This is my second Annual Report since I was elected to represent residents of Blofield with South Walsham. The Ward encompasses the following parishes:

- Blofield to include Blofield Heath;
- Hemblington;
- South Walsham;
- Upton with Fishley and
- Woodbastwick to include Ranworth, Panxworth.

Quite what should go into this report I am still not sure. What follows is therefore a potpourri of events and issues that have drawn my attention through the year.

Property development within the villages is an issue that always focuses attention. Change is not always good but some change is inevitable. Of course the greatest development activity is in Blofield but other parishes are not immune. I will not dwell on individual cases where the issues and outcomes are already known.

This report comes primarily to the elected representatives of this parish. It is with them I have most regular contact through the year. Might I ask that this report is published on the Parish web site for circulation in the wider community? I would be grateful.

INDEX

- Elected Councillor Allowances
- Devolution & The Mayor
- Greater Norwich Local Plan
- Neighbourhood Plans
- Planning Enforcement
- Food Hub
- Business Rates & Council Tax
- Pedestrian Street Lighting
- Major Roads
  - NDR
  - A47 Improvements
- NORSE Services
  - Garden Waste Disposal
  - Recycling
- Congratulations
  - Community at Heart Awards
  - Chairman of the Council
  - Sunday Times Best Company
- Water in the Carburettor

Elected Councillor Allowances

Before I was elected. I was curious to know what elected members receive for their services. I might not be alone.

The basic allowance I/we receive is currently £3,603 per annum. More important people receive additional payments for responsibilities such as chairing committees. Expenses at rates widely recognised are also paid in addition, but largely restricted to travel on Council business. For comparison, the allowance for a Norfolk County Council member is £9,018. I am told he/she performs a wholly different, and more important, function.
All payments we receive are subject to deduction of Income Tax at the highest rate and (where applicable) National Insurance. Details are published on the Broadland website. I doubt we get Redundancy or Unfair Dismissal!

As we emerge from the recession there is a view among elected members that the allowance should be increased. I cannot think that throughout the Nation many local councillors receive less than in Broadland. What we should receive by way of uplift remains to be determined.

**Devolution & the Mayor**

During the early part of the year much energy was expended over the creation of a new tier of local government run by local political heads and a lord mayor. Some Westminster powers would be exercised locally and more money would be provided to spend locally. New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) announced that £750M of new funding would be provided.

Broadland was not alone in strongly supported the deal. However it was controversial and Kings Lynn and West Norfolk were not persuaded. They roundly rejected it and the offer was withdrawn. In my estimation many who voted for the proposals will not shed tears at that outcome.

For me the concept was great but the model lacked credibility. A Mayor for Suffolk and Norfolk was the most controversial but not the only issue. What would he/she do for us?

This was a concept important to the David Cameron team. Her has moved on. Hopefully Westminster hearts have softened so that when the project is revived it will address the objections. The all Norfolk deal of the kind promoted by Henry Bellingham - MP for Kings Lynn & West Norfolk - bears careful consideration but it is not the only one..

**Greater Norwich Local Plan**

The current local plan is the Joint Core Strategy. This is now under review. We can expect that in or about 2020 the JCS will be replaced by the Greater Norwich Local Plan.

The Nation needs homes and Government has decided local policies must not be allowed to get in the way. Thus the draconian consequences for failure to meet the Five Year Land Supply. Like other councils Broadland is not able to meet the targets.

Where councils do not meet the Five Year Land Supply requirements, local plan policies (ie the JCS) are deemed to be out of date - even if entirely up to date. This, coupled with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, can mean open house for determined developers. Locally the burden is seen to be carried by Blofield and Blofield Heath.

Broadland is close to meeting the requirements. A possible solution to achieve that end is under consideration. It involves extending the Norwich Policy Area across Norwich, South Norfolk and Broadland.

The theory says that if the NPA is expanded this way then the requirements will be met. That would mean local plan policies would at last prevail everywhere. Unfortunately there is no guarantee this scheme will achieve the desired result. Accordingly there is some resistance among parishes which are not part of the NPA. For this reason the proposal may not happen.

**Neighbourhood Plans - Not Again!**

Yes - again. What is the point spending the money if local plans are deemed out of date - even when they are not - see above?

Changes to Government guidelines now say a Neighbourhood Plan can regulate development even if there is no Five Year Land Supply. Where a Neighbourhood Plan makes provision for new housing it can now be used to defeat a planning application.

The government statement means that relevant policies for the supply of housing in a Neighbourhood Plan should not be deemed to be out of date in the following circumstances:
1. Housing is allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan;
2. Either the decision is made before 12 December 2018 or the Neighbourhood Plan has been part of the development plan for 2 years or less; and
3. Broadland (the LPA) can demonstrate a 3 year supply of deliverable housing sites.

Points to Note

**Condition 1**

To meet this requirement any parish wishing to qualify must
- have a Neighbourhood Plan
- that is compliant.

Parishes such as Blofield cannot be blamed for the impossible ie not anticipating this new requirement.

**Condition 2**

If you wish to take the benefit of the change it is important to adopt a (new) Neighbourhood Plan ASAP. If you can overcome the requirements by the end of 2017 all well and good. Otherwise you must wait two years before the plan is effective.

**Condition 3**

Broadland can comfortably demonstrate a 3 year supply of deliverable housing sites.

**Good News for Lawyers**

The Government guidance is currently subject to challenge in the Courts. It may (or may not!) be upheld.

The consequences of failing to meet the Five Year requirements are also subject to challenge. The first case on the point is listed for hearing before the Supreme Court - highest court in the land.

Confused? That's allowed! Please call me if you would like me to go through this in more detail.

**Planning Enforcement**

Not many people have heard of New Anzac on Sea. In the years between the two World Wars it was promoted by a property speculator as the English answer to the French Riviera - but in Sussex? The scheme failed and investors lost money. However the land was eventually developed. It is better known today as Peacehaven.

The layout is little more than parallel rows of streets intersected by other parallel roads at right angles. It is one of the best arguments I know for the introduction in 1948 of the Town & Country Planning Act.

To be effective the laws must be capable of enforcement. And they are. The question is- are the laws enforced adequately?

In the few months since I was elected there have been a number of complaints regarding failure to enforce breaches of planning control within the Ward. I cannot think this is unique to us. There are several examples where case officers refuse action in the face of what they concede is a breach of planning law.

Enforcement is discretionary. Each case is different and to bring down the full force of the law on minor infringements can only be detrimental. Hands up anybody who wants that.

But what about the rest? Currently all decisions lie with the enforcement team. There is no mechanism for review. I don’t think that is right.

I want a mechanism to review enforcement decisions in the limited number of cases which cry out for action. I am glad to report that Mr. Courtier - Head of Planning - agrees the principal.

I must stress that, in the main, enforcement decisions will continue to be taken within the Enforcement Department as before, without review.

Subject to that and with his agreement I have circulated a draft regulation for referring complaints to a new
Planning Enforcement subcommittee for review. Conditions will apply. It is too soon to say what form the final version may take.

Meantime as a separate aspect Overview & Scrutiny Committee intend to review the operation of planning enforcement generally

**The Food Hub - part of the New Anglia EZ**

Broadland falls within the New Anglia Enterprise Zone recently extended to cover all of Suffolk and Norfolk.

Enterprise Zones are designated areas across England that provide tax breaks and Government support. They are intended to be great places to do business for both new and expanding firms. The benefits EZs can deliver to business include

- Business rate discount up to £275,000 over five years,
- Simplified planning and
- Access to Superfast broadband.

In my experience the big attraction for investing in an EZ, is the tax break of First Year 100% Capital Allowances for Income/Corporation Tax. These are intended to promote investment by capital intensive companies. Put another way; to be a success an EZ needs a little help. I therefore find it bizarre that the tax break has been excluded.

But what about the Food Hub? The site for the hub is West of Norwich and within the East Anglia EZ. A food and farming hub would tie in with Norfolk's world class research facilities and provide a significant boost to the local economy.

To quote Phil Courtier (Head of Planning):

Norfolk is the most important county for agriculture in England and grows about eight per cent of the country's agricultural produce. However, only three per cent of the national share of processing and associated work is based in the county, meaning financial and employment benefits are lost to other parts of the country.

The Government has approved the creation of a Food Enterprise Zone on land to the west of Easton and south of the A47, with easy access to the research park at Colney.

The idea is to attract food-related businesses to set up close to each other and to the county's research facilities. They would then bring high quality food processing and marketing jobs into the area as well as benefiting other local businesses and reducing food miles.

The scheme is exciting. Silicon Valley is California's answer to the demand for innovative IT. For me there can be no doubt The Food Hub has all the potential to do the same for local Agriculture, food-processing business and jobs.

And I’ve said nothing about the Airport and its potential to generate business and jobs.

**Business Rates & Council Tax**

Nobody wants to pay more if they can pay less. The problem is that if we pay less we don’t get the services we expect.

During the recession costs were cut to the bone. Hopefully the recession is history. It is entirely a personal view but for the future Broadland must increase its income to satisfy the demand for quality services.

Historically the source of local income was Business Rates, Council Tax and Government subsidy. Soon there will be no Government subsidy. We shall have to fend for ourselves on locally generated income - except it's not quite like that!

**Business rates** depend on Rateable Value. This is set independently by the District Valuer Service. The amount paid depends on the Rate Poundage which is a multiplier set by the Government. Local Authorities like Broadland
do not yet have power to adjust the multiplier.

**Council Tax** is set by the various authorities and collected by Broadland. Each authority in the area sets its own precept.

For the first time in six years Broadland has increased Council Tax. The uplift is £5.00 viz 4.5% for a Band D home. This is the maximum allowed to avoid a local referendum!

For the future I want to see a realistic assessment of the required costs to restore services to the level people expect. In some cases we may be there already - but not in all. There will be an impact on Council Tax. We cannot provide a service without the money to pay for it. To achieve all this in one year may be too ambitious. Of course we must take account of the people on fixed and/or limited incomes for whom any increase will be a challenge.

**Pedestrian Street Lighting**

As I understand it the Council has been able to maximise the CT increase by giving up responsibility for pedestrian lighting such as footpaths. There is no change for normal street lighting.

In future the burden will fall directly on the parishes. Hitherto the parishes were invoiced by Broadland and the cost was collected via the parish precept. So what's different?

To the four or five Broadland parishes most affected this is important. Although the decision has proved a clever way to maximise Council without a local referendum income I have reservations.

This is just the kind of service that would benefit from being delivered by a single provider. It is also an uncomfortable precedent for the future. What other service can we shuffle off to parishes to avoid a referendum?

**Major Roads**

Highways are not a Broadland service. Although Norfolk County Council and Highways England are the responsible authorities, Broadland takes a close interest.

**The Northern Distributor Road**

This seems to progress effortlessly. The contract completion date is March 2018. The Balfour Beatty and NCC construction team have set themselves the earlier target of traffic using the road by Christmas 2017. That is Christmas this year! Conditions apply but it soon will happen. It may not be as important for Ward parishes as for others but it is hoped it will provide a measure of relief for Woodbastwick, Ranworth and Panxworth, especially during the Beet campaigns.

**A47 improvements.**

This is what Highways England has said:

> Our proposals will create a new dual carriageway that will relieve congestion, provide extra road space, improve safety and help provide a free-flowing network. This consultation provides you with an opportunity to view, discuss and help shape our proposals. This will help us understand what is important to our customers and local communities and will help inform the selection of a preferred option.

The projected start date remains 2020. By the time this Report is circulated the non statutory consultation period for commenting on the four optional routes will have closed.

On 18th April I attended the last presentation by Highways England regarding the dualling of the road from Blofield to North Burlingham/Acle. Key Points:

- Whichever route is selected will involve junctions at the Eastern end of Yarmouth Road Blofield and at White House - as one approaches Acle.
- Neither the junction for the Windle nor Cucumber Lane form part of this project.
- The designers are aware of the importance of North - South crossings such as Lingwood Road.
NORSE Services

NORSE is a private company wholly owned by Norfolk County Council. It provides a range of services across England and Wales to Local Authorities and others. Everybody I know who meets the teams working the bin lorries and the recycling centre at Strumpshaw has nothing but praise for their staff.

Broadland is one of seven local authority partners in a joint venture company called NORSE Environmental Waste Services Ltd. (NEWS)

NORSE Commercial Services Ltd. (NCS) is a wholly owned subsidiary of NORSE which, itself, is wholly owned by Norfolk County Council

NCS has the commercial skills necessary to manage the waste disposal obligations of NEWS.

Garden Waste Disposal

I sit on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. During the Autumn of 2016 members of the Committee were prompted by a competing operator to enquire into the garden waste disposal contract processed at Marsham. Did it provide best value? It had been my expectation that the existing contract with NEWS would be renewed automatically since it must provide best value - mustn't it?

In the event the garden waste contract will not be renewed and the service has been put to tender under the normal procurement process. The hope is that out of this exercise Council Tax Payers in Broadland will receive the same service if not better at a more competitive price. It’s early days.

Recycling

That experience prompted us to enquire into the award of and the workings of our Recycling contract with NEWS. This enquiry is ongoing and the issues are complex.

Congratulations

Community at Heart Awards

Every year BDC promotes the Community at Heart Awards. The awards celebrate people who have made a great contribution to our community. I attended the ceremony held at The Space, Rowntree Way Norwich on 26th October.

With no disrespect to the Council who organised the event and the sponsors who helped to make it happen I can only describe it as all the Glitz of Hollywood - but at down town Norwich prices! In each and every way it was a really great evening.

In the category for Business Community Support of the Year our Ward produced the winner in the White Horse Development Trust at Upton. Well done.

Runners up included

- Broadland Rocks Community Choir (Mr and Mrs Gower), based in Blofield, who were shortlisted for Community Group of the Year and
- Fairhaven Woodland and Water Garden who were shortlisted for Environmental Champion of the Year

And now a (brief!) word for the sponsors?

- The Space - where the event was presented were great supporters. Click Here for their web site
- Romanian Wine Company (of Strumpshaw) Click Here for their web site

Chairman of the Council

No, Not Me!

The public face and ceremonial duties of the Council is carried out by the Chairman. Each year he/she is chosen from among elected members. For the year 2017-18 Councillor David Ward was elected to be Chairman of Broadland District Council.
David has done much work for the community and will be known by many as District Council Member for Burlingham and a parish councillor for Blofield even though he lives in Hemblington. Congratulations and well done indeed David

**Sunday Times Best Company**

Every two years Broadland District Council takes part in the Best Companies Survey, sponsored by the Sunday Times. Staff are invited to complete a questionnaire which asks how ‘engaged’ they feel in their work place. It is completely anonymous and the *Best Companies organisation* analyse the results and provide feedback across a number of factors. The survey took place last October with the results announced in February.

Broadland successfully secured a place in the Sunday Times top 100 best *Not For Profit Organisations* to work for. The Council is also a ‘one to watch’ rated by the *Best Companies organisation* (10 marks off a ‘one star organisation’). 16 councils participated in the survey; only 3 secured a top 100 position. Broadland is one of those

Didn't we do well? Yes we did!

**Water in the Carburettor**

A woman comes home and says to her husband.

"Your car won't start - there's water in the carburettor"

"Water in the carburettor?" he asks "How can you know that? You don’t know what a carburettor looks like!"

"But I tell you - there really is water in the carburettor; I am absolutely certain" she replies

"OK I'll go and see what I can do" says her husband; "where's my car?"

"In the swimming pool!"