

District Councillor's Annual Report to 27 April 2009

First of all please accept my sincere apologies for not being able to attend the meeting tonight. I have an unavoidable clash of engagements. My husband is the guest of honour at a prestigious meeting in Cambridge and he asked that I be present with him.

So I take this opportunity of thanking Shaun Betts in presenting my report. Eddy Alcock has also agreed to either answer, or take away any questions which may arise.

This has been a particularly busy year for me and the more I work with the MSDC the more work I seem to take on or be expected to deal with. There is an awful lot of 'back room' work which Councillors do as well as dealing with many enquiries from the general public relating to their personal issues

Finance - The Council Tax rise of 3.5% was the lowest we could achieve. (A 1% increase only equates to £50,000) We had a miserable grant settlement from the Government. Roughly 60% of our net income comes from Government and in the last two years we have received grant increases of only 0.5% with inflation considerably higher than that. In these two years our efficiency savings and cost control have been very good (Audit Commission have praised us on our use of resources). However due to the recession our income is down. (less planning applications for example) but we are experiencing a higher demand for other services such as benefits. We will continue to strive to give good value for money but have tough times ahead.

Boundary Committee – Local Government Review. The dates for decisions have been put back again. The two preferred options being put forward by the Boundary Committee are as follows:-

- A) One Suffolk, a single council for the whole of Suffolk including Lowestoft
- B) Two Councils, Ipswich/Felixstowe and Rural Suffolk including Lowestoft

We are asked again to put in our comments and have until the 14 May 2009 to do so after which the BC will make their representations to the Secretary of State and they will do so on 15 July. There is then a further consultation period until 26 September 2009. The proposals will be discussed in Parliament in October and Implementation team(s) start work with the new Council(s) to be in place for 2011.

As far as we are aware the current structure in Suffolk WILL change. In other words MSDC and the other current councils will no longer exist.

It is up to the public to make their representations known regarding their preferences. They can be emailed to Reviews@boundarycommttee.org.uk or you can write to Review Manager (Suffolk Review) Boundary Committee for England, Trevelyan House Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HW.

Deben Leisure Centre (DLC) - A lot of hard work has gone on between the Directors of the DLC, Parish council, MSDC and myself with regard to support for the people of Debenham Village and the Debenham Sports and Community Centre (DLC). However, as yet, as far as I am aware finance has still not been transferred. I am hopeful that both sides can get together to expedite a reasonable solution to the transfer of the funding as I am sure that was the will of the community.

Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT's) - I attend meetings on a two monthly basis and feel we have one of the best teams in the County! Information of current crimes and resolutions are discussed. All participants can bring up any crime issues and priorities are set for the next two months. The police teams can of course be contacted at any time.

Licensing - I am the Vice Chairman of the Licensing committee. As with everything there is always a change in current legislation and updating of current requirements. For example we are working on a press release for the end of April to help parents when choosing the hiring of Limousines for 'end of year celebrations/proms'

Stowmarket Masterplan - I attended a very exciting presentation of the concept of the regeneration for Stowmarket. I am sure the whole project will have a knock on effect and keep us up at the top of the best place to live, not only at present in Mid Suffolk, but of the County of Suffolk

Waste – Recycling – We are maintaining the 40% recycling rate. This is excellent! We are also keeping up vigilance on fly tipping and fining offenders. I think we can all see the improvement to the A14 where bins and litter patrols have been at work! There is a pilot on going with School Litter Awareness Project and Radio Suffolk will be relaunching the 'Don't be a Tosser' campaign.

Perhaps the Parish council might like to promote a litter pick? Equipment is available from Sarah Carter, the Environmental Services Officer at MSDC tel 01449 724946.

Snoasis – The overall development is the subject of three separate planning permissions granted by the Secretary of State in 2008. They are; a Ski Complex, Railway Station and Residential and commercial development with up to 391 dwellings. The matter is a very complex one and ongoing discussions are taking place with the developers and a dedicated planning team.

Regeneration Hartismere Hospital – As previously reported here was a Public Viewing of proposed development at the Hartismere Hospital which included a nursing home, sheltered accommodation and private housing. It is anticipated a business plan will be out any day and then the matter can go out to tender!

Housing – It is encouraging to note that during a Stock Options Appraisal (an appraisal to provide clear alternatives for the future management of housing stock should Suffolk move to a Unitary Authority(s)) that MSDC tenants would prefer to stay with Mid Suffolk! Despite the current down turn demands for affordable housing remains high in the district.

The majority of people 1,200 have now re-registered their applications for Choice based lettings and the new system will go live in May 2009.

Community, Culture and Arts– Free! Swimming for under 16's and over 60's at Stowmarket and Stradbroke swimming pools. This has to be good news! Coupled with the launch of 'Rising to the Challenge Suffolk' we are getting geared up for the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics and are encouraging not only athletes but businesses to get involved with various contracts which will be up for grabs in the run up to the 2012 Olympics. I hope to have more on that as things develop.

Wingfield Barns are now open and have an exciting programme ahead with an art exhibition currently running and are also supporting 'The Wider picture Project' by running films on 23 and 24 May. Further details of forthcoming events at Wingfield Barns contact Geoff Doggett 01379 384505.

Films are showing at Tattingstone Village Hall 01473 328499 and also at Stonham Aspal Village Hall 01449 711610 (and other venues all great stuff for our villages)

NHS – are conducting a survey on Out of hours service for Doctors and Dentists. Everyone is encouraged to send your views at <http://www.suffolk.nhs.uk> and responses must be in by 22 May 2009.

On a personal note I can advise you that my tenacity has paid off and the pavements in the close at Cross Green have been repaired and the residents are very pleased! All we need now is for the disabled bay to be marked out. Watch this space!

I have also taken the initiative and arranged with Melanie Wood at the Resource Centre to ensure their products have a section on how to complete CV's in their training package in case some of our residents become unemployed and are worried on how to get themselves out in the job hunting market. There are a lot of excellent packages available all for Free.

I also took the initiative to set up a meeting for the businesses of Winston Debenham and Aspal on how we could best support one another during this current difficult trading period. It was well supported and indeed support was voiced to form a Business Forum in Debenham and I am sure that will be taken forward positively. If anyone requires further information please contact me on Kathie.guthrie@midsuffolk.gov.uk

Finally I have attended many meetings and events in Debenham from the Children's Christmas event to the Main Christmas Event in Debenham.

I am on the committee for the Crows Hall Country Fayre and have attended meetings for the fantastic Arts Festival which is coming up in the Summer.

We really do have a fantastic village, surrounding areas and countryside and I can only commend everyone's enthusiasm.

Councillor Mrs Kathie Guthrie

