

Borough Councillor's Report for the Annual Parish Meeting for Hawstead

Another year has gone, although I am not sure where! I continue to enjoy the work I am doing in the Borough Council and representing my residents in the villages. I still attend almost all of the training sessions we are offered as I think it very important to be up to date with what is going on, both locally, and nationally.

My main interests, however, remain in the planning and development areas. I am vice chair of both Development Control and Sustainable Development and these committees take up the majority of my time. I also chair the Grant awarding committee which keeps me up to date with projects in villages and towns across the Borough and I am a member of a further 4 committees.

There are a number areas scheduled for development around Bury which are coming forward at the moment to be developed in phases over the next few years.

In the north there are 2 such areas. To the north-west the area will stretch from the current edge of the built up area towards the Tut Hill road in Fornham All Saints; to the north east Moreton hall will be extended eastwards and will link up with the projected Suffolk Business Park and the Eastern Relief Road and new secondary school. To the south, the south east development in Rushbrooke and the Nowton area has now been adopted. These areas are scheduled for development within the next 15-20 years.

The redevelopment of two major areas within Bury are also now moving forward. Station Hill and the Tayfen Road area are part of a large brownfield area, which will lead to 200 more houses and jobs: a care home, a family pub, new retail and commercial areas. The second area relates to the brownfield site on Western Way, which borders the already developed ASDA and West Suffolk House, but will extend to include amongst others the current Borough refuse depot, the NHS building and the Olding Road car park. The area is intended to become a service village for the Borough and the wider area. A multi storey car park and student accommodation is also part of the plan. We would also like to see provision for a magistrate's court here as well.

On a much smaller scale, but possibly of more importance to residents of Hawstead, several individual planning applications have been made. The majority of the applications have been approved enabling people to build extensions or make alterations to their property. Not all applications go smoothly however,

and I would strongly advise people wanting to put in an application to talk to your Parish Council who make comments pertinent to each application. In addition it is worth having some pre-application advice from Planning Officers. I am also readily available to discuss any individual plans with anyone in the village and I frequently act as a go-between between resident and Planning Officer to try to resolve any problems on an informal basis.

If plans do cause problems by not following the guidelines set out, we do now have a good and very active Enforcement Team working within the planning department. If you have any concerns it is worth contacting them to seek their advice. Again, this is something I could potentially advise on.

Council Tax has had to be raised this year to take account of the government's spending cuts. It is the first time this has been raised for six years. For a Band D property, the increase amounts to about £3.42 per year.

Brown Bins. Having collected and emptied brown bins free of charge for a number of years, a charge has been introduced this year to help pay for the £500,000+ cost incurred in this service. At the moment the take up in this Ward is 46% which is amongst the highest in the Borough. By asking people to opt in to this service, it does mean that if people do not want a brown bin, they do not subsidise those who do. This was deemed to be the fairest way forward.

West Suffolk Operational Hub. SEBC received 550 responses to the second round of consultations offering opinions as to if a Hub was needed to where such a Hub should be sited. Work is now progressing on the analysis of these responses. This will include assessing any new potential sites, or comments on sites previously considered, as well as other issues raised. Once that analysis is complete, recommendations will be put to the three Councils involved in the process that is St Edmundsbury, Forest Heath and Suffolk County Council.

Bury Household Waste Recycling Centre From Wednesday 1 June 2016, the opening hours will be changing to offer site users extended hours on Sundays, Bank Holidays, and on a Thursday evening during the summer months, reflecting the times when the sites are most used and needed by residents.

Weekends and bank holidays are busiest. The quietest day of the week is consistently a Wednesday. As a result of this, the site will be closed on a Wednesday. However the site will be open from 9am- 5pm on other days and during May to August the centre will be open until 7pm on a Thursday.

Housing Company. A Housing Company, called Barley Fields, has been set up which is jointly owned by St Edmundsbury Borough Council (25% share), Forest

Heath District Council (25% share) and Suffolk County Council (50% share). The purpose of the company is to act commercially, to build homes for sale and private rent, and provide up to 30 per cent of the homes as affordable housing (rented, shared ownership and/or low cost starter homes) in line with planning policy. The councils will use the income to help deliver services and plan to start to deliver later this year.

National research has shown that every new home built creates 2.4 long term, sustainable jobs and every £1 spent on housing adds £2.41 to the local economy.

Locality Money. I was again given £2,500 of Locality money to be spent in my Ward this last year to help promote community spirit and to get villagers together. I have given £500 to Hawstead Community Council to spend on a bingo machine, darts equipment and several pub type games. As we no longer have a village pub it seemed a good idea to create a games club to enable villagers to meet together in a convivial atmosphere and generally socialise. I really hope that this idea will take off and provide a useful asset to Hawstead.

The Locality money scheme will be repeated next year, so can I ask you all to think about your projects and contact me so we can discuss the possibility of some locality budget funding?

We still have approximately £70,000 remaining in the **Rural Initiative Grant Scheme**. This is a match funding grant which is used for capital projects of up to £10,000. Several villages have taken advantage of this scheme in recent months and I flag this up in case there are any emerging ideas for projects in Hawstead.

Bury's GPO. I expect you know that the Post Office in its wisdom is to move into a newly built dedicated post office area within WH Smith. It will be located on the first floor, accessed by stairs or lift. It seems that there is nothing we can do about the move, but I hope people are going to send comments via the links in the email that I sent to your Chair last week. It is another blow for the elderly and people from our rural areas without a post office in their village.

Please remember that I am always available to any resident who may require help and advice. I am at the end of a phone, or am very willing to come and meet with people. Please feel free to take me up on this offer!

I am now happy to take any questions you may have.

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