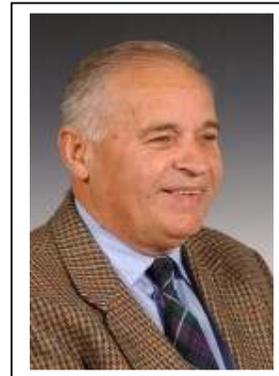


ANNUAL PARISH REPORT 2015

Councillor

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Finance and Budget

Over the past four years we have reduced our spending by over £100million by cutting waste and reducing management and staff numbers from the back office. The latest Government spending review means we now need to save a further £156 million over the next four years. To do this we have to look again at everything we do and make hard choices.

The financial situation facing Suffolk is not unique; it is mirrored across the whole country. Councils across the country are facing huge budget challenges. The Local Government Association has been listening to key concerns for the future and is keen to stress the validity of the local democratic process and its implications for local leadership and service delivery; funded through sustainable income levels which should flow through into relevant local action. The Local Government Association has launched a campaign called 'Rewiring Public Services'. This promotes some key proposition which would be needed to rejuvenate democracy, transform public services and boost economic growth.

A three stage approach was developed for the 2014/15 budget consultation which aims to meet these specified outcomes. The first stage was a residents survey and the Council commissioned Ipsos Mori to deliver this during October and November 2013. Stage Two is a series of meetings and events held in November 2013 through into January 2014 which Council representatives will attend to share details of the emerging budget proposals and seek feedback. Alongside this details of the proposals have been posted on the Councils website with an opportunity to complete an online feedback form.

Stage three was the ongoing focus from early 2014 and a series of consultation and engagement activity which will enable the Council to seek the views on specific proposals. This activity will be delivered in the main by the service directorates with the support from Corporate Communications and Business Development as required. This report provides an update on the findings of the resident survey which was conducted by Ipsos Mori. The feedback from stage two was analysed and reported in early January when the majority of meetings and events will have concluded.

Setting out Suffolk County Council Priorities

Education, Roads and Supporting the vulnerable among key issues for Suffolk

Suffolk County Council's priorities for the next three years include raising education attainment, improving the county's road network and supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities, the authority's leader announced today. Addressing all of Suffolk's county councillors in June, on a day marking the council's 40th birthday, Councillor Mark Bee, said:

"The next three years are going to see some major changes. While our budget may be significantly reduced, we certainly have no intention of simply sitting here talking while services are crudely pared back. On the contrary, we believe there is a way of protecting frontline services that the people of Suffolk value the most. To do so, we are going to oversee the most radical redesign this council has ever seen. A leaner, more focused organisation that, through strong financial management, innovation, local leadership and market development, will provide or enable the provision of good-quality services for the people of Suffolk. And all with a heavy dose of pragmatism – focusing on what works."

During his speech, he outlined the council's five priorities between now and 2017 – some a continuation of previous focal points, and some new. The priorities are:

- Raising educational attainment and skill levels.
- Supporting the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to increase economic growth.
- Maintaining roads and developing Suffolk's infrastructure.
- Supporting those most vulnerable in our communities.
- Empowering local communities.

Council officers will now be tasked with putting these political decisions and directions into practice, with delivery being overseen by councillors. A business plan will first be developed to guide this work. During his speech, Councillor Bee paid tribute to Councillor Guy McGregor, the council's outgoing chairman. He also welcomed the authority's new chairman, Councillor Chris Hudson, and vice chairman, Councillor Jane Storey.

Cycling in Suffolk

July saw a celebration of cycling with a new report calling on people to take to their bikes, and a three-week cycle challenge inviting people to compete with others to win prizes. Suffolk's first cycling strategy set a vision for cycling in Suffolk to increase the number of adults who cycle regularly every week from the current 13%. Pupils at the Edgar Sewter Primary School in Halesworth - proudly promoting their new town cycle map - hosted the launch with support from local cycling groups. The strategy highlights the many health benefits associated with cycling, and sets out a commitment to create a safe environment for people to enjoy cycling.

Suffolk County Council's Public Health team, together with Livewell Suffolk, Suffolk Sport, East Coast Community Healthcare and partners, is encouraging people to sign up to the challenge, record their indoor and outdoor cycles, challenge their friends, family and colleagues and keep track of progress online at www.cyclesuffolkchallenge.co.uk

Those taking part were invited to share their experiences on Twitter using the hashtag #cyclesuffolkchallenge, which encouraged others to upload photos of their favourite cycle routes around Suffolk and nominate friends and family to join in.

Locality Budget

Funds totaling £ 8,163 from Locality Budget for Melford Ward, which includes Long Melford, Glemsford, Hartest, Lawshall and groups based in Sudbury serving these parishes have been distributed as below;

Long Melford received grants for improvements to Football Club car park, provision of a climbing wall at the primary school fair, Holy Trinity Church for a guide to services in Long Melford,

Glemsford Guides for the big Brownie Birthday centenary
Edens project, football goals for Glemsford Youth club
Lawshall Village Hall for repairs after flooding
Hartest Parish Council, towards footpath at The Row
Boxted and Hartest Institute for chairs
Sudbury Gateway annual weekend camp
Sudbury Rowing club for shoes
Upbeat heart support for a portable heart monitor

Funds are also committed to Black & White productions for the cost of equipment hire and to Glemsford Parish Council to renew toilets and improvements at the village hall.

Current remaining balance of funds is £10,070. Anyone wishing to apply for funds should contact Richard Kemp.

Back to Work Scheme

A scheme helping unemployed people in east Suffolk return to work was set up in April after £65,000 in start-up funding was awarded to the project. The East Suffolk Partnership (ESP) made the contribution to the Work Club programme to help job seekers across the region develop the skills and confidence to find employment.

Partnership chairman, Suffolk Coastal District Council leader Ray Herring, said the scheme was likely to help about 300 people back into work and would be targeted at areas where there was most need. Suffolk County Council will use funding to contract a provider which aimed to deliver clubs in Lowestoft, Beccles, Leiston, Saxmundham, Woodbridge and Felixstowe. The focus will be on job seekers aged 25 and older but all those who are unemployed will be welcome. It is hoped to become self-sufficient after the initial funding boost.

Thank you

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the very many people who help and support me in the role of County Councillor including Parish Councils, District Councillors and Parish Clerks to name but a few.