

From County and District Councillor David Ritchie

Dear all,

The county council, Suffolk County Council, has had to raise its share of council tax by nearly two percent. The county has also increased the social care precept by two percent. This is both prudent and necessary.

The District Council, East Suffolk Council, has been able to freeze its share of council tax this year. There will be no increase. I was a speaker at the full council meeting last week where this was decided: it is now more than ten years since the old Waveney DC and the old Suffolk Coastal DC appointed a shared chief executive. This was the first step in bringing the two councils closer together. We then appointed shared heads of service. Each head was encouraged to look at their teams to see where joint working could lead to savings. Eventually we ended up with a united officer core, and each step on the way had delivered savings. It is now nearly two years since we took the final step, dissolved the old councils and formed a single new council - East Suffolk Council. It is a measure of the success of the new council, that we have been able to freeze council tax.

At the old Waveney District Council, I was the cabinet member for planning and coastal management. This double responsibility was almost a full-time job, but I worked closely with my colleagues at Suffolk Coastal where there was a cabinet member for planning and a cabinet member for coastal management. At East Suffolk Council I still have the double responsibility – but there is only one of me – with twice as much coast and three times as much planning. Before lockdown I realised that I did not have enough time to fully carry out all my responsibilities as well as having a social life. In the last year I have saved ten to fifteen hours a week in driving time, now that all meetings are virtual. But I have had to make a difficult decision. At the elections in May, I will not be standing again for the county council, I have stood down. It has been an honour to serve as your county councillor since 2009. I have enjoyed the role and hope that I have done a useful job. I will of course still be one of your two district councillors. Judy Cloke has been selected as a candidate to stand in my place.

Once again, I have attached a report of the work of the county council in the last month. It has been compiled for us by George Baker our Conservative research assistant. I am pleased to see that the Suffolk Highways drainage budget has been doubled. It is now four million pounds a year. It is very frustrating when work to correct recurrent flooding problems on our roads has to wait in a long queue. The increase should help.

My wife and I both had our Covid vaccinations two weeks ago. The set up in Reydon was impressive. I am so grateful to all the volunteers. The only problem was that we very nearly got stuck in snow that had blown on to the road on the way back into St James.

We all have to keep patient as we hope that life will eventually return to something that more closely resembles normal.

Best wishes

David Ritchie

**One of your two District Councillors for the Bungay and Wainford Ward.
And County Councillor for the Bungay Electoral Division**