

District Councillor's report, June 2010

1. Finance

The new coalition government has begun to tackle the unprecedented budget deficit inherited from its predecessor. Although no figures have yet been discussed, indications are that local government is an area which will suffer reductions in central government funding. Apart from the possible merger with Babergh District Council (discussions over which continue apace), work has also begun on looking into a number of services which might be run more efficiently and effectively if they were to secure economies of scale unavailable to individual district councils. Revenue and Benefits is one such area. Three authorities in Suffolk (Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils, and Ipswich Borough Council) are currently examining jointly whether they could deliver these services more efficiently if they were to do so jointly. It is estimated that such a merger could generate cost savings of over £1m per annum (shared between the councils) once fully bedded in.

2. Thornham Walks

The Countryside Team continues to work with optimistic enthusiasm to ensure that Thornham Walks remains open as an attractive open country facility.

3. Mid Suffolk Leisure Centres, Stradbroke and Stowmarket

The leisure management contract with SLM Ltd began in October 2005 for a 10-year period, with the option of a 5-year extension. By extending the contract we will reduce the annual management fee, and thereby release significant savings. The partnership has proved very successful, and SLM have suggested extending the Stradbroke pool to include health and fitness facilities, and to replace fitness equipment at Stowmarket Leisure Centre. The financial implications are considered realistic and achievable. SLM expect to have completed the extension at Stradbroke by November this year. Combining these opportunities with the 5-year extension provides the Council with the opportunity to maintain high quality and new facilities, at a net saving of £31,000.

4. Riverside Club, Stowmarket

These premises developed into a night club from what had previously been a snooker hall. Issues relating to planning and building control contraventions have arisen, and activities have given rise to significant noise complaints. The Environmental Protection team therefore instigated a licence review (the first such to be instituted by Mid Suffolk).

5. Stowmarket Area Action Plan

The public enquiry for the compulsory purchase orders was held at the end of April, with the outcome expected within 2-3 months.

6. Waste management

Fly tipping so far this year is down 6 cases to 254, of which 147 people have been dealt with by Fixed Penalty Notice or the courts. We are now starting to deal with unauthorised roadside

advertisements. We now have an arrangement with Suffolk Police who will arrest anyone who refuses to attend interviews on waste enforcement issues.

From the Spring Clean we collected waste from 33 community litter picks and have recruited 7 new voluntary litter pickers who go out all year round keeping their area clean.

We have made progress on cleaning the A14 whereby we now have an agreement with the contractor doing the roadworks whereby we collect rubbish under their guidance, which increases safety and may enable us to clear up some of the central reservation areas.