responsibilities for adult, community, and learning support. He later became Deputy Principal for Curriculum, Quality and Learner Experience before being appointed Principal and CEO.

With a career in further education spanning a range of curriculum management roles, Paul has led initiatives that have consistently improved teaching standards, learner outcomes, and community engagement. His leadership contributed to the college achieving an Ofsted 'Good' rating in 2020.

Paul holds a Law degree and a MSc in Computer Science, combining strategic insight with a commitment to skills development and opportunity for all.

As a member of the Lowestoft Place Board, Paul brings deep knowledge of local education and skills needs, strong connections with employers and community groups, and a commitment to aligning training opportunities with the town's economic growth and regeneration ambitions.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Principal and CEO East Coast College, April 2024– current.



GENEVIEVE CHRISTIE

CEO, First Light Festival CIC

Genevieve Christie was a founder director of First Light Festival CIC before becoming CEO in 2022, and started working in Lowestoft in 2015 developing cultural and cultural education projects including the Great Places Making Waves project.

Genevieve worked in television production for more than 20 years, training at the BBC, then working at London Weekend Television and independents as a producer on a raft of factual programmes before co-forming independent production company Carey St Productions. She has commissioned many co-productions between UK and international broadcasters.

Genevieve has a keen interest in education and served as chair of trustees of a single academy trust and actively works with the Lowestoft Cultural Education Partnership. She is a trustee of Framlingham Arts Charity and a member of the Advisory Group for a new ceramics creative centre on the waterfront in Ipswich.

As CEO of First Light Festival, Genevieve brings to the Place Board a strong commitment to cultural regeneration and community-led placemaking. Her leadership in delivering major public events and creative programmes ensures the arts play a central role in shaping Lowestoft's identity and future.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

CEO First Light Festival CIC

Trustee, FlipSide Literary Charity

Member, University of East Anglia AHRC IAA Delivery Board

Anglia Ruskin University Creative Media Skill Advisory Panel

Trustee, Framlingham Arts

Member, Thomas Mills High School Academy Trust

Member, Norfolk and Suffolk Culture Board



JESS ASATO, MP

Member of Parliament for Lowestoft

Jess Asato is the Member of Parliament for Lowestoft, elected in 2024, and is the Violence Against Women and Girls Advisor to the Department of Health and Social Care.

Prior to being elected, Jess was the Head of Policy and Public Affairs at the children's charity Barnardo's, worked for the domestic abuse charity SafeLives, and was a political advisor to Tessa Jowell.

As a Member of Parliament, Jess brings to the Place Board valuable insight into governmental processes, strong policy expertise, and the ability to advocate for investment and support at the national level, helping to ensure that Lowestoft's priorities are heard and addressed in central government.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Member of the Labour Party

Trustee, Dartmouth Trust

Director, The Social Market Foundation (SMF)

For further information visit:

members.parliament.uk/member/5156/registeredinterests



COUNCILLOR CAROLINE TOPPING

Leader, East Suffolk Council

Caroline leads an Administration formed of the Green Party, Liberal Democrats and Independent members of the authority. She is a District Councillor for Beccles and Worlingham and a County Councillor for Beccles.

Caroline is an experienced Office and Business Manager, with skills including event planning, fundraising and volunteer co-ordination. She has a strong interest in building community resilience and is a Bachelor of Science (B.A.Sc.) in Criminal Psychology.

As member of the Lowestoft Place Board, Caroline brings her collaborative leadership style and her commitment to cross-party working, helping to ensure that diverse community voices are heard. Her practical experience in managing projects, fundraising and mobilising volunteers supports the Board's goals of delivering effective, sustainable regeneration. Caroline's focus on community resilience aligns closely with the Board's ambition to create a thriving, inclusive Lowestoft for residents and businesses alike.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor for (and Leader of) East Suffolk Council – 2023 to date

Councillor for Suffolk County Council – 2021 to date

Member of the Waveney Green Party

Member of the Association of Green Councillors

Suffolk Public Sector Leader

Member of the Improvement Board of the Local Government

Association Independent Group

Member of the Suffolk Business Board

Member of the Freeport East Supervisory Board (Substitute)

Green Party Mayoral Candidate for Norfolk and Suffolk



PAUL AGER

Divisonal Port Manager, Associated British Ports

Paul joined ABP in June 2016 having previously spent more than 14 years of leadership experience in Logistics, Supply Chain and the Construction sector, having held various regional operational leadership roles driving cross-functional teams to deliver high levels of customer service across the UK. Being born and bred in Suffolk Paul has a special relationship with the local area, Ipswich and Lowestoft in particular.

In June 2022, it was announced that Paul was joining the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce Board, accompanying his role on the Greater Ipswich Board.

With his role at ABP Ipswich and being on both Chamber Boards, he is looking forward to contributing to the local businesses and organisations in the town.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Paid Consultant role approved in line with policy. Any potential conflicts are declared and managed appropriately.



COUNCILLOR NASIMA BEGUM

Mayor of Lowestoft

Originally from London, Nasima moved to Suffolk with her family 20 years ago. After studying Biomedicine at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, she settled in Lowestoft, and has co-managed a High Street business, Lowestoft Tandoori, with her husband.

She served as a councillor during the inaugural term of Lowestoft Town Council and is pleased to have returned to continue supporting positive change within the community. She values the opportunity to engage directly with residents and assist with their needs, finding fulfilment in making a meaningful difference. Her vision for Lowestoft centres on creating a vibrant and inclusive town for future generations.

As a member of the Place Board, Nasima brings a unique blend of local business insight, financial expertise, and strong community engagement. Her professional and civic experience enables her to represent the interests of residents and businesses alike, while her long-term commitment to the town supports the Board's goal of shaping a prosperous and sustainable future for Lowestoft.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Member of the Labour Party

Business Owner - Lowestoft Tandoori

Managing Director- Ssain Properties Limited

Lowestoft Town Council Councillor, Mayor and Chair of Lowestoft Town Council

Immigration Advisor - GYROS



COUNCILLOR RICHARD SMITH, MVO

Deputy Leader, Suffolk County Council

Richard has served as a county councillor since 2010, undertaking a range of Cabinet roles, including the Finance portfolio from 2015 to 2019. He resumed this portfolio in May 2024 upon becoming Deputy Leader of the Council. He also holds political responsibility for the County Council's strategy on economic development and skills provision in Suffolk, a priority area to which he is strongly committed.

Richard brings extensive experience and knowledge to the Lowestoft Place Board and takes great pride in being born in Lowestoft and maintaining a lifelong connection to the area.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Suffolk County Council

- Cabinet (Vice-Chairman)
- Staff Appointments Committee
- Cabinet Member for Finance, Economic Development and Skills
- Deputy Leader of the Council

Freeport East Board Member

NuLeAF (Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum)

Community Safety Partnership/ Responsible Authorities Group East
Suffolk

County Councils Network

East of England Local Government Association (EELGA)

EELGA Finance Lead Members Network

EELGA Local Government Employers Panel

Local Government Association General Assembly

National Heritage Centre for Horseracing

Suffolk Business Board



MATTHEW WATERS

East Suffolk Forum Chair (Suffolk Chamber of Commerce) and Associate, Lovewell Blake LLP

Matthew Waters is a Chartered Accountant with over 21 years of experience working in East Suffolk. His long-standing involvement in the local business community, including his previous role on the Lowestoft & Waveney Place Board, positions him as a knowledgeable and committed advocate for the region.

In December 2023, he was appointed Chair of the restructured East Suffolk Forum under the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, bringing leadership, financial expertise, and a strong network of local connections to the role.

Beyond his professional contributions, Matthew is actively involved in the local community, particularly in grassroots sport. He serves as Treasurer at Beccles Rugby Club and is a regular supporter of Lowestoft & Yarmouth Rugby Club.

His passion for East Suffolk, both economically and socially, makes him a valuable asset to the Lowestoft Place Board.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None to declare



DANNY STEEL

MD Steel & Co Ltd. Commercial Property Agents and Financial Services

Danny has been a familiar face in Lowestoft's property sector for over 30 years. Before founding Steel & Co in 2016, he ran a successful lettings and financial services business, experience that now underpins his leadership of property valuations, acquisitions, and major development projects. He is known for navigating complex commercial deals with integrity and building lasting relationships with landlords, investors, and developers.

Alongside his business role and being a member of the Place Board, Danny is Chair of Lowestoft Vision, the town's Business Improvement District. He has been instrumental in regeneration projects, including the revitalisation of the historic town centre and leading the campaign to reopen the South Pier in 2015.

On the Place Board, Danny brings commercial insight, strong local knowledge, and a collaborative approach, helping to unite stakeholders and champion projects that support the town's future growth.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Chair, Lowestoft Vision

Vice Chair, Lowestoft and Northern Parishes Community Partnership

Vice Chair, Lowestoft South Pier Trust

Member of the Kittiwake Partnership

Rotarian

Member of the Forward Planning Committee, Lowestoft & Yarmouth
Rugby Club

MD Steel & Co Ltd. Commercial Property Agents and Financial
Services



COUNCILLOR PETER BYATT

Labour District Ward Member and County Councillor for Kirkley & Pakefield

Peter brings decades of experience and a lifelong commitment to serving the Lowestoft community. With over 40 years in education, he has taught across all age ranges in local schools, giving him a deep understanding of the needs of young people and families. He also represented the National Union of Teachers at local and county level, supporting colleagues through complex welfare and disciplinary cases.

Beyond education, Peter spent 10 years as a Special Constable, rising to the rank of Chief Inspector, and another decade with HM Coastguard Search and Rescue as Station Officer, demonstrating exceptional leadership and a strong commitment to public safety.

Today, Peter serves as an East Suffolk District Councillor for Kirkley & Pakefield Ward and a Suffolk County Councillor for Pakefield Division, bringing valuable insight into local governance and community priorities. His involvement in coastal protection and water management boards reflects his passion for safeguarding Lowestoft's future.

Peter's experience across education, emergency services, and local government makes him a trusted voice on the Lowestoft Place Board and a strong advocate for the town's regeneration.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Member of the Labour Party
East Suffolk District Councillor for Kirkley & Pakefield Ward
Suffolk County Councillor for Pakefield Division
Waveney, Lower Yare and Lothingland Water Management Board
East Suffolk Water Management Board
Pakefield Coast Protection Group

The National Education Union (formerly National Union of Teachers)
Spouse: Family Support Practitioner – Suffolk County Council
Beneficial interests (property): Available upon request



CLARE VARELA

Head of People and Culture, Cefas

Clare Varela is Head of People and Culture at Cefas, where she leads the organisation's people strategy, shaping recruitment, induction, training and culture development to ensure Cefas attracts, retains and supports a diverse and committed workforce aligned to its mission in marine and environmental science.

Before joining Cefas, Clare built broad HR experience across both the private and charity sectors, working for Morrisons and Young Lives vs Cancer. Her background spans strategic workforce planning, training and talent development, policy design, pay and reward, and organisational change, giving her a strong foundation for driving modern, inclusive and flexible people practices within a public sector research environment.

Alongside her professional role, Clare is a committed member of her local community. She serves as a councillor on Carlton Colville Town Council, acts as Vice-Chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee, and is a trustee of the local community centre, all undertaken on an unpaid basis.

Clare brings to Cefas a blend of strategic HR leadership, hands-on operational insight and community-driven values, championing workplaces where people feel supported, valued and motivated to deliver excellence. As a member of the Lowestoft Place Board, she contributes a strong people-focused perspective, advocating for inclusive skills, workforce development and community wellbeing to help shape a thriving future for the town.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor for Carlton Colville Town Council

Trustee for Carlton Colville Community Centre.