

District Councillor's Annual Report 2017 for Kirton Ward which includes Levington and Stratton Hall, Girton and Falkenham, Buckleham, Newbourne, Hemley and Waldringfield

Another busy year and thank you to everyone who gets in touch with me to keep me up to date with what is concerning you in your villages. I attempt to attend your Parish Council Meetings but due to clashes of dates this is not always possible, however I do always get a monthly report to you.

The move to the new Council Office has taken place and will save a great deal of money for the Tax Payers. Officers are pleased with their new working environment.

The Merger has been agreed by both Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils and will take place in May 2019. Work is being done to make this a smooth transition. The 90 Councillors who cover the 2 districts at present will be reduced to 60-65 by the boundary Commission. SCDC went through a boundary review recently but WDC has not done so for many years. The 2 councils have shared a Chief Executive and other officers for several years now and it works very well as well as saving money.

Planning

The Innocence Farm scoping has taken up a lot of time. It is expected that Bidwells will try to get it included in the Review of the Core Strategy which is being undertaken at the moment. This document will not be completed before mid 2019. All Parish Councils will be given the opportunity for meetings with officers so that your concerns and wishes for your villages can be addressed.

There are proposals for more affordable housing in some villages on sites abutting the physical limits. It is hoped that these will eventually be taken on as the council's own housing stock. Something SCDC has not had since it sold its stock many years ago. Commuted sums from housing developments for affordable housing has to be returned to the developers if it has not been used within so many years. Whilst people are on Housing List their needs have to be prioritised.

The Govt. White Paper on Planning emphasised the need to look again at developing Neighbourhood Plans which enable people to have a say in what they would like to see in their villages. They take a couple of years to produce because of all the consultations and are voted on by everyone in the village. They are then approved by an inspector and are "Made" by the Council. They will become legal planning documents.

43 houses are being built in Kirton and the developers expect to be off site in late summer. Lots of people have moved in and are very pleased with their new homes. Kirton play area has been given a face lift with lots of new equipment chosen by young parents. This is due to playspace funding which developers contribute to. Plans have been approved for new business units and housing in Buckleham and some individual houses in Newbourne and Waldringfield and Kirton and Falkenham. This housing supports the local schools, pubs and businesses. The Artisan Smoke House has opened in Falkenham and is a great success.

Beach Huts

Consideration is still being given to the consultation and the many letters received. Decisions will be made over the next 12 months. I have already said that I have never seen such a biased consultation.

Deben Estuary Partnership.

I work with this group which is made up of land owners and access groups footpath officers and the EA. Maintenance of Flood cells and river walls is very important as is the protection of the birdlife and nesting sites in the Estuary. At present we are looking for people who would be happy to commit to assessing the Tranquility aspect of the Deben Estuary. It would mean an hour or so on a monthly basis and training would be given. The Deben Estuary is unique and we want to keep it that way. If anyone is interested in helping with this please let me know.

Refurbishment of Car Parks and Leisure facilities

Woodbridge Leisure Centre will be refurbished starting in September. There will be a new gym, a new health suite with a steam room sauna and ice room.

Car Parks at Melton Riverside and Aldeburgh have been refurbished.

Suffolk Walking Festival is being launched at Sutton Hoo and runs from Sat 13th May to Sunday 4th June. This incorporates walks for experienced walkers and beginners. visit www.suffolkwalkingfestival.co.uk

There is a new Visitor Information centre at Aldeburgh cinema.

Community Enabling Budget

Finally I have spent my £6,000 enabling budget. This was on a new floor for the East Anglian Sailing Trust and refurbishing the village hall floor at Levington.

Fencing round the Village hall car park at Newbourne. A new tent for Guides, a free games afternoon to celebrate the Queens official birthday, and some posts to protect the edge of the village green at Kirton. Training and equipment for the East Suffolk Association for the Blind which covers home visits for blind people. New yellow bowls and carpet for those with impaired vision at Bucklesham as well as paying for the Bucklesham Bugle newsletter.

Finally Waldringfield received enough grant to enable another set of Speed Watch equipment to be bought which will be available for use in our villages. For 2017/18 I shall have £6500 available so please think about any projects you might have.

Susan Harvey