

## **Borough Councillor's Annual Parish Report 2016/17**

The Borough continues to work together with Forest Heath to promote and support issues that affect our local area whilst working with government and partners in promoting economic growth and the health and wellbeing of our population in West Suffolk through greater funding and responsibilities at the local level.

A great deal of time has been spent on the devolution issue which sadly has not produced the outcome we worked for, with Norfolk unable to agree to the proposal. In addition the government failed to address our concerns about an extra tier of local government with their insistence on an elected mayor. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are moving ahead with their devolution plans and the mayoral election takes place alongside the County Council elections.

The other big local issues and ongoing work are the proposed closure of RAF Mildenhall when the US Forces leave, the provision of a West Suffolk Operational Hub for our future waste transfer needs and decriminalisation of parking in West Suffolk.

The Borough has three main priorities:

- 1 .Increased opportunities for economic growth.
- 2 .Resilient families and communities that are healthy and active.
3. Homes for our communities.

### **Increased opportunities for economic growth:**

A thriving local economy underpins everything we do in West Suffolk as high levels of employment are key to our residents' quality of life and the benefit of our communities.

Campaigning for the right infrastructure: Lobbying for more regular east-west rail services. A14 junctions, particularly junction 45 for Rougham and the surrounding villages. A11 Fiveways roundabout where £400,000 from the Department of Transport has been promised to improve safety. Working with the Local enterprise partnerships who have jointly funded the new Rougham Relief Road to service the Suffolk Business Park and Sybil Andrews Academy. A business has already signed up to relocate to the business park. The road is on track to open in the autumn. The Government's Enterprise Zone programme includes two sites in West Suffolk. Haverhill Research Park and 14 hectares of land at Suffolk Business Park. Enterprise zones offer benefits to businesses such as potential business rates discount to new tenants. St Edmundsbury continues to offer Small Business Grants of up to £1,500 for new businesses including and new bakery in Bury St Edmunds. The West Suffolk Greener Business Grant which received its 100<sup>th</sup> grant application in early 2017. This supports organisations to reduce their energy expenditure in a variety of ways, changing to

LED lighting being the most popular measure. Apprentices, in the last five years we have employed 54 apprentices, of which 35 have stayed with us in either permanent or temporary jobs. 5% of our current workforce started as apprentices.

### **Resilient Families and communities that are healthy and active:**

Bury St Edmunds town centre masterplan, we have undertaken a consultation with local people and businesses to ensure that the town can meet future needs of the increasing population. Community Chest funding 19 local organisations have received funding through this grant in 2016/17. Rural Initiatives Grant £69,500 has been awarded to match fund projects in the rural areas. Parks and green spaces, all our parks have been awarded the green flag status. Bury St Edmunds achieved the gold award in Anglia in Bloom, Abbey Gardens and Nowton Park were top in both their categories. Working in partnership with Abbeycroft Leisure and Suffolk County Council we have shared community access to the new Sybil Andrews sports facility. Moyes Hall and West Stow were awarded a grant of £108,000 to help fund staff and volunteer training, adaptations to the museums displays and the building of a shelter at West Stow to enable more school children to visit at any one time. Numbers of visitors to both museums has increased by 7,000 for 2016. The Lego event held at Moyses Hall was particularly popular. Working with the Guildhall Feoffment Trust has seen a matched funding award of £669,000 granted from the Heritage Lottery fund Guildhall Bury St Edmunds towards the refurbishment and restoration of this important building. The council continues to support Abbeycroft Leisure in a variety of ways for instance Exercise on referral, 309 people so far have taken part in the first six months to help them keep active thus reducing high blood pressure and weight. 93% of participants who completed the scheme have remained active.

### **Homes for our communities:**

We work with our partners to ensure we have an appropriate and sufficient supply of housing for our communities. This involves working with landlords to improve the standards of private rented housing and bringing empty homes back into use, including a grant to incentivise landlords. This has resulted in 26 homes returned to use in 2016/17. Vision 2031 Bury St Edmunds major development sites, Taylor Wimpey is on site and the first of 500 dwellings are currently being built in Rougham as an extension to the Moreton Hall development around Sybil Andrews Academy and the Suffolk Business Park, completing the circle of jobs, homes, education and leisure facilities. The two Councils together with Suffolk County Council have established a housing company Barley Homes, to build houses. Council owned sites have been identified and work should start on the first site early in 2018. Improving the quality of existing housing, we have a discretionary housing grant to help people repair their own homes and have helped 35 household through grant aid with a total budget of £142,535. We work with Suffolk partners to deliver support through the disabled facilities grant to make adaptations to their existing properties. 73 residents have been helped in 2016/17.

2016/17 we continue to work to deliver the Warm Homes Healthy People grant, 156 homes in West Suffolk have received fully funded external wall insulation. Homelessness and temporary accommodation. We are committed to reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation in West Suffolk for emergency temporary accommodation. We purchased a property in Newmarket Road and converted it to provide accommodation for 6 families who have become homeless this is in addition to a similar property in Lake Avenue Bury St Edmunds. In 2016/17 we spent £86, 677 on bed and breakfast down from £208,600 in 2014/15. We have also ensured that 16 and 17 year olds are provided with suitable emergency accommodation and bed spaces have been provided across 3 locations in West Suffolk for this particular vulnerable age group. Homelessness, we have been awarded a grant of £96,000 to fund an outreach worker across West Suffolk to work with individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and to develop ways of preventing homelessness. We were also successful in a bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government for £516,244 to provide accommodation for victims of domestic abuse across Suffolk.

Challenges for 2017 include the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Bill, welfare reform and the introduction of Universal Credit. Financially, the removal of the government support grant and the introduction of business rate retention from new businesses will be a challenge. We will continue to engage with government on their Industrial Strategy and Housing and Planning white paper. Finally, many thanks to Terry Clements for his work over many years as our County Councillor and congratulations to Karen Soons who is our newly elected County Councillor and now of course we have the national election on the 8<sup>th</sup> June.

Locally, I am always delighted to support your village organisations with my locality budget.

I would like to give a huge thank you to Stanningfield and Bradfield Combust Parish Council for all their hard work and achievements over this last year. Also all the support you have given me over the year. Thank you

Cllr Sara Mildmay-White

