

ANNUAL REPORT
SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL 2012

Personally, this has been a very interesting and exciting year as I have had the privilege of being the Chairman of SCC for 2011/12. It has also been a year of change for the county council.

A **new Chief Executive** was appointed in December, Deborah Cadman, a former head of the East Anglian Development Agency and Chief Executive of St Edmundsbury Borough Council. She has 28 years public sector experience.

Radical changes are taking place in all our services. In **Adult and Community Services** staffing numbers have been reduced considerably, not because of cuts to services but because staff are moving to newly-created or other organisations. These will continue to provide for the council. eg The Industrial & Provident Society has taken over the running of the library service, enabling SCC to retain its library network and reduce the library budget from £9m to £6m over 3years.

Phase 1 of **School Organisation Review** has been completed in Lowestoft and Haverhill. The expansion of primary schools, to take yrs 5 & 6, has not resulted in disruption, as was feared. Indeed since last September 4 of the enlarged primary schools have gained “outstanding” assessments.

Work to deliver high speed broadband is developing apace following SCC’s commitment of £10m and a similar amount from the government. A company will be selected to do the work and the aim is to raise the areas with poorest coverage up to the average. – (Being in the 1st wave of counties implementing high speed broadband will give Suffolk a competitive edge, when attracting businesses).

Landmark House, the new office building on the A14 near Sproughton, is due to open in June. The building will be used by both Suffolk Police and SCC and will have the advantage of aiding a closer working relationship between SCC and Police and will also save in the region of £500k.

This is part of a project to cut down on office accommodation across Suffolk. There are approx 2,500 public sector buildings in Suffolk and over the next few years SCC will be working with colleagues, to reduce that number and thus make considerable savings.

In October a **new joint fire control centre** was set up with Cambridgeshire and is working very well. A total of 32 fire control operators work as a single team.

It will be easier to hold street parties during the **Queen’s Jubilee Celebrations** as SCC has waived the fees for road closures. To ensure minimal impact on our road system the county council is urging party

organisers to celebrate in community areas, cul-de-sacs and 'no through roads', as far as possible.

Because of the reduction in government grant, on-going increases in demand for services and the cost of provision, **SCC must save must save £50m over the next two years, £26m in 2012/13.**

We will do this by: reducing management costs, cutting bureaucracy, lowering the level on senior public sector pay, rationalise office accommodation and work with other authorities. SCC has frozen council tax for the 2nd year.

I have given, what I hope, is a flavour of what has been happening over the past year at SCC and fuller accounts of the year are contained in my monthly reports to parish councils.

CHAIRMAN SCC

As mentioned at the beginning of my report I have been chairman of SCC for the past 11 months and my term finishes May 24th. I'd just like to give a brief snapshot of what that has entailed.

One of my duties is to chair Full Council; a task not to be taken lightly. I am quite proud that the first call I made upon members was to adhere to the rules of "Just a Minute" and to speak without repetition and deviation. (I relented on hesitation). Instead of 1 minute, they have 3, and it has worked very well.

Throughout the year I have been to so many different engagements, met interesting people, in a variety of circumstances, and seen the county from a new aspect.

I have visited both British and American airbases at Lakenheath, Mildenhall, Honnington & Wattisham. The hospitality at the bases has been outstanding.

Many of the civic services have been held in beautiful old churches in villages and towns such as: Walsham le Willows, Hadleigh, Stowmarkets, Eye, to name only a few. Attending services in Ely Cathedral and St Edmundsbury Cathedral have been uplifting experiences.

Prize givings, speech days, graduations and citizenship ceremonies have been a memorable part of my year as has the sombre privilege of laying a wreath at the Cenotaph in Ipswich on Remembrance Sunday.

Meeting members of the royal family has been an especial honour and the recent visit of the Duchess of Cambridge, to The Tree House Children's Hospice, gained Ipswich and indeed Suffolk, nationwide recognition and acknowledged the tremendous work of the Children's Hospice.

I am well aware of the privilege of being chairman for a year and have enjoyed it hugely.

POLICE AUTHORITY

The Police Authority will cease to exist on 22/11/12 when a Police & Crime Commissioner will be elected. He/she will be responsible for: appointing Chief Constable; funding and budget; the award of grants for community safety priorities. The PCC will be supported by a Chief Executive and team. There will be a Police & Crime Panel that will scrutinise the PCC.

Patricia O'Brien March 2012

