

Occold Parish Council 4.7.2011

County Councillor Report

Over The Hill?

Today after the findings of the Dismissals and Appeals Committee had concluded its investigation into allegations of Bullying and Harassment and claims of inappropriate use of expenses. On ALL counts Ms Hill was found to have no case to answer however after lengthy negotiations Andrea Hill has agreed to leave her post with immediate effect. Consideration will now focus on any future appointment.

The total settlement for this departure is agreed at £218,592.00 (one years salary) this figure includes Her contractual notice period.

I welcome the opportunity to explore the best course forward, perhaps even discussing if we need a chief executive at all, especially given the fact we have a number of senior Directors attracting 100 k plus salaries, and during the last 2 months we seemed to have coped adequately without a Chief Executive.

One other point to note is that the agreement for Ms Hill to go has not yet been signed by all parties, and another important point of regret is that many in the media focussed attack after attack on Andrea Hill while not holding up to scrutiny those that drew up her original contract of employment.

Plan Bee

At our last full council meeting Mark Bee was chosen as the new leader of the Council, this choice draws a line under the County Councils big idea for cost savings in the future known as the New Strategic Direction. He has correctly identified that this whole endeavour relied upon an open and honest discussion with our communities, and to date that conversation had not taken place in any meaningful way, to propose cutting Lollipop people and Household Waste sites from communities for instance, with barely 3 months notice did not give anyone confidence that this whole media lead campaign had not been thought through sufficiently. I for one look forward to working with Mr Bee to make sure that the cost savings we all know have to come, are carried out in a reasoned and practical way that can be communicated to Parish Councils like this one with credibility.

After months of being told by SCC that “there is no plan B” I am glad there is now a chance to take a long hard look at how we get back to a council we can all be proud of.

Suffolk Better Broadband Programme

The “Choose Suffolk” to BDUK for central government funding has proved unsuccessful in the first round; if our bid had been approved then the County Council was to be the accountable body for administering the funding of up to 40 million pounds. At an emergency meeting last week Suffolk County council pledged £10,000,000 to support resubmission of our BDUK bid, quite a jump from the previous figure of £255,000 especially for an organisation that apparently doesn't have any money. I have reported numerous times the steps that SCC have already taken to try to find a solution to Suffolk's woeful Broadband provision. We have also had meetings with various small providers that could roll out a “Local solution” as soon as possible if the central government money is not likely to come Suffolk's way in the near future.

Andrew Stringer andrew.stringer@suffolk.gov.uk 01449 780339 07774 199061