

WORTWELL TOWN COUNCIL

JUNE MEETING 2023

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT

Firstly, let me commend the Councillors for stepping forward and recently standing for election and especially their willingness to serve the local community. I know from personal experience what this can involve. Demanding but rewarding. I hope that you are able to contribute and enjoy your time on the council.

This is the first parish meeting at which I am one of your District Councillors. It is a time when local people decided to create an alliance of political parties in our Ward and indeed across the District. People voted for James Eddy and me in the knowledge that we can, and will, work together in the interests of local people. Although we are members of different political parties, we are foremost members of the community.

I am humbled by the support of the local community, and I am aware that people of all political allegiances gave me their support in the knowledge that we are looking at local issues. I am also aware that this was the first time some people voted Conservative and that this was not an easy decision. I will repay and justify the support.

I made commitments during my election campaign to expand the Harleston nature recovery programme, attract further tourism initiatives to our Ward, and give local people a real voice on local developments and use of community land. I will look to deliver, and report on progress.

These are very early days in the new District Council and there is a steep learning curve for all the new Councillors. I have been appointed to the Development Management, Finance, Scrutiny, and Cleaner and Safer Environment committees. Along with being the representative on the Norwich Area Museums Committee.

A New Office

Not only have James and I moved to a new office, but the entire South Norfolk District Council has moved to new offices at the Broadland Business Park jointly with Broadlands District Council. The move to the Horizon Building will provide large savings, and any future increases in energy prices will be offset, thanks to lower running costs and the hundreds of solar panels that are already installed at the Horizon building.

The new building is much more environmentally friendly. The move will help dramatically reduce the carbon footprint by around 84%. This huge reduction will help achieve the target of Net Zero by 2030. The building also has existing electric car charging points that could be used as a revenue generator by making them available to residents out of hours.

A New Life

We have attended my first committee meetings and in common with all Councillors, we are undergoing an extensive training programme. Please bear with us as we get up to speed with the demands of the roles. James and I will hold regular open surgeries to listen to your views and we will respond. I will be available on the second Saturday of each month at Harleston Information Plus on Exchange Street between 10:00 and 12:00.

James and I have a hard act to follow. Jeremy Savage not only represented Wortwell but also lives in Wortwell. He is well known and has huge local support. I will try my best to live up to the standard set by Jeremy.

Grant Funding

We all like good news, especially in times when there seems so much bad news. Two local groups have been awarded money from the 'Go For It Grant' from South Norfolk Council.

Borderhoppa were recently awarded £300 to go towards advertising costs to encourage more volunteers to come forward. Dream Weavers, a weavers group, were awarded £298 to purchase the initial stock of weaving equipment and resources. The group is open to all ages, abilities and aptitudes and requires no previous experience. It aims to tackle isolation and loneliness though bringing people together to be creative and learn to weave.

These grants are available to not-for-profit projects that bring communities together and encourage people to take part: <https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/communities/go-grant>.

There are other funding opportunities. Each District Councillor has an annual budget of £1,000 to spend on small projects within their Ward. District Councillors are also responsible for receiving, considering and proposing applications for funding between £500 and £15,000 under the Community Action Fund to support community initiatives which require larger amounts of funding.

Museums and Schools

I attended the Norwich Area Museums Committee and was amazed at the extent of the educational offers available to Schools from their Learning Team. We should work together to ensure that our schools are aware of the programme and can take advantage of the opportunities.

Campaign Commitment

I campaigned with a commitment to help extend the successful 'Nature Recovery in Harleston' initiative to encompass Needham and Wortwell, as Nature Recovery across the entire Ward. I would like to offer my support and work with you to establish a programme for Wortwell and a wider forum to drive this forward at a Ward level.

Our nature recovery programme is very much in line with current and emerging government policy. The South Norfolk Local Plan - Development Management Policies Document includes an environmental quality and local distinctiveness policy that 'all development should take all reasonable opportunities to enhance biodiversity to achieve a net gain for nature.' The Environment Act which will become law in November requires a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain. Following our local success, we may be able to encourage other South Norfolk Wards to join us in our journey. We can be at the forefront of this peoples' movement.

Getting to Know You

Campaigning was very rewarding in gaining a much better understanding of the views of a broad cross section of the community. Knocking on doors provided a greater general understanding of people's views.

I aim to attend and present to local groups and organisations. I hope to be able to get to know many more people across the Ward, and further find out local wishes and concerns. I look forwards to the next four years working with the local council and community for the benefit of all.

Cllr Trevor Graham
South Norfolk Council
Member for Harleston