

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT 2017

A year ago we were looking at the prospect of devolution, combined authorities and 'The Referendum'. Now we are entering negotiations to leave the European Union and local authorities are reinventing themselves alongside changes in the government's approach to funding local services. In Suffolk talks are still going on about devolution and local revenue generation (such as full retention of business rates); Waveney and Suffolk Coastal have decided to merge in 2019 and Mid Suffolk and Babergh are increasingly working jointly, they will both join the County at Endeavour House later in 2017.

On a more local level, considerable resource has been spent on resurfacing roads; these investments are intended to reduce temporary repairs and diversions in the longer term but may have been frustrating for local residents. The system for reporting minor defects such as potholes is working well and in most cases responses have been prompt. Speeding is an ongoing concern, and the County has helped the parish (along with Botesdale) to obtain Vehicle Activated Signs.

During 2016 SCC contracted out Community Transport among seven operators in Suffolk based broadly on District/ Town boundaries. This aims mainly to connect people to commercial buses and trains. Other transport providers such as the locally operated Rickingham-Botesdale Good Neighbour Scheme offer a more customised 'door-to-door' service. No one should feel that they are stuck unable to leave home or get to appointments.

Rickingham and surrounding area is likely to have additional housing growth and residents will be aware of local applications and proposals in response to the District's Call for Sites. Master-planning and infrastructure funding have challenged both District and County Councils to work more effectively together to resolve these problems and enable school places, health and other services.

Neighbourhood plans are increasingly influencing the type of growth suited to a particular area; three are now adopted in Suffolk (Lavenham, East Bergholt and Mendlesham) and 14 others have started the process including Rickingham-Botesdale and the Diss Area.

Protecting our natural and historic environment is one of the Council's obligations and, as a Historic Environment Champion, one of my own. During the past year SCC along with the University of Suffolk initiated design and construction of a new repository, The Hold in Ipswich, which will house most of the County's archives and offer better public access. It is due to open in 2019. Also last year SCC hosted a new service, the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS); among other things this publishes a list of 'priority' species and habitats which is helpful in assessing impacts of development on local wildlife, visit their website on <http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/>

Thank you for your support and participation over the past year.

Jessica Fleming, County Councillor, Hartismere Division
jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk
Mobile: 07714 597980
Twitter: @jesstfleming