

5) **To welcome visitors from North Norfolk District Council**

Tom Fitzpatrick:

These meetings with Parishes are being held throughout the district to try to improve communication and break down any "them and us" attitude that exists. NNDC is working hard to provide more jobs to improve the local economy and to provide adequate housing for local people. One positive step is the provision of loans to housing associations; these can provide cheaper funds for the housing providers and at the same time provide a higher rate of interest than is available commercially. The recent tidal surge cost the Council £3.1m. It is known that about half of this is definitely recoverable from either insurance or the government and efforts are continuing to increase the amount recovered. Since the last general election all district councils had lost money due to central government action. NNDC had managed to balance the books and maintain services by reducing management staff. There would be no increase in the district portion of council tax in 2014/2015. An enforcement board has been formed to use existing legislation to bring back empty homes into use. This is officer run and has had considerable success so far. As well as being a district and county Councillor TF sits on the Tourism and Sport committee of the Local Government Association.

Steve Blatch:

Since 2011 a new corporate plan has been used to identify which parts of expenditure are "luxuries" and which are not, and this has delivered £1.3m of savings which has been necessary due to government grant cuts. The former five senior management staff has been reduced to three and middle management has been reduced from sixteen to eight. Over the next few years a further £600k of savings are still required to balance the books. It is hoped to obtain these from savings on service contracts and better partnership working. A new recycling system to be introduced later in the year will bring higher income from recycling credits. The leisure contract for facilities in Fakenham, Sheringham and North Walsham expires this year and it is intended to provide savings from the replacement. The CCTV system is to be abandoned. Talks continue with the Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk to see if any opportunities exist for joint working. Because of the current economic situation the plan to build new homes in the area moves very slowly. It is in the Council's interest to see new homes built as the *New Homes Bonus* paid by the government is the equivalent of six year's council tax. The Council also aspires to provide new employment opportunities and future offshore wind farm activity is one obvious example of possible future growth. However, close ties exist with current existing large employers in the area.

6) **To discuss any matters arising from the above including the previously submitted question: *is there any point in discussing planning applications when NNDC do not appear to take any notice of comments made?***

Binham was not the only PC to raise this matter and it was agreed that there should be feedback to say why any particular comments made were not taken into account in the planning process. Planning is considerably constrained by rules set by central government and the current trend of these rules is to make it "harder to say no". However, it is accepted that there is no point in asking Parishes to give an opinion and then not telling them why any suggested action is over-ruled.

TW was concerned that there was a tendency for small properties to be purchased by "incomers" and then for these to be expanded to make them larger. Over time this meant that there were a decreasing number of smaller properties available to those that needed them.

Steve Blatch said that the Core Strategy took the "size mix" of properties into account and should be quoted if the PC were concerned about the matter in a particular case.

DF asked if anything could be done locally to bring unused houses back into use. SB said that talking to the owners was the best way to start. Although very few grants were available now, a properly repaired and maintained property could bring economic advantages to the owners as well as providing additional homes and tidying the area for the benefit of neighbours.>>>>>>>>>