

Annual District Councillors report to April 2021

Well what a year this has been. Everyone in lock down and different working patterns.

I must begin by thanking the entire Ward of Debenham which includes Ashfield Cum Thorpe, Aspall, Bedingfield, Debenham, Kenton and Winston for their magnificent efforts to support not only their local community but friends and Neighbours. Particular thanks go to all those volunteers, too many to mention, but the Debenham Parish Council who co-ordinated food parcels and set up a support mechanism for all things such as Doctors visits, prescriptions picking up vital medical supplies and so on and of course for the Debenham Leisure Centre to host the inoculation service for not only this community but several surrounding villages not in the Debenham Ward. I also thank our Local Gp's and nurses and staff who did us proud.

It is fair to say the whole County of Suffolk stood shoulder to shoulder and we must thank them for pulling together all the initiatives and of course sending out daily updates.

I will just point out some of the other work which went on in the back ground as well as all the usual services, bin collections and so on.

The Home but not alone phoneline was invaluable and may MSDC officers were diverted to enable to phones to be supported

Babergh and Mid Suffolk were awarded £100,000 government funding to tackle rough sleeping and homelessness. Work continues.

Grants were sought and achieved to support local businesses and much work was done to ensure those entitled were supported

As well as dealing with the Covid fall out business as usual continued with virtual meetings and the planning Committee Development control B was the first on line meeting hosted by myself in the whole of East Anglia.

So much work went on in the background and over many hours that I will just bullet point some of the highlights of the year.

Debenham Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan was highly commended as part of the virtual 2020 Planning Awards

Gateway 14 Plans have been put forward for public consideration. This is landownered by MSDC with the proposal to encourage businesses and industry to look to utilise this land just off A 14 by Tescos to create jobs.

Many applications for new homes in Mid Suffolk have been given permissions and some included new schools and extensions to Health Centres for Example Woolpit Health Centre now has room to accommodate improvements. MSDC published a 7.67 five year housing land supply

A lot of work was undertaken to respond to government changes to the planning system and also get the Joint Local Plan put forward for Reg 19 – this should enable the Councils and communities have more say in how and where housing will be allocated.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk approved their first Biodiversity Action Plan to protect and strengthen biodiversity – supporting councils' carbon neutral aims. They will move the fleet to Hydrotreated Vegetable oil fuel to achieve a 90% reduction in CO2.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk are set to receive funding from the Government Green Home funding to install renewable heating in 48 socially rented properties insulate 50 owner occupied and privately rented park homes insulate 73 social housing properties and other projects within Suffolk.

CIL – Community infrastructure payments of £312,507 were distributed to 29 Town and Parish Councils for their projects, with Debenham Leisure Centre receiving support to various initiatives

CIFCO which is a subsidiary company with a property portfolio of 18 properties having invested £70m continues to garner much needed funds and since 2017 has invested £3m into Council Services.

MSDC secured £800.00 from the better building fund to match fund a pilot project of multifunctional microgeneration and storage Solar Car Ports to generate and store electricity and to include electric charge points.

There is a new Visitor Centre at the Needham Lake

The Regal Theatre will have a new look and is hoped it will open shortly

Stradbroke Pool and fitness centre has been refurbished Planning Permission has been granted to update and refurbish the Stowmarket Leisure Centre as the next project with a £2.2m upgrade

28 businesses across Babergh and Mid Suffolk were shortlisted for Innovation Awards.

As I said earlier we all worked differently and many many meetings were conducted by 'Zoom' or Teams. Where would we have been without the internet.

I can also advise I have allocated my locality budget as follows:-

£2500 Debenham Food Bank

£1000 Men's Shed

£700 Lap top Kenton

£85 Plaque for tree at Winston

£600 1st Responders

£1000 Ashfield Cum Thorpe Village Hall

£300 for Suffolk Flag – Debenham

£300 Debenham Library

I had £865 left over which went to a communal project in Mid Suffolk.

Just to note many of the applications came 'late in the day' and it is always difficult to allocate funding fairly but I do hope all the projects benefited and I spent wisely!

Let's hope for a better year ahead and thank you to you all for your support.

Cllr Mrs Kathie Guthrie

