

Councillor's Annual report to 12 May 2008

I cannot believe it is a year since I was elected as your councillor for the area. As I have said in all my reports it has been a huge learning curve for myself and I have undertaken many training courses and seminars.

On a monthly basis;

- I am on Planning Committee A
- Planning Referrals Committee
- I am Vice Chairman of Licensing
- I am substitute for the Scrutiny Committee
- I am substitute for Environment Policy Panel
- I also attend Safer Neighbourhood Team Meetings
- I have also sat on Bridleways and Footpath hearings

The training courses include sessions on the

- Budget and funding for MSDC
- Planning
- Wind Power
- Code of Conduct
- Emergency planning
- Choice based lettings

I have also been attending technical advice and referrals meetings over the regeneration of Stowmarket.

I attended the Debenham High School for a presentation on Democracy. Philip Tallent from the MSDC put together a very good programme on how the Council works and interaction with the Parish Council and Councillors.

I have also attended fund raising events for bicycles for the Police, and 'stab vests' for Police dogs and was pleased to attend the official opening of the pre school log cabin.

The pre Christmas event was a huge success and I hope to attend that again this year.

And in between.....

....I have enjoyed working with and for the people of Debenham, Winston and Aspell and of course Winston and Debenham Parish Councils. In particular I would like to thank Mick Morely with whom I have worked closely over the last year and for all of his time, experience and wisdom which he has shared with me. I would also like to thank all the other members of the Winston and Debenham Parish Council.

I have been working tirelessly behind the scenes both at the MSDC offices and with individual parishioners who have come to me with their problems and of course the Parish Council. Where I haven't known the answer I have found out where I could

get an answer and will not leave a stone unturned! And as many of you may have discovered, I don't give up easily!

This can be demonstrated over the issue of the potholes at Cross Green. The biggest problem there was, and still is, ownership of the strip of land which gains access to the Car Park. The car park was donated under a charitable trust by the Lord Henniker Estate. Other access users are those to MSDC bungalows, private bungalows and houses, and the Library (formerly the Fire Station).

With a lot of hard work between the Parish Council and myself we presented a 20 page document to the MSDC as to why they should pay for the repair the road. To my surprise I had the backing of the relevant parties in MSDC and in particular the Chief Executive. To my even bigger surprise it was the members (other Councillors on the Executive Committee) who put obstacles in the way and recommended the MSDC only provided part of the funding. Again I would not give up and enlisted the help of Eddy Alcock from the point of view of Highways. Again we got no, no, and no. Eddy and myself kept at it and at the eleventh hour when we thought all was lost we got a compromise which included the Debenham Parish Council making a contribution and help from the Suffolk County Council and we were able to get the first round of repairs to the road. There is a further surface to be put over the current one and I will pursue that along with what we need to do for the future.

I have also worked with many people over their planning issues of which many are still on going.

The council has worked to give people value for money and as I learn what the scope of the Council is I believe they do just that with huge restraints. As I reported earlier on this year for next year we have received a **below** inflation increase from the government of 1.8% in the sum of just over £6.2 million pounds. But for the following two years there will only be half (0.5) percent increase per year. This represents real terms funding **CUT** of 2% over a three year period. It will be a challenging period ahead.

Boundary Commission - Many of you will know as a result of the failed Unitary bid for Ipswich the Boundary Commission is working with all the Councils in Suffolk and Norfolk to recommend Unitary Councils. There is an update in the form of an email which I have forwarded to the Chairman Mick Morely who will arrange for it to be put on the Debenham Website. Further information will be forthcoming at a meeting tomorrow night and if in e format I will forward. This information will be in the public domain on the MSDC Website.

Snoasis Update - Again I will forward an email to Mick Morely for inclusion on the Debenham Website and can be accessed via the MSDC Website. We still do not have a definitive decision.

Planning - There are new forms and new procedures designed to make things quicker and clearer and again are on the MSDC Website.

Waste - Eddy will no doubt have updated you but I can inform you that last year we have achieved 40.13% recycling rate, the previous year when we were top straight

recycler (without composting) in the country our rate was then 34.2% This is excellent. It needs to be 60% by 2014.

The Garden waste has been a huge success and 3226 households have signed up for garden waste. There are still 120 on the waiting list! This too is excellent and will stop people dumping their garden rubbish on the side of the road causing nuisance and littering.

There is a litter pick campaign and any Parish Council who would like to take up a 'community clear up' they will be supplied with fluorescent coats gloves pick sticks and bags and these will be left with you to distribute at any time for further litter picks.

As regard the A 14 new Contractors are in place and along with the litter bins in lay byes we should see an improvement.

Fly tipping we must be vigilant and report any such activity to 08456066067

Stowmarket Master plan and regeneration – This is well on track and I have been to several planning and technical meetings both on site and at MSDC

Core Strategy Submission Development Plan Document – I know many of you are concerned about land bids for Debenham. So I would like to repeat my explanation I gave in my February Report There have been road shows, workshops and so on to put people in the picture. The purpose of the workshop was to show people the land Bids which had been received (They are legally obliged to do this) People were able to put their view forward.

The next stage of the process was to determine those land bids which do not fit in with the new development hierarchy i.e. those in the villages which are losing their settlement boundaries and these have been discounted. The remaining bids are being subjected to the sustainability appraisal. Once those assessments have been completed they use the information as PART of the criteria to move to preferred options. The sustainability appraisal helps identify the issues affecting a given site and also need to consider against planning policy and consider any mitigation of the issues raised within the sustainability appraisal. Once the preferred options have been worked up they commence another round of consultation (lasting 6 weeks) to give people another chance to consider these and provide feedback.

As Debenham is a Key Service Centre it means Debenham would have the opportunity for future development but this is unlikely to be on a massive scale and that any potential development does not have to be delivered immediately. The 'scores' from the Sustainability Appraisal are on the high side, but the intention is to test these during the next round of consultation, when they reach the preferred options stage. The SA was a desk top exercise delivered for MSDC by the County and there are some scores which people are concerned about – hence the intention to include this in the next consultation stage. I have been informed when the preferred options are put out to consultation if people do not feel that the village can take any further development at all or at least without some form of action regarding schools, parking and flooding issues then they have the opportunity to say so within the consultation

response. Please note the SA is not the only consideration in deciding which land bids will be taken, it is just part of the assessment process.

The 'soundness' of the Core strategy document is being tested by an independent examination of this document is being undertaken from the 29th May for three weeks. The public can attend but not speak but would need to book their seats with Mr Simon Osborne 07710 969411 email simon@poservices.co.uk.

The Mid Suffolk Local Development Scheme is currently being revised to take account of the proposed Government changes to the Local Development Framework process. As a result the proposed timetable will be formally adopted once the Government changes are finalised which is expected in summer 2008 but is potentially subject to change. Stowmarket and surrounding areas site specific allocations will be looked at on or around August 2008 but the rest of the allocations will not be reviewed until September 2009.

I hope this is helpful.

Choice Based Lettings - MSDC and several councils have agreed to participate in this scheme which is believed to be the best approach for the future allocation of social housing. This scheme allows social landlords to advertise their available homes and customers are then asked to express an interest in the property they would like to live in. A new lettings banding scheme is being developed to prioritise customers.

Affordable Housing and Shared Ownership – such houses have been made available to residents in Debenham.

Mere View Very Sheltered Housing Haughley – This is a first VSH scheme in the country built in partnership with Housing 21 and MSDC and SCC. It is available on a shared ownership basis. To qualify one has to be over 55, require a minimum of 4 hours care per week and have some connection with Suffolk. There are 32 one and two bedroom flats. It is a fantastic purpose built enterprise and is currently sold out with a waiting list!

Stanstead Stacking Eastern Hold area – Whilst this doesn't directly impact us MSDC have sent strong representation suggesting the stacking is located over the sea. I understand there is a slight problem in so much Holland uses the North Sea for stacking and approach for Schipol Airport.

To Update specific issues I know the Debenham Parish Council are looking at programmes for the young people in the village and I will do my best to ascertain funding where possible. I will leave the PC to update people as and when anything transpires.

It is noted we have a new Take Away facility and Dental Practice and welcome all new initiatives. However local planning regulations and so on will be part of an ongoing process to enable all activities to gel within the village.

I have tried to include all relevant issues and apologise if I have missed one area or another and if I have please contact me or look on the MSDC Website where all the information can be located.

Finally, I look forward to working with you all again next year.

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