

District Councillor's Report for Creeting St Peter Parish Council meeting 19 March 2018

Coffee Morning – It was lovely to be able to attend the February coffee morning and see the tables and chairs purchased with a grant from my Locality Budget. I didn't see the new barbecue, which was also bought with Locality funding, but I'm sure it will be put to good use in warmer and drier weather.

District Council Ward Boundary Review – A fresh set of draft proposals has been published by the Boundary Commission for consultation, which runs until 30 April. The Commission will take account of comments and then publish their final proposals in August. The new ward boundaries will come into effect at the District Council elections.

The aim of the review is to reduce the number of District Councillors and set up wards with a similar number of electors. These new draft proposals show Stowupland joined with Haughley, Wetherden and Old Newton, Dagworth and Gipping, but not with Creeting St Peter. This new ward, if agreed, would elect two councillors. I had hoped that Stowupland and Creeting St Peter would have remained together, with the addition of another parish to bring the number of electors up to the required level but this now looks unlikely unless there is a weight of adverse comments made to the Commission within the consultation period.

Merger with Babergh – Little has been heard in the last month. Hopefully, in the light of Babergh's decision to hold a public vote on the proposal to merge, MSDC will also hold a public vote.

Regal Cinema, Stowmarket – MSDC have agreed a grant of £1.56M and a loan of £1.0M to Stowmarket Town Council towards the cost of redeveloping the Regal Cinema. Also, up to £15,000 for remodelling the car park which is likely to result in a loss of up to 10% of the current parking spaces.

NatWest Bank, Stowmarket – MSDC have purchased the building which, for many years, has housed the NatWest bank, and before that the National Provincial bank. There are a number of potential uses for the building, including the possibility of it forming a front entrance to the John Peel Centre.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – MSDC have developed and will soon publish a detailed CIL expenditure framework. This will set out how and when a Parish Council can put forward suggestions for expenditure of the MSDC element of CIL and when they can bid for an amount of the MSDC element to jointly fund a project promoted by the Parish Council. This is unlikely to have any effect on Creeting St Peter unless new homes are built in the village.

Did you know that, as a resident of Mid Suffolk, you own part of a car dealership? In 2016, MSDC agreed to borrow up to £25 million, set up a company to invest in commercial property outside of the Mid Suffolk area and then, hopefully, invest the profits from this in council services – so-called "Profit for Purpose". The Green Group of District Councillors voted against this because, if the Council has money to invest, it should be invested within Mid Suffolk and a significant portion should be invested in truly affordable housing for our residents. In the last few months, investments have been made in commercial property in central Peterborough, Brentwood and most recently in a car dealership in Milton Keynes.

Keith Welham