

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT
TO CAMPSEA ASHE, MELTON, PETTISTREE, RENDLESHAM;
UFFORD, AND WICKHAM MARKET PARISH COUNCILS
MARCH 2014

PLUS DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S NOTES
(FOR MELTON, UFFORD, PETTISTREE

HIGHER POSTS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

As many of you will know, I have been concerned about the levels of pay in the higher echelons of local government for many years. In Suffolk the subject has been eased very slightly by amalgamations of some district council staffs, but in the country as a whole, senior staff pay remains a serious problem, particularly for “chief executives”. I put the term in inverted commas because it has been taken, like so many things, from the commercial world, and of course the defendants of high pay for local government chief executives almost invariably make comparisons with commercial or industrial chief executives.

I have always scorned this specious comparison because unlike those in commercial life, the local government chief executive has little responsibility for policy (which is reserved in theory for the councillors) and almost none at all for profit (revenue comes from tax), which are the two main responsibilities for the commercial version of the post – not to mention R&D, marketing, taxation, and so on, which are not part of local government. Indeed the role of county and district councils is essentially administration, associated with the 1000 or more statutory requirements placed upon them by Whitehall.

I was therefore most interested to read recently that a committee of the Department of Communities and Local Government is conducting an investigation, and seemingly a message has emerged from ministers that “The government believes the traditional model of chief executive, with a wide public role and a significant salary, is unnecessary.” This is my own view too. I think that the position should be abolished and replaced by the position of clerk (or secretary) to the council with primarily legal and perhaps financial duties.

We shall see.

