

ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk's Report to the Ordinary Council Meeting 15th April 2019

- 1 I attended a SALC / MSDC seminar on the 2nd May election procedures on 20th February. Unfortunately, the Mid Suffolk speaker did not turn up and the time, for me, was somewhat wasted. I have made my disquiet known to both bodies. Meanwhile, the arrangements which have had to be put in place as a consequence of the move of Mid Suffolk's administration out of the District and into central Ipswich have not been well co-ordinated. In any *post mortem* on the process I shall argue for serious consideration of changes before the next election is called.
- 2 I attended a Safer Neighbourhood Team liaison session at Stowmarket Police Station on Friday last along with representatives from just 4 other villages. The considerable gap between the real concerns of the rural population and the imperatives which drive Police policy and action remains, as does the realisation that much of the discrepancy is driven by powers and influence beyond local control. It would seem that we must wait for the drivers of social fashion to decline in parallel with an improved financial backdrop before our communities can once again begin to feel adequately protected. It emerged that the 2 new PCSO's funded by Mid Suffolk are to be contacted for action via our Ward Members. I made the point, as so often before, that town & parish councils are the most appropriate link with the grass roots.
- 3 The 40% uplift in income from the lettings at Blackbourne / Wesley reflects a proportionate increase in pressures on the management process. The stresses are most obvious on the physical 'caretaking' processes, and this particularly at weekends when there is often no-one in the office to oversee proceedings. I remain aware of the need to develop Council structures so that the inevitable succession to new management is not problematic. To this end I seek Council's consideration of an increase in 'caretaking' hours with an eye to flexibility and would suggest that a new post be created, a 'weekend caretaker', committed to split-shift cover over Saturdays and Sundays with additional responsibilities for holiday absence / emergency cover as necessary. I suggest that 4 hours per week would be a working basis for a trial period, the post to be advertised in the village and any firm proposal to come back to Council for ratification.
- 4 Since 2017 Council's employees have had the right to take part, or otherwise, in the Government's automatic enrolment pension scheme to which the employer must make a contribution. Thus far the option has not been taken up, but the Assistant Clerk is enrolled from 1st April and Council will be liable to a 3% contribution, to show beginning with the May accounts.

Peter Dow
15.04.2019