

## **APPENDIX**

**Reports given to meeting of Occold Parish Council held on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2012**

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## **1. County Councillor's Report**

### **Better Broadband**

The county backed project to deliver better broadband for Suffolk is heading in the right direction, Last year we secured government backing for the £41.7 million fibre

optic backbone planned for Suffolk. The tender for the contract to deliver this is due to go out in this spring, with upgrades to the existing network being programmed shortly.

It is hoped, that we would have been letting the contract by the summer, and I will be pushing the County management to make sure this project's timing does not slip, and we attended a conference in Suffolk last week & gained detailed information regarding the timeline/ hurdles etc of this investment process.

Meanwhile to help draw in match funding etc from potential bidders, householders and businesses can register their support at [www.suffolk.gov.uk/broadband](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/broadband) I would urge everyone to please register your support over 10,000 have already done so.

### **Policy Development Panels**

Suffolk County Council has embarked on two policy areas to be reviewed, using policy development panels made up of County Councillors, to look into the locality budget arrangements and what was branded the "our place" initiative.

The panels final reports will be available soon.

I have had a place on both of these panels and look forward to the findings being published. And hope, in making changes we will make the Locality working of elected members and officers better able to deliver the future needs of our communities.

I have also been assigned an officer to work with me in developing the working relationships between the County Council and the Parishes. Although only being allowed a few hours a month of officer time to work on this, I feel we could get a many issues moved forward allowing us to forward plan a little more, rather than just responding to the latest issues, as at present. The first issue on which we will jointly work, is the issue of a 850 mtr permissive footpath at Fishponds Way Haughley.

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

With all sides claiming a victory the final legislation for the new planning policy framework has now become public, and I am pleased to note that many of the pitfalls we pointed out to government have been acted upon, however the clarity as to who will fund the new Neighbourhood plans and associated referenda that will come from these plans, has now been shown will fall in the lap of the District council. With the new plans costing upwards of £15,000 each and referenda £60,000 I see little hope of these plans surfacing anytime soon, until then the way is open to interpretation (by lawyers!)

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## **2. District Councillor's Report**

### 1. Payment of Council tax

Following the closure of the Stowmarket Service Bureau, we worked with the Post Office (PO) to set up a collection facility for Council Tax – increasing the number of locations where individuals could pay it, and also making them more local. However, this involved a cost to the individual every time they made a payment by cash or cheque. Council

officers were therefore asked to investigate alternative options, resulting in a proposal to introduce bar coding onto Council Tax Bills. This facility has been worked on over the last 6 months and is now in a position to go live as from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012.

Each Council Tax bill now has a bar code printed on it, and a unique reference number, which if taken and shown to the PO/Payzone point when making a payment will not only direct it to the right account but will also ensure that the resident is not charged for processing the payment.

## 2. Mid Suffolk Pub of the Year competition

For some time we have been considering how to recognise and promote the importance of our Suffolk pubs which in recent years have struggled and in some cases been forced to close. These closures have meant our local communities have lost out on their 'local' asset and we want to be sure that the local pubs in Mid Suffolk are given encouragement to continue to be the 'hub' of their community by celebrating all that is so good about them.

We are launching the **Mid Suffolk 'Pub of the Year 2012'** competition in April. The EADT is to support this new competition by giving full coverage of the launch and continued promotion of the competition throughout the summer months. We have around 90 pubs across our district that showcase not only excellent local beers, but also regional foods and actively support their communities.

The competition will have 5 categories available for entry: Dining Pub of the Year, Inn of the Year, Landlord/Landlady of the Year, Community/Family Pub of the Year and Pub with the Best Beer of the Year. The winner of each category will then go to a final round to become the overall Mid Suffolk Pub of the Year 2012.

Sponsorship has been secured from 6 local companies, all of whom recognise the importance of our pubs, together with the valuable press coverage from the EADT. We should aim to make this competition successful by ensuring that all pubs in the District participate in the competition. The application package will be launched on our website together with a 'competition package' to go out to all the pub landlords and landladies in Mid Suffolk; the launch will take place around Easter (exact date to be confirmed).

## 3. Fearless campaign against crime

Young people in Mid Suffolk and Babergh are being urged to become *fearless* in the fight against crime following the launch of a new service for the county.

Fearless.org was launched nationally in April 2010 and is a new website by the independent charity Crimestoppers where young people can get information about crimes that affect them. It also gives them the opportunity to pass on information about crime 100% anonymously. It is now being officially launched in Suffolk with the support of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council's Community Safety Units.

While all schools in the District have been approached, so far only two, Claydon High School and Stradbroke Business & Enterprise College, have taken up the opportunity to host presentations in March. The events will include an interactive theatre performance and workshops by The Solomon Theatre and a talk by Fearless youth workers.

Ann Scott, Eastern Regional Manager for Crimestoppers, explained why Fearless.org is so important: “Young people are one of the most important audiences for Crimestoppers to communicate with, but they haven’t always understood or been willing to interact with the charity. One of the key reasons for re-launching Crimestoppers for young people is to empower them to be ‘fearless’ in passing on information about crime anonymously if they feel unable to talk to Police.

She continued: “We want to reassure young people that information they give to Fearless.org about crime is taken seriously and that they have nothing to fear by contacting the charity. When someone contacts us we do not ask for their name or take any personal details. We do not trace calls/IP addresses and we do not record our calls. Those who give information do not have to give a statement to Police or go to court. In the 24 years that Crimestoppers has been running we have never revealed anyone’s identity”.

Crimestoppers plays a major part in the fight against crime. It has received over 1.3 million calls to date and every day 23 people are arrested as a result of information given to Crimestoppers.

John Spitzer, Mid Suffolk’s Community Safety Manager, added “We are very excited to be the first areas in Suffolk to launch Fearless. This is an excellent opportunity to engage with young people and provide them with an additional tool that will help them become more involved in their local communities”.

The website is at: [www.fearless.org](http://www.fearless.org) and the brand new Fearless film can be seen here: <http://www.youtube.com/user/FearlessORG#p/u/0/Nbnwb0WVTI>

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