

## District Councillor's Report to Lavenham Parish Council meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021

The biggest topics of the moment centre around our market town of Sudbury. Dissension has been high amongst councillors (and residents) over the executive decisions taken and being taken on the customer access point; proposed car parking charges; and the sale of Belle Vue House. Executive decisions are those that the Cabinet can take without consultation with the remaining councillors. Consultations have been argued for, debated on and challenged for; the matters are still being discussed in varying quarters.

I attended the Cabinet Meeting today (4<sup>th</sup> Feb) and asked questions and made comments as a member. Re car parking charges; it was confirmed by an officer that disabled parking will not be charged in the future and I will keep the Cabinet to this disclosure. Permit parking will be £250 pa which I will also be keeping an eye on as in my opinion most charges rise annually with little regard to the financial situation of those involved.

Re council tax: I raised the issue that increases on council tax is moving the burden to fewer and fewer residents, I was pleased to have support on this matter by one of the Cabinet members. Legitimately, residents have the opportunity and the right to request reductions and exemptions on their council tax bills and government have during these unprecedented times, given BDC more funding for these schemes. I stress the increase is small but once other authorities add their increases it does make a difference to some residents' finances.

Another large topic is the motion of no confidence in the Leader of BDC, Cllr John Ward. This will be voted on at our next Council meeting after the motion was submitted and accepted. My personal feeling is that it is a shame that the reputation of BDC has reached such low levels. My vast network of countrywide contacts are all asking what is going on – I am fearful for the status of BDC.

More discretionary business grants are available and I urge all businesses, and public buildings, to apply for them if they have not already automatically received the monies.

BDC also have their minor and major grants for home adaptations. If in need I urge residents to apply for them. The minor adaptations are not means tested and can provide that help which makes living at home so much easier.

All parishes will have set their precepts for the year and will be looking at their forward plans for their villages for the benefit of residents. Please remember that apart from CIL Bids there is also funding help from BDC through consultation for both their internal and external funding schemes. Contact Joshua Holmes or Chris Knock for more information.

The vaccination roll out across the District is gaining momentum and by 1<sup>st</sup> February all over 80s and those in care homes should have been offered a vaccination. If not, please contact me directly (I do need a few personal details) and I will forward the names to my contact for an appointment. There have been some questions directed to me regarding the roll out and I can answer those if needed. But in the meantime, please be aware that there are three schemes inviting residents for a vaccination, including the national scheme which is using larger hubs. If visiting one of the larger hubs is not acceptable to a resident, one of the other schemes will contact them at a later date for a more local appointment but whatever a resident chooses to do please make sure you/they are aware of the **address** of the vaccination centre as some are attending the wrong site.

As we are still receiving significant rainfall which for the period December 2020 to January 2021 is recorded as the highest for one hundred years, it is producing some worrying and

distressing issues. I am aware of flooding in Little Waldingfield, Lavenham and Great Waldingfield. The last, due to it threatening property and the safety of residents within it, has had significant intervention via SCC. Cllr Spence and I sought out a solution to the immediate problem which proved (provisionally I add), SCC owns the pond. This situation has proved that the lack of maintenance to ditches, culverts, grits, ponds, etc is a real problem and something needs to be done to maintain drainage systems that are efficient.

On the same excessive rainfall issue, it is apparent that Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) are becoming waterlogged, muddy and difficult to negotiate. I would urge all to take care at this time, not put themselves at risk of a slip or trip and consider using another walkway until the PRoWs have had time to dry out. Cllr Spence and I have spoken on the subject of PRoWs. SCC are setting their current response (at the moment) to flooding issues as above; are inundated with requests for PRoW management which is overwhelming their services; and are looking at their forward management plans. Please remember that any work carried out by volunteers on PRoWs does put the volunteers at significant risk of liability if they do not have the correct authority from SCC to undertake any such works.

Taylor Wimpey have their consultation out for phase one of their works at Chilton Woods and I would urge residents to have their say on the proposals. The works access point (haul road) is still not confirmed and I fear that it will be pushed, by default, along the B1115 from the old airfield entrance.

Worryingly the gas generated battery store for electricity has appeared again for planning permission at Church Field Road, Chilton. These generators have been rejected in other parts of the country, would be using gas which is due to be phased out from 2025, are noisy, not attractive to look at and in my opinion against BDC climate change and climate emergency policies. I have called the application into planning committee IF it is minded, to be approved. I am not in favour of this at all – it is the wrong place, the wrong facility and if the utility companies cannot support their connections, should we be approving planning applications within this area? I leave this question to others to answer.

**Cllr Margaret Maybury**