

Hingham and Deopham District Councillor – Josh Woolliscroft

I would first like to take this opportunity to thank Yvonne Bendle for her 12 years of service as the councillor for Hingham and Deopham. Yvonne was a great help to me during the election and gave me a real insight into the pleasure of representing the community I live in. I was lucky enough to see her appointed an Honorary Alderman of South Norfolk at the end of last year and I'm sure the whole community will join me in wishing her well in her retirement.

I was elected in May 2023 with a little over 50% of the vote of the people of Hingham and Deopham, taking over from Yvonne after her service of 12 years. In June I was appointed chair of the Stronger Greener Economy Policy Committee, to the Board of South Norfolk Council and the Greater Norwich Development Plan Board.

The past year has seen a continuation of the cost-of-living crisis for many of our families and South Norfolk has not been immune to the challenges that other councils have faced, however, thanks to starting in a more secure financial position we have managed to maintain a budget surplus and continue to be a council which *does* things. Whilst, sadly, council taxes have gone up this year we have been able to expand support for individuals and families who need help. We have been able to increase our spending power on capital programmes and community support by 5.62%.

This year working with across the parties of the South Norfolk Council we were able to secure a budget with input from Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat colleagues – this was very much a joint effort. Some of the measures include:

- £145,548 to top up to £1 million to support leisure provision in the district – a non-statutory service
- £355,000 to double the Household Support Fund
- £100,000 to retain our ditch walker – and if anyone in Hingham has concerns about this please get in touch
- £70,000 into a reserve for additional planning resource
- An additional £100,000 into the Community Action Fund and increasing the maximum grant to £20,000
- £100 million capital investment programme to improve infrastructure and services over the next 4 years

In addition to the financial aspect of the council's activities we have also approved the Greater Norwich Development Plan, protecting the district from speculative applications. We have also created Norfolk Environmental Credits which will mitigate the pressure that has been put on areas not covered by Nutrient Neutrality. The council has now relocated to the Horizon Centre, saving tax payers a significant amount of money and providing a safer and more modern working environment for our staff.

On a local level I have been able to support our local community on everything from potholes to planning and lots in between. I have been happy to use my Member Grant to provide:

- £300 for the Hingham Community Cupboard
- £700 for the Hingham Playing Fields Association

The new funding kicks in in May, so I would ask any community group to reach out if they would like to discuss how the grant could help them. As a reminder it is £1000 and must be used for a sustainable purpose, that is to say not to cover day to day running costs or to fund an event or similar.

If any resident wishes to discuss the above or any other issue, please contact me on 07590466648 or [Josh.Woolliscroft@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk](mailto:Josh.Woolliscroft@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk).