

Kirton Ward Annual Parish Report 2018

This has been another very busy year, but I think a good one - thank you to everyone who gets in touch with me to keep me up to date on what is concerning you in your villages. I try to attend all the Parish Council meetings in my Ward but, unfortunately, due to clashes and other meetings, I have to miss a few. I do however make sure you get a monthly report and I am always available should you have a problem.

The Council has now settled down well in its new building at Riduna Park at Melton. I have picked out just a few interesting things which have happened in the last 12 months.

June: Official opening of the new Council Offices at Riduna Park Melton. This move was to save rate payers money. It is a modern building, easy to heat etc.

July: The Review of the Core Strategy which will go up to 2035 was underway and comments were invited.

The merging of the Council with Waveney District Council is still moving forward for 2019. The number of District Cllrs will reduce from 90 to 55 representing about 3800 people per Cllr.

I was made Interim Vice Chairman of the Planning Committee due to ongoing illness of the present Vice Chairman.

September: The Beach Hut review took place which caused quite a stir. I objected to this as it had not been fairly done. Fortunately, the Beach Hut association became involved and were indeed listened to. The Deben Leisure Centre in Woodbridge was closed for refurbishment. It should reopen soon.

October: An excellent apprenticeship scheme was introduced which resulted in 43 young people being trained since 2012 with 70% of them remaining with the Council to develop their careers. The A12 4 villages bypass consultation went out which I supported.

Speedwatch was very active in our villages. I bought these cameras for use in Kirton Ward. The Melton Hill old Council offices planning application came forward and was approved. There was a lot of opposition but in the end this will be a spectacular development whether people like it or not.

November: 60 town and Parish Councils responded to the Issues and Options Document which was excellent. The Bell Lane application appeal for 300 houses failed and the Council had a 6 year housing land supply.

December: I was invited to a Highways Open Day. Having been critical about highway issues I thought I should attend. Their new way of working sounded very good but I have to say we have been experiencing difficulties with getting pot holes dealt with locally as we are all aware. Just keep reporting them on the Highways web site. If they don't know that problems exist they will not be dealt with. To be fair I don't think Suffolk is any worse than any other county, I have been driving a lot recently and they all seem to be as bad. The M25 is appalling in places.

January: Sajid Javid was 'minded' to support plans for merging the two District Councils. This is a major cost saving operation. Our Council is working towards being financially independent as more and more government funds are being reduced. Suffolk Coastal announced that they would be charging £43 for green waste collection. This caused a lot of consternation, however, the Council had carried this cost for the previous 3 years and it was decided to bring us in line with other Suffolk District Councils. The Adastral Park planning application was unanimously approved by the planning committee on 15th January. I have to thank all those Parish Councillors who met with officers and had their input into this initially very contentious application. They made many representations which will have a valuable impact locally when this development gets underway.

February: Council tax was raised by 3.15% for 2018/19, this equates to less than 10pence a week for a band D house. The entire Suffolk Coastal district jointly with Waveney will be Re-Warded with agreement of the Boundary Commission. The new Wards will be in place ready for the local elections next May 2019.

March: Suffolk Coastal Planning Committee arranged to attend a Waveney District Council Planning Committee and Waveney Cllrs attended one of ours. I felt this was a very important thing to do as when the 2 Councils merge officially next year dealing with planning applications is a major part of the Council work. Many Cllrs including myself want our planning applications to be dealt with locally. We are elected to serve our people and I don't think any of us want local planning decisions to be made remotely. I shall be supporting a move for at least 2 planning committees in order to represent our local people. We now officially have a building land supply of over 7 years so the Council is in a position to defend applications by speculative developers. We are now building over 465 houses a year. I attended a course at Warwick University for Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of Planning Committees. Many counties were represented and we learned a lot from them. Statistics were listed and I have to say that Suffolk Coastal came out in a very good position. We get the majority of applications dealt with within the correct timescale and we win a very good proportion of our appeals.

My Community Enabling Budget of £6,500 delivered 2 Static Speed Cameras, so watch out they will be operating around the villages of Kirton, Waldringfield and Newbourne. I have supported refurbishment of the toilets at Kirton Village Hall, 2 Access ramps for Bucklesham Village Hall, The extension of a trial dial a ride ferry for all year round use from Felixstowe to Bawdsey. This is in anticipation of the Coastal Footpath locally. I also supported a CCTV camera for the Kirton recreation Ground.

Starting in May I hope to encourage the idea of a community shop/hub. The group I am working with are looking at the possibility of one on the Village Green in the form of a new container which has been suitably clad to make it fit in. I am getting a design drawn up along with a photo montage to show what it could look like. When Paddock Close was applied for I requested £10,000 towards a Community Shop, I am determined that this should not go back to Taylor Wimpey without making a huge effort to use it.

That's the year in a nutshell, albeit a rather large nut.

Susan Harvey