

Appendix 6

## DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – 12<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2017

### TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING

Brian and I are deeply distressed at the loss of 3 young lives in the terrible accident at Pulham; our sympathies are with the families and friends.

South Norfolk was in the last 6 in the Council of the year competition, I am proud of the fact that South Norfolk, a small District Council has reached the last 6 out of 380 UK Councils in these awards, this recognises that South Norfolk is one of the best places to live and start a business in the country and South Norfolk Council is one of the most forward thinking and best administered Councils.

Parish Boundary Review – A Community Governance Review is currently taking place; this is an opportunity to square off any illogical boundaries and in some cases to amalgamate Councils to make a more practical working unit. In some of our smaller Councils two thirds of the precept is spent on the Clerk and insurance. We are also concerned that out of 119 parishes in South Norfolk only 19 held Parish Council Elections in 2015 which is not good for local democracy.

District Council Boundary Review – The Boundary Commission has issued its final guidance regarding the District Council Ward Boundaries. Subject to Parliamentary approval their recommendations will result in 26 Wards in South Norfolk with 46 Councillors, there will be more multi-member Wards including some in the Waveney Valley; it is likely that the 2019 elections will be fought on these new boundaries.

Business Rates Review – There has been a lot of distress among local businesses, apparently in Harleston a typical shop with a rateable value of say £5,000 per annum has seen a reduction of about £200, but this can be misleading as single shops not part of a chain with rateable values of less than £12,000 may pay nothing at all and on a discretionary basis if a shop, pub or garage in a village is the last, then we exempt the rates. Where the most distress about rises has been is places like Southwold where there have been sharp rises.

The Next Local Plan – Councils are currently canvassing land owners to suggest land to be considered for building, this is a preliminary to decisions about where new homes are to be built in the future, but at the same time we must consider the infrastructure, for example in Harleston the Primary School is getting close to capacity as are also the Doctor's Surgery, we would like to see more smaller developments allowing local builders to take part which would lead to better designed homes as some of the larger sites are so tightly packed that I fear we are developing slums for the future.

I would again like to congratulate the Flags Committee in Harleston for the way they keep Harleston a colourful place to shop.

There are concerns about the extent of road side advertising, I particularly wonder why we need such a huge campaign for the Peterborough Antiques Fair, I very much doubt if the attendance from South Norfolk with equal the number of posters I have seen.

Devolution – It was disappointing that Councils in Norfolk voted against Devolution which allowed Cambridgeshire to gain an advantage, I still feel that if Suffolk are going ahead South Norfolk should join in otherwise the Waveney Valley will be divided.

Policing – Lorne Green has been very active since he was elected and is emphasising in particular rural policing issues, it is deeply concerning the number of local churches who have had lead stolen. Lorne is very good at listening and we should advise him of any problems we have.

The Harleston toilet issue is being resolved and has gone very quiet, it does seem likely that a few people have imposed their view on the larger community, although of course there were issues with the French design.

Brian and I look forward to working with the Harleston Community in the next year to deal with any issues that may be raised, one of which I am certain is the review of transport and parking within Harleston.