

# *Local Government and Information*

## *The Issues*

1. Lack of information on issues relating to Local Government.
2. Lack of knowledge as to who the local councillors are and how the parish precept is spent.
3. Apparent apathy within the community as to what goes on at Parish Council meetings.
4. Lack of information on forthcoming events in OHSMag.

Most people answered the questions relating to local government. Just over a third had attended a Parish Council meeting despite these being open to the public and only 15% had attended the annual parish meeting when all village organisations report on their activities over the past year. When asked about the awareness of local issues at Parish, District (Mid Suffolk) and County Council it is very obvious that most residents think that the closer the elected councillors are to the people they represent the more understanding and awareness of local issues is known and acted upon.

Nearly 60% of respondents felt that the Parish Council is fully aware but only 31% think that of the District Council. When we look at the figures for the County Council 39% of respondents think that they are unaware of local concerns and 28% think the same of the District Council. What is worrying is that nearly 9% feel that the Parish Council does not know what is going on and some say that they don't even know who their elected councillors are or if anything is ever published relating to local government.

With regards to our own Parish Council, 66% of respondents felt that any decisions or information were being publicised well or reasonably well, but 10% thought it was very poor. One important question was regarding the parish precept and how it was spent by the Parish Council. 42% indicated they were not aware at all as to how this money was spent and only a third were quite or well satisfied. This needs to be rectified and quickly.

However of those who responded to the questions relating to the dissemination of information and advertising events 94% felt that OHSMag is a very good vehicle for this information. It is obvious that some people are not aware that information which is of importance to them regarding the parish is contained in OHSMag and often this is the only way of passing on this information. 5% said they didn't read it. There seems to be a need for more items in OHSMag regarding local events (84%), leisure (44%) and sports (25%), and for people to advertise events earlier.

The Notice Board is also a place where people find information about events in Onehouse. When asked about advertising their own events 90% said they would use OHSMag, 43% said they would use the Notice Board and 16% said they would use the website.

The Onehouse website is as yet accessed by only 2% of the respondents but more felt that the results of the Parish Plan should be published there as well as in OHSMag, by public meeting or by a report delivered to every house.

Although the information given regarding local government is encouraging there is much to be achieved before everyone in the parish has all the information they need. Therefore the three layers of local government Parish/District/County must address the needs identified to give good value.

## *The Way Forward*

1. Regular information from all tiers of local government.
2. Use the parish website to reach more people.
3. Encourage people to attend Parish Council meetings.
4. Publicise how precept is spent.
5. Raise awareness of events taking place in the village.
6. Encourage people to put more reports and information into OHSMag.