

WORTWELL PARISH COUNCIL

FEBRUARY MEETING 2024

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT

South Norfolk Council set the Council Tax for a Band D property at £170 for the coming year. This is an increase of £5 and means that the Council have maintained their record of keeping the increase below inflation. Since 2007, the SNC Council Tax has risen by about 30% less than inflation while investing in our infrastructure.

The Council received a one-off VAT refund of £854,452, due to HMRC accepting that local authority leisure services are provided under a statutory framework. This will be used together with money from additional in-year investment to reinforce a commitment to promoting an active lifestyle by providing £250,000 each year for the next four years to support the South Norfolk leisure centres.

The additional investment money was also allocated as: £355,000 into the 'Household Support Fund' to double the assistance to hard pressed families, £100,000 to support the Council's role in flood prevention; £30,000 to the Help Hub to support schemes for residents facing hardship; £70,000 to strengthen enforcement of planning conditions; and up to £50,000 to support design creation and community participation in public realm improvements for Wymondham.

The Council also allocated an extra £100,000 from an earmarked capital receipt resulting from the sale of former Council offices on Middleton Street into the Community Action Fund with an increase in the fund to £150,000 and an upper limit for an application to £20,000. This fund is open to all District Councillors, and I hope to help secure further CAF money for our Ward in the coming year following two successful applications in the current year.

In response to environmental concern and nuisance for residents, the Council passed a Public Spaces Protection Order on vehicle-related anti-social behaviour. This will initially run for three years and operate across the entire district.

I contributed £300 from my Members Ward Allowance to the Friends of Harleston Primary School to help create a safe environment around a previously derelict pond. When completed, the children will be able to interact with nature and enhance their knowledge of the natural world. This is further support for nature recovery.

I gave short presentations at Wortwell and Needham about community based nature recovery and how South Norfolk are supporting the initiative. Both groups are now setting up community groups and developing their own delivery plans. Our ward is truly leading from the front on this internationally important topic.

James and I worked together, contributing £400 each to the Wortwell Bowls Club for new equipment. The club offers an environment for light sporting exercise and socialising, promoting community cohesion with an enhanced quality of life. The award will allow the club to provide a more welcoming environment and ability to expand and attract more members. I have now spent all of my allocation for the year, but a new allocation will be made available, when I look forwards to helping more people.

This month, I attended the first meeting of the groups creating the Friendly Invasion play, the 60th birthday party for the Harleston Library, and the unveiling of an impressive mechanical scythe bought by the Waveney Volunteers for Nature using a CAF grant awarded from South Norfolk Council. Being able to help our community is one of the very rewarding aspects of the role of a District Councillor.

John Fuller, Leader of South Norfolk Council is to become Lord Fuller following an announcement from Buckingham Palace on 9 February 2024. John has served South Norfolk for many years, first being elected in 2003 and serving as Leader since 2007. Lord Fuller said: "I have dedicated the last 21 years to improving life in South Norfolk and the wider county and I am really honoured to have received this recognition. I look forward to continuing to champion the needs of our county and ensuring our voice is heard in London, while helping to shape and improve the laws that affect us all." I hope you join me in thanking Councillor Fuller for the time he has dedicated towards and good work he has carried out for our area and, offer our best wishes to Lord Fuller in his new role in the House of Lords.

I will hold my next surgery on 8 March at Harleston Information Plus on Exchange Street in Harleston between 10:00 and 11:00. I hope to see you there.

Cllr Trevor Graham
South Norfolk Council
Member for Harleston