**Annual Parish Meeting**

**Barnham, May 2019**

**I would like to thank Ed Wyer all the Parish Council very much for their welcome to me at meetings. Caroline Dowson has been an excellent clerk and I thank her for keeping me in touch with issues in Barnham. I believe that Andrew Smith and I have an effective partnership covering issues here in Barnham with the services provided by our Councils. I welcome the new West Suffolk Council which has my full support and congratulate Andrew on his re-election**

**At the County Council I took on a new role a year ago as Chairman of the Audit Committee which has responsibility for all aspects of governance as well as financial responsibility. I also play a role in the constitutional side of the Council. I am chairman of the West Suffolk Community Safety Partnership . This involves bringing together local authorities, the Police, the NHS, Probation and the voluntary sector in establishing joint community safety plans.**

**In May last year the Council elected a new Leader, Matthew Hicks, who as my full support. The new Deputy Leader is Councillor Mary Evans from Clare and I am really pleased with how she has tackled her role as Cabinet member for Highways and Transport. Improvements are now visible. We also have a new Chief Executive, Nicola Beach, who joined us from Essex County Council.**

**The County Council has had to continue the relentless search for savings with the continuing cut in our grant from Government and with some reluctance we have again put up the Council tax this year. We have made more than £260 million savings since 2011 and some of the changes have been tough. This year our budget, which excludes money going direct to schools, is around £520 million**

**The biggest budget pressures continue to be adult care services and child protection. This represents 75% of our expenditure. It is interesting that whenever we do surveys although the people of Suffolk recognise the importance of our statutory duty to protect the vulnerable and elderly they continue to suggest highways should be our highest priority.**

**Which leads me on to highways ! The contract that SCC have with Keir is considered to be working better now and the programme for potholes using new technology is making progress. It is really important that the website reporting tool is used**

**Specifically this year in Barnham:**

* **Changes have been agreed by SCC to the provision of school transport. This will mean that Barnham children will no longer get free transportation to Thurston Community College – only to Ixworth Free School. This only effects the new year 7 children from this September**
* **I have been pleased to give a grant of £750 towards the re-surfacing of the village hall car park**
* **Congratulations to the Parish Council for taking the initiative to commission the work to cut back and improve the pavement between the village and Barnham Heath and I was pleased to give a grant of £500 towards this**
* **I am really pleased the A134 at Barnham has been selected by the first installation in Suffolk (on SCC roads) of variable speed cameras**
* **The last year has again been dominated by the continuing formal process handling applications for sites to be included in the Suffolk Minerals Plan – now heading for a public enquiry in June**
* **I remain keen to work with the Parish Council and the Residents of Barnham Heath – and to that end we now have proposals for new signage**
* **It looks as though SCC are now ready to support the Parish Council’s application to introduce a lorrywatch scheme on the C633**

**Joanna Spicer. May 21st 2019**