

## A report for parishes from District Councillor David Ritchie

July 3<sup>st</sup> 2021

The county council elections are now well behind us and I would like to congratulate my colleague Judy Cloke on her election as the county councillor for the Bungay and Wainford division.

I am still the Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management at East Suffolk Council and we have been very busy since I last reported. Coastal Partnership East, our shared coastal management team have been leading nationally on coastal adaptation. We have always had a dynamic and changing coastline. Just one example: Benacre Ness has been moving north at about eighty metres a year. This has led to unexpected erosion pressure in Pakefield and to the south of Kessingland, the Benacre pumping station, once safely inland, is getting ever nearer to the sea.

Last year at the national Flood and Coast Conference Kelly Fisher, who was working for us on adaptation won 'Woman of the year'. This year the winner was Karen Thomas who is the head of Coastal Partnership East. For the Lowestoft Flood Risk Management Scheme we had a ground breaking ceremony for the flood walls around the outer Harbour. Our speeches were slightly shorter than usual with a high wind and drizzle! The walls are important – but the tidal barrier to stop a tidal surge entering Lake Lothing will be the vital element. Although we have started work on this, it will not be in place until 2026. As chairman of the board I am proud of the progress we are making.

Despite lockdown and officers working from home the planners have also been very busy. We have actually had more planning applications than usual. This reflects a large increase in householder applications. Stuck at home people have been bringing forward plans for extending and improving their houses. Our local plans allow for just over 900 houses a year to be built in East Suffolk. In the year to April, we were behind, but not as far behind as we feared. If we don't meet the target, we are subject to government sanction.

Our development manager, Liz Beighton, after 12 successful years with us, has moved to the private sector. This has led to a richly deserved internal promotion for Ben Woolnough. Ben is a Suffolk boy and the grandson of my old friend Ernie Woolnough from Wissett.

Next Thursday we have the first meeting of the Southwold Harbour Management Committee. We have been working closely with the Town Council for the last ten years looking for the most satisfactory arrangement for managing the harbour and the harbour lands. This is a formal committee with onerous responsibilities. I am reading up on the governance good practice requirements and the marine safety regulations. The committee has nine members, five from East Suffolk's cabinet, and four, highly qualified co-opted members. The first item on the agenda will be to elect a chairman. If elected this will be great honour for me. I have been going to Southwold well over fifty years. It is the gem on our coast, and I never expected to have a direct responsibility in the town.

On Monday I was in Ilketshall St Margaret for their annual parish meeting. As usual it was well attended, good fun, and not too long. Unusually it was out of doors with social distancing!