Report from your District Councillor March/April 2024

* At the MSDC on March the 20th there was firstly presentation done by Officers on the topic of ‘Devolution’. This was followed by a debate in the Chamber, there was no vote as the District Council is only a Consultee feeding back to the County Council which is the body to decide whether or not to accept the offer of devolution from the government.

The District Council’s stated aim is to present to the County Council a presentation of different views expressed during the debate.

The idea of ‘Devolution’ is to give more powers to decide to the County Councils. There are 4 levels of this, level 3 is what we have been offered. There are offers of extra money from the government is the Suffolk County Council were to accept this.

Over a period of 30 years there would be £480 millions of extra government funding, around 16 million annually. It would be for the SCC to decide how to spend this.

Also there would be a one off £200 millions for development of ‘brown field sites’.

On top of this there would be £ 5,8 millions more for adult education.

For local transport the SCC would receive £250 000 per year for two years.

An electoral change would also happen, the County Council Leader would be directly elected. This could be put in place for May 2025.

We were explained that no new layers of bureaucracy would be added.

I put the direct question if the financial responsibilities of the SCC would be altered. The straight answer to that was that this would not be the case.

If this change would happen the SCC would be able to decide more for itself, focusing on local needs based upon local knowledge.

During the debate misgivings re the intentions of the government were voiced. What those malign intensions could be was not specified. Some members argued that the money on offer was ‘too small’. Compared to the entire SCC budget the figures are not mind boggling.

My own view, as I expressed it, is that even if the money may be less than what we desire it would wrong to turn it down. I also think that it is right on principle for decisions that affect local communities should be made locally as far as is feasible.

One risk that was mentioned concerned the theoretical risk the Leader may not be from the political majority. However, decisions would be made by voting and the majority would have its way.

* The amendments to the CIL Expenditure Framework as from March 2024 were approved, the same went for the CIL Expenditure Framework Communications Strategy.
* These two items will be reviewed again around October time this year and any amendments from that can be instigated in the spring next year. A huge amount of work has been done by both involved Councillors and Officers.
* A joint homelessness reduction and rough sleeping strategy 2024 was approved unanimously. This outlined on pages 119 – 256 in the Agenda Document Pack.

Officers are focused on this and at present there are about 300 outstanding matters. Pressure has increased but it appears that the situation isn’t running out of control.25th

* The MSDC meeting that was scheduled for the 25th of April has been cancelled, due to a by election in the Stowmarket area.

Best Wishes, Anders Linder