

District Councillor Report 2018-19

Ditchingham + Broome, Thwaite, Hedenham

This year has been dominated by Brexit, but the South Norfolk Council has got on with delivering its services.

The District council has been able to propose a balanced 5-year budget, despite receiving £2.8 million less in funding from Central Government, than it did 3 years ago, a real term reduction of 48%.

This year, in the light of the loss of all remaining revenue support grant in the local government settlement 2019/20 and considerable financial uncertainty for all councils from 2020/21, an increase of £5 is proposed for 2019/20 to assist in meeting the financial challenges over the five-year period and help maintain essential services.

The District Council has put a lot of effort into the future cooperation with Broadlands District Council. This has evolved into an agreement to work together but keeping the two District Councils identity intact - under the heading of "Two Councils One Team". New heads of team have been appointed after detailed assessments, with the aim to make significant savings, over the next 3 years. As you have seen this is a local government trend - as shown with East and West Suffolk District Councils restructuring.

Main local Issues this year,

- Cancellation of the 88Bus Service to Norwich and failure of the County Council to provide an alternative.
- Planning permission and opposition to more housing than necessary. The Sun Lane planning application was turned down, the Hamilton Way application agreed conditionally despite protest that this would lead to a dangerous rat run.
- Handing over street lights responsibilities to the local Parish Councils, only relevant to Ditchingham.
- Further fund raising for the Men's Shed and Ditchingham Village Hall Annexe.
- Continued aggravation of flies in Hedenham and efforts to control/reduce exposure.
- Speeding in the villages and efforts to control.
- Chicken Roundabout memorial and wildflower beds.

Clearly the most important and recent issue is the possible closure of All Hallows Care Services. Following the private meeting and the public meeting in Ditchingham, the relevant authorities are well aware of the strength of feeling and support for the Hospital. It is clear that the main problem is local authorities do not have additional resources to cover the increasing costs that All Hallows has to pay (living wage etc.) At present discussions are taking place with interested parties with the main priority to find a company to maintain all activities in the present hospital. It is hoped a larger organisation will benefit from economies of scale, to enable all the services to continue.