

## Somersham

In this pre-election time I will stick to a report on the last Full Council Meeting.

**Community Infrastructure Levy**

The decisions from the latest review of the CIL processes and criteria were reported at the March Full Council meeting. A selection of the more significant considerations, extracted from a 170 page plan is:

- The use of District CIL to finance the boreholes needed to prove the feasibility of a parish heating system was considered. Although I considered this a good use of the funds the Member Panel considered that district CIL should not be used.
- The use of District CIL for community led infrastructure projects involving business proposals, for instance a hall to accommodate a fitness business was considered. Members agreed that it would be inappropriate for a private business to benefit from District CIL investment.
- Funding for cycling and footpaths. The pilot scheme will continue for projects in the LCWIP, the local cycling and walking infrastructure plan, IDP infrastructure and development plan, and IFS with a community maximum threshold of £100,000.
- The rising costs of building works and difficulty of getting committed prices for CIL Bids was recognised. It was decided that the period that quotes must be held be reduced to 1-2 months and updated quotes are sought, if necessary, before decisions made.
- Finally, it was agreed that CIL monies need to be spent. The District Council should encourage greater spending of CIL, including Neighbourhood CIL. The current proactive approach towards expenditure and progression of CIL Bids should continue. In addition the team should produce capital project workplans for next 5 years, working with infrastructure providers: (NHS, SCC, Network Rail etc).

**Local Planning Enforcement Plan**

A plan which to move planning enforcement to a more active role has been produced. We hope it will be a framework for getting deviations from agreed plans, or actions undertaken without plans, corrected. This would make a pleasant change from explanations as to why no action is possible or it is expedient to do nothing.

**Councillors' Parental Leave Policy**

A parental leave policy was agreed with most features in line with current good practice. We hope it will widen the range of people who are prepared to stand as councillors, away from the current surfeit of the retired. At present councillors are only obliged to attend one meeting every six months, so this policy was not essential, but it did cover other aspects of the situation.

**Pay Policy Statement**

The annual pay policy statement that is required was presented with no great surprises. There were no obvious conclusions to be drawn on the tendency for particular groups to hold all the low paid jobs or those with no promotion prospects.

**Houses4Homes**

As I reported in "In Touch", there are over a thousand homes empty across Babergh and Mid Suffolk, a rather surprisingly large number. The two councils "Houses4Homes" service will help owners of properties that have been empty for six months bring them back into use.

It offers advice from environmental health professionals, construction and project planning support, and a £20K interest-free loan. The councils' Central Suffolk Lettings will offer lettings and income assistance. You can report long-term empty homes at [www.houses4homes.org](http://www.houses4homes.org) or by calling 0300 1234000.

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