

District Councillor Ian Allen

I have divided my report into two, ward specific and District wide.

Firstly Council financial pressures and coping with shortfalls in future years. Without a doubt there will continue to be reductions in central government support, whoever is in government post 2015. The controlling group has embarked on a policy of cost cutting via redundancies of key departmental heads, while still setting aside money for an as yet unaffordable leisure centre. There is a danger that services will suffer as key staff are stripped out and capacity is lost. My personal view is that costs could be reduced by amalgamating services with neighbouring authorities, something Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury have already done. This would achieve cost savings over a manageable timescale, would not demotivate staff and would enable the existing knowledge base to best be used to form new relationships.

I do not agree with the current plans to drastically reduce Member numbers, leaving a core of twenty five Members. Rural Wards will become ungainly and there will be a loss of local connection. It is a recipe for any well funded and organised political party to squeeze out local independent representation.

Both Witchford and Haddenham have to contend with Gladman developments applications. I have been pleased to assist residents and have met the case officer and officers of the forward planning team to clarify the situation. Gladman are aggressive operators and are only interested in elevating site values. The District Council will robustly defend their land and house number allocations against assertions of inadequacy. However the Council is not going to be helped by the Coalition government having a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development where no complete Local Plan is in place'.

This same presumption will affect the wind turbine proposals at Berry Fen. The four turbines will be much easier to assemble a case against than the anemometer mast. They are permanent, they will have a significant landscape impact, they will have an ecological impact and they will affect the appreciation of a conservation area. All these things will have far greater weight than in the recent anemometer application. The onus will be on the applicants to demonstrate that these impacts will be manageable; I do not believe that they can.

Ian Allen

Non-Aligned Member Haddenham Ward

