

## District Councillor Kathie Guthrie Annual Report to 19 May 2014

In just over two years Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have successfully created joint delivery teams that serve two Councils. Care has been taken to listen to the community in so much both Councils remain separate but with many shared services, one chief Executive and shared Management and so on. I will touch on a few issues which have happened throughout the year.

**The localism Act** has seen parishes taking the opportunity to shape their environment and I am pleased that Debenham PC are working towards a Neighbourhood Plan. The Localism Act also gives communities new powers to register land or buildings for recognition as being an asset of community value.

**Planning** .As with everything nothing stays the same and the Planning department and Parish Councils and Councillors have had to contend with the ever changing regulations for Planning. Training sessions are ongoing for District Councillors and it is hoped the Parish Liaison Meetings will give an update to Parish Councils. Throughout the year there have been many controversial planning issues some of which are ongoing and affect many communities

**Licensing** Since October 2013 MSDC has taken on the new function of Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013. This was done at very short notice and with a very small team who have absorbed the function and supported local businesses during the transition. These regulations have been tightened up to tackle the rise of metal theft and disruption to businesses and communities which in turn costs vast amounts of money. Amongst other things it is now an offence for a scrap metal dealer to buy any scrap metal for cash.

**Housing** The localism Act Allows Councils to move away from offering secure tenancies for the lifetime of the tenant and grant fixed term (or flexible tenancies) instead. A new scheme will start in June 2014 with a minimum tenancy period of five years. However it will exempt tenants who move into sheltered accommodation and those with disabilities. Other changes now restrict the entitlement of an occupier to take over the deceased tenants' home to only spouses and civil partners. We are able to grant discretionary rights should it be appropriate to do so. MSDC canvassed the opinion of our Tenant Bodies and Housing board. Work is also underway to support tenants who have been affected by the introduction of under-occupation measures through the recently enacted Welfare Reform Legislation

Turning specifically to Debenham, the community never fails to achieve and I am pleased to say I have attended many meetings of successful initiatives and succeeded in gaining funding from MSDC. None more so than the Library group and the Swimming Pool project. And of course the many ongoing projects whose reports I look forward to.

Winston and Aspell sit at the periphery of Debenham and each compliments the other and I am particularly pleased for the generous support from Aspell Cider in particular my medal albeit for a small effort of 1 kilometer fun run achievement.