

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF DEBDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Wednesday 5th May 2010 at 8.00pm, in the Debden Memorial Hall

Reports Submitted

1. District Councillor – Tina Knight

UDC finances are slowly improving. It is still challenging but now stable. Reserves are being replenished, they have lobbied several Government Ministers for support and their score for use of resources has improved from rating 1 – 2 (meaning they are 2 years ahead of schedule with improvements)

They are continuing seeking out suitable partnerships to reduce costs on services that are duplicated. We are operating a parking service with Colchester and Braintree District Councils and have linked forces with Herts and East Herts DC and Essex and Herts CC to fight the Stansted Airport application for an additional runway.

They have introduced free swimming facilities for the under 16's and over 60's.

New community centre at Gt. Dunmow.

Introduced part time Job Centre facilities in Saffron Walden and Thaxted.

They are in the top 10 for recycling and have been successful in a bid with 15 other local authorities for £6.3 million share for home energy resources.

They have refused application from Stansted Airport for change of use of warehouses rental rules.

Bridge end Gardens has been voted the best picnic spot in the Eastern Region and has been entered for the National finals.

Unfortunately not much advance in cycle paths in the region although a start has been made in a small way on the Thaxted road out of Saffron Walden. However, I continue to raise this issue on a regular basis.

More locally I am continuing with pressing for speed restrictions at Debden Green and have had requests from residents at that end of the village (N. Or S.?) that the tubs that were stolen last year have not been replaced by the Parish Council although they were replaced at the other end. There is one tub missing at the triangle by the seat at Debden Green crossroads. One tub by the first Debden Sign into the village and two tubs by the other signs. All of these tubs were looked after by residents who have stated that they would continue to do so.

2. County Councillor – Simon Walsh

Since we last met there has been a County Council election, and in case you missed it, the Conservative Party retained control winning 60 of the 76 seats.

The administration is now lead by Cllr Peter Martin, an experienced councillor, who succeeds Lord Hanningfield who has stepped down for personal reasons.

Council tax: This year we managed to keep the increase well below inflation at 1.9%. We have pledged to keep it below inflation for the next four years. This equates to 38 pence a week for Band D properties.

With substantial savings made, particularly with behind the scene processes, of £40 million, and a project in partnership with IBM to save £300 million by 2012, we have been able to increase budgets to front-line services, such as Children's Services, Adult Social Care and in Highways.

In addition the council has pledged to support apprenticeships up to 1750 by 2012

Recruit more foster carers and provide support

Promote rural access and community transport across the county

Expand broadband availability across the county

Promote the establishment of new community orchards and allotments

Deliver sustainable energy advice

Increase opportunities for healthier lifestyles

It has generally been a successful year for the County, initiatives such as saving the post offices, a life raft grant for tourism businesses, and creating a Bank of Essex to help small businesses through the recession have been nationally applauded.

Things are difficult in other areas, Children's Services, in particular safeguarding remain a concern, the major difficulty being the size of Essex, its large population of young people, 320,000, and great difficulty in recruiting suitable qualified people, despite recruiting drives across the world.

Highways, particularly after one of the worst winters for 30 years remain a major challenge. Despite the Government's £100 million extra money to repair potholes, in reality it will cost billions nationally. The share for Essex is just over £2 million.

Winter gritting was a significant challenge this year. For over 80 nights 65 gritter trucks were out sometimes upto three times per route in order to keep the roads clear. However, as national salt stock ran low, all councils were asked to ration their routes and eventually, only key routes were covered.

This caused problems for some especially in the rural areas, but on the whole we got by.

The County recently hosted a Snow Summit, attended by 150 delegates where many issues were discussed. I was pleased to learn that our gritter trucks have state of the art computers in them that direct the drivers to their routes and control the amount of salt spread at any given time.

I now chair a Scrutiny Committee, Safer and Stronger Communities, and we have already investigated the Lights Out pilot, motorcycle safety and are now looking at the conservation of the Built Heritage in Essex.

I also have been appointed to the police authority.

This year a new Chief Constable, Mr Barker-McCardle was appointed, and he is driving forward the measures introduced by his predecessor, Mr Baker.

Despite the economic situation, we continue to recruit more front-line constables, paid for by making savings elsewhere. An example of this is by collaborating with Kent by sharing IT systems, the helicopter and serious crime teams.

The airport remains firmly on the County's radar and we remain opposed to any further runways.

3. Footpath Warden – Patrice Sauzier

This year, the contractor for grass cutting is a new one. We intend to have 3 cuts in all, the first one being w/o 10th May (next week, at the end of the week).

On the 22nd May, weather permitting, a group of volunteers will help clear the hedges and invading growths where it is required.

There is no major work planned or required for the coming year.

Just to remind everyone that we are always thankful for walkers who report to us about problems they might encounter while walking the footpaths.

Patrice Sauzier 541159

Pat Hemmings 541308