

# Occold Parish Council 11.10.2010

## County Councillor Report

### **New Strategic Direction**

I reported to the last meeting that the County Council were looking into how we might save money. The document suggested “We might also want to be the holder of strategic infrastructure that enables smaller enterprises, As we move towards divesting our services there may need to be an interim step of payment by activity and to start creating more commercial skills within our services.”

I interpreted this to mean “here come the cuts”!

How close we were, the county is honestly proposing that within a decade it will be just a commissioning body effectively outsourcing everything. At Octobers Full Council this was voted to be acted upon. We did succeed however in gaining an amendment, which suggested that charities and parishes etc be consulted to find out if there was capacity to take on the services being “divested”. If there is not the capacity then this process will become an exercise in wholesale privatisation.

### **Bridge Open at Last**

After a mere wait of around 40 years the Bridge enabling Stowmarket to stand a chance of being gridlock free is at last open. This vital link is the largest single piece of infrastructure the county council has been involved in this year. As reported in earlier reports the bridge has artwork etched into the parapets depicting scenes of the industrial past of Mid Suffolks largest settlement. The opening of this link will also better integrate the near on a thousand houses on Cedar’s Park to be able to not only drive to town but also Cycle and walk. I have had a few comments regarding the number and effectiveness of the traffic lights and would welcome your comments on the issue.

### **Scrutiny Committees**

The Scrutiny committees that sit at the County Council are being reviewed. All of these panels are chaired by the governing group at the moment, and after serving on one for over a year, I am sceptical as to how much real scrutiny is achieved. Our groups submission to the powers that be at County Hall is that the present regime should be scrapped in favour of a more open form of scrutiny were “task and finish” Panels are used to actually tackle specific issues, rather than the present arrangement were we are told the parameters of the questions we might ask. Hopefully, allowing us mere back benchers a more meaningful role in holding the Leaders and Cabinet to account.

### **Light’s Out**

Next Wednesday the cabinet will vote whether to adopt a new program of dimming control to their streetlight’s. If approved, it will mean that lights will be able to be controlled to the minute, rather than the dawn to dusk regulation at present. It will provide a lam by lamp control capability. The borrowing needed to achieve this (2.5 million) will be paid for from Energy savings from the network.

Andrew Stringer [andrew.stringer@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.stringer@suffolk.gov.uk)

01449 780339 07774 199061