

My annual report coincides with the forthcoming elections and so I will just report a snapshot of some outcomes and achievements at the District Council which have been collectively driven forward and implemented by elected Councillors and MSDC employees.

I am sure many of you read that in a National Survey Mid Suffolk was voted the 20th best place to live in the UK. The survey traced residents' health and life expectancy, crime rate, weather, employment and low traffic level figures and its burglary rate was also one of the lowest in the Country.

As you all know savings had to be made and indeed they have. Over the last four years, although the public voted not to merge with Babergh District Council many back office services, senior management and different ways of achieving outcomes have enabled the Councils to save well over £4.8 million in both Councils.

A joint strategic plan has been drawn up which was done in consultation with the public and Parish Councils. The priority areas are economy environment and housing and strong healthy communities. A Neighbourhood Plan, which is being worked up for Debenham residents by the Parish Council and the local residents in consultation with staff at MSDC demonstrates to commitment to engage with the public well into the future so they can have a greater say on any development in Debenham and reap the benefits.

MSDC needs to build more housing and at each planning meeting the number of houses and developments coming forward are on the increase.

MSDC have secured more than £1m by way of a grant towards the development of new Council Housing. Together with the new homes bonus (a new way of receiving funding from government), surpluses and the right to buy receipts provides MSDC with funds of £12.7^m to invest in new council housing over the next five years.

A joint housing board set up with Tenants are helping shape the future direction of the councils' landlord services. Work has begun to install solar panels on the roofs of 2000 council houses across both districts and it is anticipated to generate up to £7.5m over next 20 years and reduce tenants' fuel bills. With the welfare reform came change and difficulties and many tenants were supported financially in this process.

A review is underway to understand how current provision for sheltered housing needs to change with the ageing population and demand.

Recycling rates have increased from 38% to 42% and with the new waste facility at great Blakenham the energy produced will be used to power 30,000 homes and businesses in the area.

In Debenham many projects have been supported by MSDC, The library project, the Swimming pool project, the Biomass and Kitchen projects at the Debenham Leisure centre to name but a few

I have served the community to the best of my ability and continue to strive to assist and improve facilities and opportunities within the Debenham Ward.

Kathie Guthrie

District Councillor