

Report to 19 October 2013

Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Council continue to merge as many back office services as possible. This is a huge undertaking and unfortunately there is the inevitable dip in performance particularly within the planning department.

The Council has received news that further funding cuts are more severe than previously projected and the final phase of allocating jobs to existing staff has been put on hold while more job cuts are explored. We had previously anticipated a 10% reduction in the Government Grants we receive but it is now running at 15%. That means the budget gap for a three year period 2014/2015 for the two Councils has gone from a projected £8.2million to £8.9million.

The Rate Support Grants will cease completely and it is the governments' aim for Councils to be funded entirely from business rates and non core funding eg. New Homes Bonus, business rates and council tax.

We are going to have to look to other departments being cost neutral for example the planning department which poses a huge problem as fees are set centrally by government.

On a positive note a press release today advises that MSDC and BBDC have jointly been awarded £166900 for the Transformational /integration services.

Benefits. We have heard much about the under occupancy charge. Fortunately for Mid Suffolk we have not had too much of an issue and all residents affected have been contacted and relevant advice given. There is a small emergency fund for people who are really struggling and so far we haven't had to dip in to that too much but with winter approaching and cost of fuel etc we may find more of a call on that funding.

Oil there are initiatives out there for group purchase of oil, there is one in Debenham and also Suffolk Acre can direct residents towards this.

I have found a note in the paper that for people whose income is below £16000 you may be entitled to a £135 rebate from Warm Front. Tel 0800336699 for further information

Young people – Skills Summit which included Ben Gummer, MP Dr Andy Wood chair Local Enterprise Partnership. This was attended by over 150 delegates from the public and private sectors, universities, and businesses – Main discussion about how best to give students the ability to access and nurture a strong knowledge skills base and how to improve the engagement between businesses and students – What can be done to improve employability

At my last planning committee the members gave the go ahead for a Dementia Care Home at Cedars Park and that will provide up to 40 jobs once opened and of course the building work will create more jobs.

I attended a meeting with the Police and Crime Commissioner on Monday evening and that was supported by approximately 100 people. Debate was lively but they set out the vision and took away issues which weren't being addressed to the public's satisfaction. Needless to say speeding in Villages was the biggest angst

As I am Vice Chairman of Licensing myself and another Councillor went 'Clubbing' in Newmarket one Saturday night till 3 am and were out with the night time economy Police. It really is an eye opener and one of the issues which we came away with to see if we could instigate in Stowmarket was closing the food outlets before the clubs kicked out. That is what they do in Newmarket and it then meant clubbers went home rather than hawking round the streets as is the case in Stowmarket and this was one of the issues raised.

They also mentioned the initiative to catch Hare Coursers in our rural community.

I attended the 25 years celebration of the Debenham Leisure Centre, which incidentally I have just secured more funding for their guttering. The event and band were fantastic and it is heartening to see so much support.

I also attended the High Suffolk Rotary Club event on Saturday last again at the Debenham Leisure Centre which again was a huge success and they raised a lot of money to support the 'Base' Youth club.

I will of course endeavour to keep a high profile of this fantastic venue but funding to the District Councils is going to get even tighter and I wonder how much longer the current funding support can be sustained. I don't personally use the facilities at the Leisure Centre but I fully support it and so must we all even if we don't necessarily use it.

I wonder if everyone realises how fortunate we are having all the facilities and shops and businesses in Debenham? Perhaps when doing our present buying we take a look at all the lovely goods available in Debenham. I will do all that I can to support small businesses from a MSDC angle as well as shopping locally.

If you need more information on activities and issues in Mid Suffolk much is on the website and so this is just a snapshot. Please also feel free to contact me either by email Kathieg@midsuffolk.gov.uk or by phone on 01728 861752

Councillor Mrs Kathie Guthrie