

**Mid Suffolk District Councillor's Annual Report (2018/19)
For the Creeting St Peter Annual Parish Meeting on Thursday 9 May 2019**

Governance

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England carried out a review of ward boundaries in Mid Suffolk proposing reducing the number of councillors from 40 to 34. The final proposal was for the single councillor Stowupland and Creeting St Peter Ward to be split and for Creeting St Peter to be part of a two-councillor ward covering Needham Market and surrounding parishes. Councillors elected on 2 May are Mike Norris and Steve Phillips.

Councillors voted to increase their allowance from £4,000 to £6,000 per year. The changes voted through included Portfolio Holders gaining a 25% increase and the Leader of the Council a rise to £12,500 from £8,000. I voted against this.

Budget and investments

The 2019/20 budget was approved for approximately £10 million on core services (as in previous years) with a council tax increase of 0.5%. This was despite an expected underspend in 2018/19 of £1.9 million.

The Administration re-named the "transformation fund" of over £10 million – calling it a "Growth and Efficiency Fund". It began to spend some of the money from this – including on purchasing the former NatWest Bank building in Stowmarket and on refurbishments of the Regal Cinema in Stowmarket.

Funding has also been put towards two PCSOs available for the District.

Previously, Mid Suffolk borrowed £25 million to invest in commercial property outside of the Mid Suffolk area and currently owns properties in Harlow, Peterborough, Norwich and Milton Keynes. It is expecting these properties to provide over a million pounds of income per year. During this year it borrowed a further £25 million for property investments.

Planning and Housing

I am pleased that the application made by Poundfield Products for a certificate of use or development has been unsuccessful. The company failed to provide sufficient evidence of work commencing before 8.00 am on a regular basis and their application to commence work at 6.00 am has therefore failed.

Much of the year was spent with Mid Suffolk District Council not having a five-year housing land supply and, as such, any housing policies from the Local Plan can be disregarded when a planning application is being considered. Many refused applications were appealed on the basis of Mid Suffolk not having a five-year housing land supply. Notably, an application in Woolpit was appealed whereby the applicant alleged Mid Suffolk only had a three-year housing land supply.

Just last month (April) Mid Suffolk has now confirmed it has a 5.24 years supply. This is based on a consultation undertaken in March and on changes to forecast housing numbers by the Office for National Statistics to all councils in England and Wales.

Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils put in place a Homes and Homelessness Strategy and a Communities Strategy. They continue to work on a new Joint Local Plan but consultation on this has again been delayed until June 2019.

Supporting the community

Using my Locality Awards, I provided funds towards the cost of the beacon on Stowupland Green, the Stowupland Sports and Social Club showers, equipment for the Pre-school and Baby and Toddler Group, a new floor for the Bowls Club pavilion, Freeman School Environmental Project, kit for Stowupland Falcons Under 10 Girls Team, display boards for Stowupland Local History Group, Mid Suffolk Axis, new windows for Creeting St Peter Church Hall, and grants to Stowupland Telstar and The Mix in Stowmarket.

Thank you

I am very grateful for the opportunity to serve Creeting St Peter as District Councillor for the last 4 years. I have always received a warm welcome at meetings and social events. Also a big thank you to members of the Parish Council for their commitment, which has made my role very enjoyable.

Keith Welham, MSDC District Councillor for Creeting St Peter and Stowupland (2015 to 2019)