

Norfolk County Councillor Report Spring 2015

Ian Monson Member for the Brecks Division

The 2014/15 year has been difficult. Grant reductions from Government coupled with spiralling costs and increased public expectations have eaten into the Councils reserves. Efficiency savings have been made through redundancy and improved good practice, but this has not arrested the growing financial deficit. The current Rainbow Coalition, led by Labour, seems unable or unwilling to take the necessary measures to correct the slide that will without doubt continue to worsen over this current year.

In regard to services, Adult Social Care, in spite of a few well publicised disasters, is offering improved long term care in modernised Care Homes with care at home also being expanded and improved. There is much greater co-ordination with the NHS to find places for patients who have to be discharged from hospital. There is still along way to go. Credit must be given to the hundreds of Care Workers the Council employs who 24/7 are looking after our rapidly increasing elderly population. They do an excellent job and I would like to thank them for their hard work and dedication.

Children's services, another vital department at County Hall has recently adopted a more proactive approach to stop the continuing increase in looked after children. This is centred on spotting the problems in families earlier and trying to improve them before the child has to be taken into care. There has been limited success here and costs have been reduced. In Education more schools are

becoming independent Academies and this has necessitated a reduction in Council administration costs. However the Council can still offer professional advice and help if needed. It still remains open as to whether the schools are improving or not from these changes.

Our Libraries and Museums have had another record year in visitor numbers, offering an excellent and varied service, and this is in spite of considerable funding reductions.

Trading Standards, also with reduced funding have had to keep up with the ever increasingly sophisticated criminal fraudster. I take my hat off to the officers in this department for what they have achieved over the year.

Our Fire Department has lost 5% of its funding last year, but through sheer dedication and training it is still rated as one of the most efficient fire services in the Country.

Roads and Transport have also seen funding reductions and a few more bus services have been cut through lack of use. However this part of Norfolk has not been badly affected. Service maintenance to our roads has been kept up, and the Rangers continue to help Parish Councils at a local level. This has been mainly due to a series of ring fenced government grants.

One of the biggest blows to the Council's budget has been the cancellation of the Incinerator project last year. Cancelled at a cost of £35 million, we are now also faced with double the cost of disposal of out waste for at least the next five years. This amounts to finding an extra £20 million each year.

These are difficult times. With the Council politically gridlocked, decisions are not being made as they should. Weak leadership of the Administration does not help, but I can assure you I will do my personal best to make sure services get properly and fully delivered right down to local Parish level.

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