

Parish Council Report by Terry Clements

First of all Happy New Year to you all, not sure what the new year will bring as usual it will be different but let us hope at least there will be some certainty.

I believe last year was summed up by the amount of people who couldn't wait to take down their Christmas decorations and get 2020 started.

West Suffolk as a Council seems to be settling down and a larger group of Councillors are getting to know each other. Overall there doesn't seem to be massive disagreement on the overall direction in which the Council is going.

An Environment and Climate Change Task Force Working Group has been set up and there is buy in from all Councillors. This group will report directly to Cabinet and their conclusions and recommendations will then be put to Council in the early part of this year.

The Rural Area Task Force has concluded it's initial work and that is to be presented to West Suffolk Cabinet on the 14th January 2020. The last meeting of that group was on the 7th January which was a round up of all discussion and recommendations.

I believe there is a strong feeling that this was a very useful exercise and that the Rural Task Force should continue in some form as it had when Vision 2031 was being put together.

I have previously stated the main areas Communication, Housing and Community.

Initially I was sceptical as a member of this group because it had a very tight timescale, but I wasn't the only member who thought so.

So instead of finishing in September we had our last meeting last Tuesday on the 9th January.

I also believe that because so much work has gone into this group also because we did get strong feedback from residents, Parish Councils and various groups this could be a springboard for more meaningful meetings in future.

There always is problems with any engagement if people don't see the result of their input, I don't believe this will happen this time.

The Council will be discussing the budget and looking at the asset management plan over the next few weeks.

The Government has given the Council the option to borrow at PWLB rates and to deliver financial initiatives which will benefit residents in the West Suffolk area.

I believe this needs to be well scrutinised as any borrowing rate comes with risk and should show a comparable rate of return. That also means looking at each one on a case by case basis.

Overview and Scrutiny met on the 9th January to review Management of Events in West Suffolk.

The Chairman David Nettleton and myself had been asked by supporters of the Nearly Festival to call this in to Overview and Scrutiny back in July 2019.

There had been a press release from the Portfolio Holder but there was a strong feeling that the perceived threat to such a popular event deserved proper scrutiny.

I believe there are now sufficient conditions in place to give residents the right assurances. Questions ??