

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT
TO CAMPSEA ASHE, MELTON, PETTISTREE, RENDLESHAM;
UFFORD, AND WICKHAM MARKET PARISH COUNCILS
JUNE 2013

PLUS DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S NOTES
(FOR MELTON; PETTISTREE)

COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTION

Elections were held for the Council for the next four years on 2 nd May. The results were:

Party	2013	2009
Conservative	39 (-16)	55
Labour/Labour Co-operative	15 (+11)	4
UKIP	9 (+8)	1
Liberal Democrat	7 (-4)	11
Independent	3 (+1)	2
Green	2	2
Total	75	75

565,906 people were registered to vote and 175,424 ballot papers were issued - giving a county-wide turnout of 30.99%.

The Conservatives had their overall majority slashed to 3 members, mainly owing to the gains made by the Labour Party and the UKIP Party.

BUSES

Anglian announced that they had decided to withdraw their 164 and 165 services, which generated strong protests, especially from people living in Rendlesham, which I perfectly well understand. I at once alerted the County council and I have discussed the case with the Operations Manager Passenger Transport Suffolk County Council and with the network officer of First Eastern Counties.

It would be helpful, I think, if I very briefly touch upon some of the very basic facts before I get onto the specifics as they affect us in Rendlesham.

First, and this may amaze and infuriate you, but the council has no duty to provide bus services or to fund them. It has 1200 other statutory duties, but running bus services is not one of them. It required by the Transport Act only to consider providing them,

Even so, Suffolk County Council does spend 2.1 million pounds on subsidizing the bus services or on actually providing them – entirely voluntarily. The money comes from council tax and general revenues.

The County Council has as much power to intervene in the decisions of the bus companies as it wields over the affairs of Marks and Spencers or Tate and Lyle, that is to say, zero.

The decision to axe the 165 service was taken by one man – the new operations manager of Anglian Bus. Not only was SCC not involved in taking this decision, but we have no powers to examine the financial reasons nor the business statistics.

In conversations that I have held, I have the impression that the 2 bus companies serving Rendlesham were simply in competition and one of them decided to drop out. The news seems to have come as a complete surprise to the other company, called First.

First had announced improvements to its Rendlesham service, increasing the number of pickups to 13 per day, and ironically this may have proved to too much for its opponent, who perhaps, for all I know, saw their profitability being eroded to the point of making losses. (incidentally a new bus costs around 150000 pounds, and it does about 7 miles per gallon.)

I spoke at length to the First network officer, and I also mentioned the work that we doing in quantifying the demand and need for services on Sunday. He struck me as being genuinely concerned about the needs of the community and later he wrote to me saying that First were committed to providing a comprehensive service to the people of Rendlesham and would welcome any feedback on how they could improve things. He wrote that First would be willing

to enter into discussions with Suffolk County Council officers to make further improvements.

I think that the best way forward is to start a close dialogue with First. I suggest that in this way, we can generate good will and keenness to do what is right and reasonable. I suggest that we see how things settle down and take things from there, with the objectives of improving evening services and trying to get something on Sunday if the current notion of getting mini-buses does not work out. I shall represent the interests of Rendlesham as firmly and consistently as I am able.

WICKHAM MARKET TOWN TEAM

In Wickham Market, a group has been formed with the aim of re-vitalising the village centre. Part of the work will be given to an organisation called Action for Market Towns, who will be undertaking a thorough survey in support. SCDC, The Wickham Market Partnership, a local charity, and I through the locality budget are all contributing 1000 pounds.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE PAY

The TaxPayers' Alliance has released data which shows that more than 2,500 council staff received six-figure pay packages last year, and one chief executive earned nearly £600,000. Overall, the number of local authority employees earning more than £100,000 fell by 11% in 2011-12. However, 103 councils were employing more staff on that level than previously and 42 people took home more than £250,000. The highest-paid chief executive was Katherine Kerswell, group managing director of Kent County Council, who received £589,165, including severance pay.

Words fail me.