

District councillor's report, March 2012

1. Council tax

In its meeting at the end of February the District Council took the decision not to increase Council Tax for the coming financial year, 2012-13, i.e. to accept a special government grant of £136,000. Other councils (e.g. Babergh) took a different view, and decided to increase Council Tax. There is a risk that the government will not repeat this offer next year, in which case our tax base will be £136,000 lower, requiring either further cuts or else a higher increase in Council Tax. However, we believe that it was best to accept the money on the table and to attempt to keep Council Tax as low as possible.

This does not mean, however, that there will be no increase in Council Tax at all (Mid Suffolk only accounts for about 10% of the total paid by local residents, the balance being made up by the County Council and the police). While the County Council has also decided to freeze its taxes, the police authority is increasing its precept by 3.75%. Town and parish councils may also decide to raise their precepts.

2. Waste recycling site, Brome

The operator of the site, Bolton Brothers, has taken the decision not to continue to operate its other site in Mid Suffolk, at Bramford, that they took on for a six-month trial period last September, because of insufficient use (in January, for instance, they saw fewer than 25 visitors per day). Boltons maintains that the Brome site will remain open, so long as visitor numbers there do not drop any further.

3. Fearless campaign against crime

Young people in Mid Suffolk and Babergh are being urged to become *fearless* in the fight against crime following the launch of a new service for the county.

Fearless.org was launched nationally in April 2010 and is a new website by the independent charity Crimestoppers where young people can get information about crimes that affect them. It also gives them the opportunity to pass on information about crime 100% anonymously. It is now being officially launched in Suffolk with the support of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council's Community Safety Units.

While all schools in the District have been approached, so far only two, Claydon High School and Stradbroke Business & Enterprise College, have taken up the opportunity to host presentations in March. The events will include an interactive theatre performance and workshops by The Solomon Theatre and a talk by Fearless youth workers.

Ann Scott, Eastern Regional Manager for Crimestoppers, explained why Fearless.org is so important: "Young people are one of the most important audiences for Crimestoppers to communicate with, but they haven't always understood or been willing to interact with the charity. One of the key reasons for re-launching

Crimestoppers for young people is to empower them to be 'fearless' in passing on information about crime anonymously if they feel unable to talk to Police.

She continued: "We want to reassure young people that information they give to Fearless.org about crime is taken seriously and that they have nothing to fear by contacting the charity. When someone contacts us we do not ask for their name or take any personal details. We do not trace calls/IP addresses and we do not record our calls. Those who give information do not have to give a statement to Police or go to court. In the 24 years that Crimestoppers has been running we have never revealed anyone's identity".

Crimestoppers plays a major part in the fight against crime. It has received over 1.3 million calls to date and every day 23 people are arrested as a result of information given to Crimestoppers.

John Spitzer, Mid Suffolk's Community Safety Manager, added "We are very excited to be the first areas in Suffolk to launch Fearless. This is an excellent opportunity to engage with young people and provide them with an additional tool that will help them become more involved in their local communities".

The website is at: www.fearless.org and the brand new Fearless film can be seen here: <http://www.youtube.com/user/FearlessORG#p/u/0/Nbnwb0WVTI>

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