

Annual Town Council Report – District and County Councillor - Stuart Lawson

I am writing this report not only as a District and County Councillor but also as a father of a young family and resident of Kesgrave. Firstly, I'd like to say that I hope everyone is safe and well. In these difficult and unusual times, it is so re-assuring to know that we as a community have come together to help each other.

There have been so many heart-warming stories of volunteers and volunteer programmes during this COVID 19 situation we find ourselves in and when all of this is finally over we can look back and know how many of us stood up to help one another - whether that be the vulnerable, the elderly or just checking if the next-door neighbour needs anything, Kesgrave really has excelled.

In my dual role I am in regular contact with the Town Clerk Jo Abbott and the great Team at Kesgrave Town Council. This joint relationship is key so I am pleased it works well as this partnership helps ensure problems at ground level can be quickly and easily communicated. When there are issues that need fixing or awareness needed, so that small problems don't become bigger ones, then that's when that line of communication has to be clear and concise and I believe that's what we have in place right now.

Overall with one of the highest populations in East Suffolk we have 3 District Councillors in Kesgrave and I we work well as a Team and alongside Debbie McCallum and Geoff Lynch we cover the ward with our own area of experience to serve the residents. We might not know all the answers straightaway - but when a query does arise you can be assured that between us, we will help sort it out.

I know there will be others who thank Debbie McCallum in their individual reports for her volunteering in the community of course - but I thank her for all the things that very few see behind the scenes and the hard work that for confidentiality reasons sometimes cannot even be discussed. We receive many calls and correspondence that go un-noticed but every one of these matters. We work well together on all manner of issues and along with Geoff we always try and get problems resolved as quickly as we can.

I am continuing to work with Highways to prioritise work on the Foxhall Road/Bell Lane Junction and have had meetings with the Leader of the County and Cabinet Members to ensure this black-spot is given all the support it needs to be resolved. Whilst costs and budget are always raised they know my feelings and alongside the Town Council we will work tirelessly to get the initial plans to fruition, or at least to public consultation at the very least, and is something I raise with Matthew Hicks (County Leader) on our regular 1:1s and is very much aware of my thoughts and the need for action and action quickly. At least the planned speed restrictions is a good place to start.

I know we have had pretty good weather over the last couple of months but it probably won't be long before the British Summer turns to rain - so as always I have been working with the Drainage Team at Endeavour house to ensure as many of the usual flood points are on the budgeted list for the forthcoming year and will continue to do so. I speak to many residents on a weekly basis with regards this and with so many cars on the roads it is key to do so.

I have attended many Meetings throughout the year and will continue to do so with regards Buses and public transport in general - from old ones, to late ones, environmentally friendly but equally noisy ones, to changes of routes and the effect it has on daily users. Alongside Sue Hall, who as a resident keeps me informed of problem areas and is a keen advocate, I work to get the message to

First Bus Company and the Cabinet Member for Transport that with so many users and potential users within Kesgrave we should be consulted on all issues, and I will continue to do so. If we have a reliable Bus service that's on time, clean and gets us quickly to where we want to go, we will use it more. That would then have the knock-on effect of less cars on the road especially in and around Grange Farm/Bell Lane/Main Road at peak times.

With my dual role I receive two lots of Enabling Communities and Locality Budgets. Funding that goes directly to groups within Kesgrave. During this year that money has helped support Café 66 Community Café in a new coffee maker, support the Dementia Café day out, local sports group kits, repair the Clocktower at the Community Centre, The Low-carbon Farm, Library Books, Mental Health programmes for young adults at Kesgrave High School, Chess for children in the area as well as funding a year of Age UK Chin Wag Coffee Mornings Events for our elderly residents held at Kesgrave War Memorial Community Centre – all great causes and more to come.

If any group or individuals have any suggestions or ideas/projects, they would like to discuss then please come to me direct as I will always be happy to help where appropriate if it benefits anyone in and around Kesgrave

I always prefer to do these type of things face-to-face but these are the times we are in currently but if there are any questions please give them to Jo and the Team or as always just call or email anytime.

Other than that, please keep safe and well.

Regards

Stuart