



Annual report – East Suffolk District Councillor Mick Richardson, April 2023

To be honest – this is a bit of a 16-month report as only having been elected in the August of 2021, there wasn't that much I could have reported at this time last year having served only a few months.

So, in the last year and 4 months, I have managed to get my 'feet under the table' so to speak at East Suffolk Council and can report that I was selected to sit on the Audit & Governance Committee (more about that later), and also, I regularly sit on the Scrutiny Committee.

The latter of those two is a committee that literally scrutinises the work of the various departments and teams who 'do the work' for both the Council and the population within East Suffolk Council – and with ESC being the largest single District Council in England, there's an awful lot going on to scrutinise! That said, at all the Scrutiny meeting I have attended, I have yet to find any team or department, or any individual who isn't doing their very best for the people of East Suffolk.

As for as the Audit & Governance Committee, their role is to ensure that all the Councils financial transactions are following policy, procedure and relevant legislation – but they also hold departments to account for the way that progress is being made against relevant projects (just as an example, those responsible for public car parking undertook to conduct a consultation process on public car parking places across the District (including electric vehicle charging points) as well as kerb side parking - meaning yellow lines etc), so we challenged them as to how far that process has got – and it's going well – the results will likely be published (I hope!) in early 2024.

The A&G Committee are also responsible for governing councillors' behaviours. All councillors, no matter which council they sit on, are governed by the Nolan Principles – 7 strands on an individuals behaviour in public life.

It was therefore with a heavy heart that I had to report to the final East Suffolk Council meeting in March 2023 about the findings of an external team of lawyers who were employed to look into the behaviours of a Lib Dem colleague who had effectively suggested that the Housing Team had 'fiddled' the figures. That was found not to be the case and the individual was required to apologise – which has not happened. That's not the way to behave in public office!

Now, with all the above put to one side, as a sitting District Councillor for the Orwell & Villages ward at ESC, I have been working with eight parish councils to try and do my best wherever I can in providing support and information to those parish councils for the benefit of the local communities.

Very clearly, one of the biggest issues in the majority of parishes is 'planning'.

I'm acutely aware that all parish councils 'scrutinise' planning applications and that some have a heavier workload in that regard than others!

In Trimley St Martin, three sites have been developed already and two more seem likely to appear in the not-too-distant future. There are various different thought processes about these applications with some

members of the community saying that it shouldn't happen and it's simple over-development, some saying it'd be ok if it was to be built with relevant infrastructure included, and others saying 'get on with it, we need the houses'.

The trouble is that 'land' was identified and allocated for development years ago, but it's only now that these developments are coming into being.

Working with both of the Trimley Parish Councils and the developers, a number of 'issues' that were identified have been resolved, and the developers have undertaken to enhance building and landscape design to help offset the loss of land and the effects of that loss by including things like 'bee bricks, bird boxes, bat boxes, hedgehog highways etc into the builds. Equally, all houses will have solar panels 'built in' and EV charging points installed to assist new home owners to reduce their power draw from the national grid. I wouldn't call these things a 'win' per se, but it does go a little way to offset the loss of farmland (which by the way was NOT sold off by the council – and from which the council does NOT receive any monies for said sale!)

Objections to planning applications There appears to be much confusion around what sort of objection has to be taken notice of .. and I have been copied into a large number recently – but – an objection that “we should be keeping agricultural lands to be able to feed ourselves” or “I won't be able to walk my dog across those fields anymore” and similar do NOT amount to an objection that local planners are required to take note of or action.

I have suggested to the local planning team that we create a public YouTube video to explain what people can object to and how best to do it. This is currently on hold as a Bill proposed by Michael Gove MP is currently finding its way through the legislature that will hopefully massively and positively impact how planning applications are decided and which hopefully give local people a genuine say in what is built – and where.

Other than for planning matters, I have had the ability to support a range of local initiatives that have benefitted the local communities – here's the list!

4th March 2022	£1,000	Bucklesham Parish Council	Funding to Provide a Nest Swing on the Playing Field, Bucklesham
23rd September 2022	£573.30	Kirton & Falkenham Parish Council	Funding to install an enhanced direction sign on the village green.
29th November 2022	£500	Levington and Stratton Hall Parish Council	Funding to distribute a 30-page newsletter (A4) to all residents in Levington and Stratton - quarterly.
-	£1,691.70	Cost of Living	Cost of Living contribution.
10th February 2023	£500	Deben Flower Club	Funding towards an event.
10th February 2023	£720	Bucklesham Parish Council	Funding towards the Bowls club

16th February 2023	£478	Bucklesham Parish Council	Cost towards newsletter for the year.
23rd February 2023	£92.00	Trimley St Martin Parish Council	Funding towards a new logo for the PC
26th February 2023	£645	Kirton & Falkenham Village Hall	Funding towards roof repairs

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Date	Amount	Group/Organisation	Project
30th September 2021	£2,000	Waldringfield Parish Council	Funding towards new play equipment.
20th October 2021	£1,000	Kirton & Falkenham Village Hall	Funding towards building improvements to the Village Hall.
24th November 2021	£1,000	Kirton and Falkenham Gardeners' Club	Enhancing the programme of events, comprising lectures and visits, to retain existing members and bring in new people.
14th January 2022	£1,000	Bucklesham Parish Council	Funding To Provide a Nest Swing on the Playing Field
8th February 2022	£1,850	Trimley St Mary Parish Council	Funding towards jubilee events.

I'm absolutely delighted to have been able to support so many good and great causes across the ward – and I very much look forward to being about this time next year to report to you all once again.

I'd also like to say a very warm 'thank you' to all eight parish councils for the warm and friendly reception that is afforded each time I attend their meetings – though it can be a bit of a juggling game as many have their meeting on the same date at the same time!

Very best wishes
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