

District councillor's report, December 2010

1. Merger with Babergh District Council

The public will have an opportunity to vote on the proposed merger in a Local Poll in May 2011, to coincide with the next council elections.

2. Comprehensive Spending Review and impact on Budget Planning for 2011/12

Local government faces some of the biggest cuts in the public sector, with a 28% reduction in real terms in grant funding to councils over the next four years. While this represents an annual average reduction of 7%, it is in fact front-loaded with a cut in formula grant of about 10% in the next financial year.

Councils that freeze their council tax will receive government grant equivalent to an increase in 2.5%. That is clearly something worth getting, but in order to do so (and deal with the higher than expected 10% reduction in funding) it will require us to make additional savings of £200,000, on top of those already budgeted for (of over £1m).

3. Thornham Walks

The summer months saw a return of large numbers of visitors and indicates that this important countryside facility will continue to flourish. Revenue from car parking is an important contribution along with the organised activities for all ages, so if you want Thornham to continue to operate please make use of it. The second round of a lottery bid has been submitted for a play area to be built at Thornham and will provide an added attraction for visiting families.

4. Pest Control

Suffolk County Council has awarded the contract to Mitie and Mid Suffolk District Council has been recommended to transfer its Pest Control Service to this contractor.

5. Waste & recycling

Mid Suffolk residents are to be congratulated on their support in helping the county as a whole to raise the recycling level to 50%. The next target, of 60% by 2015, will be harder to achieve, but we still intend to go for it.

Recycling information is not always clear, with packaging information often contrary to the message published by the Council. In order to redress this we plan to distribute (with the new collection calendar) information stickers to be placed inside recycling bin lids to remind residents, new and old, of the "do's and don'ts" of recycling.

It is intended to keep the amount of disruption over the Christmas and New Year period to a minimum, with a continuous, unchanged service operating up to and including December

31. The new year will then see all collections move forward one day, e.g. with Monday's collection moving to Tuesday, etc., and the contractor working on Saturday January 8 in order to catch up, which will of course be necessary given the greatly increased volumes of rubbish accumulating over the holiday season.

A comment on the household sites is in order as it has been widely remarked that recent changes are not particularly user-friendly. In response to feedback, the County has recognised these problems and plans to implement a number of changes, which we shall be monitoring.

6. Waste enforcement

To date, fly tipping incidents are 93 fewer than last year, although twice as many offenders have been dealt with. The down trend may in part be due to the recession, but also to our zero tolerance policy and the vigorous efforts of David Abbott, our Waste Enforcement Officer, who is undertaking and leading training with other partners and agencies in all forms of enforcement and prosecution. All this is saving the Council money which was going to outside agencies to prosecute on our behalf.

7. High Street History

An empty shop in Stowmarket, 56 Ipswich Street, will be transformed as part of the BBC's Turn Back Time – High Street History series. Residents will be able to drop in and find out how Stowmarket's high street has changed in the last 50 years, and guess what they will be able to buy there in 50 years' time. Along with displays of goods from the past and photos of shops that have long since disappeared, volunteers in period costume will be collecting recordings of people's memories and Radio Suffolk will be hosting their lunch time show from the shop on December 8.