

District Councillors' report to Annual Meetings April – May 2020

May 2019 heralded the formation of the new East Suffolk Council and, also, my first year as the elected district Councillor for the Framlingham Ward.

The Ward benefits from the local government of Framlingham Town Council and sixteen Parish Councils covering the rural villages and communities. It is allocated to have two District Councillors.

Unfortunately it became clear, at an early stage, that my colleague Councillor William Taylor found it difficult to balance his Council responsibilities with his work and family life and he has now formally resigned his position. There will no doubt be a by-election in the Ward in due course when I hope that the new Councillor will share my devotion and enthusiasm for supporting and preserving the quality of life in our communities.

Of necessity and by desire I have tried to fully communicate with all Town and Parish Councils and have attended at least one meeting at twelve of the sixteen Councils and also social events, fetes, and garden parties in most communities. I have provided reports to all each month.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my role is being able, through the Council's Enabling Communities Budget scheme, to directly provide financial contributions to local projects. With a personal budget of £7,500, I set out to make contributions as widely across the Ward as possible and to as many different projects as appropriate. Together with the contributions from Cllr Taylor's Budget I have been able to support spending across the Ward for:

- improvements to Children's play areas,
 - speed indicator signs,
 - improvement to village halls,
 - support for Christmas festivities,
 - equipment for a playschool,
 - mental health support for students,
 - a youth music workshop
 - transport for the elderly
 - improvement and renewal of green spaces
- and with support from the Council's Exemplar Fund
- provide floodlighting for a local sports club

In the coming year I shall be looking to continue support towards road safety, village community amenities, recycling and green energy projects.

As the largest District Council in the Country, East Suffolk has continued to reduce costs by economy of scale but at the same time increase the areas of core service. In the past year the key decisions and initiatives have been:

- To declare a Climate Emergency and form the Environmental Task Group to deliver results
- To create a new District wide Business Strategy Plan and to expand the core objectives of
 1. Growing our Economy
 2. Enabling our Communities and
 3. Remaining Financially Sustainableto include
 4. Delivering Digital Transformation and

5. Caring for our Environment.

- The introduction of the Community Partnership Programme to deliver the most effective help and support directly to where it is needed.
- To invest heavily in the refurbishment of the district's leisure facilities
- Working with the Town Council and local Business Association, the introduction of a free public WiFi system in Framlingham
- The promotion of solar energy and diverse recycling projects
- The introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement and new Car Parking management schemes to improve the parking experience and in support of local businesses and visitors.

Of course, latterly we have all been dealing with the dreadful Coronavirus crisis. It is in such times that everyone sees the true value of their Town and Parish Councils. The local efforts to support the elderly, the isolated and the vulnerable has been truly heart-warming.

I was privileged to be appointed as Cabinet Member for Resources in January to prepare for and carry through the Council's Budget proposals. Having achieved that objective, I could be forgiven for thinking that I might have a quieter time for a few months. The crisis had other ideas!

My focus at this time is to deliver the available financial support from the Government to over 8,000 individual Council Tax tenants and over 6,600 small businesses to help them survive until we can return to more normal times.

What those 'normal times' look like might be quite different from before and I am certainly considering how my role as a Councillor can best be achieved going forward.

I will certainly still be striving to support the many and varied communities within the Framlingham Ward and I look forward to working with you all in the coming year.

Kind regards

Maurice



Cllr Maurice Cook *FInstLM*
Framlingham and Villages
Assistant Cabinet Member - Resources
Maurice.Cook@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
07825 421128
www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk

East Suffolk Council is a new district authority which, from April 2019, delivers services for the residents, businesses and communities previously served by Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils