

REPORT ON SALC AGM HELD ON MONDAY 14TH NOVEMBER IN ELMSWELL VILLAGE HALL

The meeting was chaired by Sir Edward Greenwell and 95 councils were represented. Normal business went through smoothly. Chairman Philip Hayes warned that PCs in the future might be subject to a referendum which could cost £1,000 if they raised their precept above a certain level. (Relating to this matter, a consultation is currently taking place for councils whose turnover is £500,000. If approved, it might be applied to smaller authorities) He recommended councils write to our MP.

Regarding the Devolution debate, the proposed Mayor will be a figurehead but will be in charge of infrastructure, not Whitehall. Shona Bendix in her annual report said she was pleased with the survey forms that PCs had completed on a range of issues. She reckons this is going to be of great interest, covering Police, Highways and Planning. Shona works a lot with her Norfolk colleagues on the devolution issues and emphasised transparency, concern about precept and freedom of information.

In The Councillor due at the end of the month, there is a long article on those who are struggling in Suffolk. Many people cannot manage on their pensions due to food, price and heating gone sky-high.

For the second year running we had civil servant John Connell, Head of Neighbourhood Policy at the Department of Communities and Local Government who spoke about devolution and said everyone needs to work together for right solutions. Young people need help after they have left school to get apprenticeships. He also mentioned the plight of lonely, isolated people.

He mentioned grants of up to £10,000 could be forthcoming. Grants programmes can be found for projects in your area www.mycommunity.org.uk

Solar Farms should be like wind farms and pay PCs a contribution. Shona will take any calls on any of these matters.

Award winners: Newsletter of the Year

Small Villages: 1st-Levington 2nd Freckenham

Larger Villages: 1st-Ufford Punch 2nd Stowmarketland Telstar

Website of the Year: Small villages: 1st Mellis, 2nd Hawstead Medium/Large Villages: Framlingham

David Chenery (Highways East) has said his department is moving out of Saxmundham and will either go to Halesworth depot or back to Ipswich

REPORT ON DISABILITY FORUM HELD ON TUESDAY 4TH OCTOBER AT SCDC COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Some time was spent talking about the new SCDC offices at Wilford Bridge. Concern was raised a long time ago about facilities for the disabled there. The lift has not been fire-proofed and may not take the weight of a heavy electric wheel chair. Of more concern are the plans for evacuation in the case of an outbreak of fire in the upstairs main meeting room where the lift cannot be used. Any disabled person would have to be winched down to the ground floor. The views of disabled people were not sought prior to the new build.

It was also a matter of concern that there are not enough disabled parking places outside Woodbridge Library where the public will be able to meet with SCDC staff rather than at the new offices.

A representative of the Coastal Transport System (CATS) was present and it was pointed out that it is not always possible to get the slot you need for urgent medical appointments. Some people book weeks in advance. Cll Mark had to step in and take the person to her optician appointment herself.

Felixstowe Chamber of Commerce is meeting with the chair of the Disability Forum about the survey of shops carried out in July from the point of view of access for the disabled. Banks should have their ATMs lower down so those in wheelchairs can reach them.

Next meeting of the Forum is on Tuesday 10th January 2017.