

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Decisive action needed in BBC Savile investigation

As hostile grillings go, that experienced by the BBC director general George Entwistle at a select committee in Parliament yesterday was amongst the hottest. So it should have been. The level and depth of the allegations around the deceased BBC star Jimmy Savile are truly shocking in the first instance.

But in addition, the insouciance demonstrated by the BBC over a period of years has meant a sexual abuse scandal has been joined by one of institutional ignorance.

Mr Entwistle has rightly faced criticism over the decision not to broadcast a BBC Newsnight investigation into abuse allegations which included interviews with Savile's victims last year.

But opening the hearing yesterday, the director general defended the corporation's handling of the case, which has included setting up two independent investigations. He admitted only that Savile's alleged behaviour had been possible because of a "broader cultural problem" at the BBC.

Meanwhile, Mr Entwistle said past and present BBC employees were now also being investigated following the allegations against the former TV presenter and DJ. This included sexual harassment claims against serving employees, but Mr Entwistle said he could not say how many people were involved. Little wonder one of the MPs told the director general to "get a grip" on his organisation. This is becoming a monumental outrage. It needs decisive, publicly visible action and it needs it to happen now. The victims of Savile's abuse deserve that at the very least. Otherwise trust in the BBC, like so many of our other institutions recently, will be damaged beyond repair.

Worrying level of apathy

Police and crime commissioners, who will have the power to hire and fire chief constables, have been heralded as the most significant democratic reform of policing in our lifetime.

Charged by the government with giving power back to the people and making forces more accountable, commissioners, who will replace "invisible" police authorities, are to be elected on November 15.

But with less than a month to go to polling day an EDP survey has uncovered a shocking level of apathy and indifference to the elections in Norfolk and Suffolk, with just 25pc of people intending to vote.

Turnout at the landmark polls, which could cost £130m to set up across the country and £50m every four years to hold, could be just 10pc, making a mockery of the vision that people will have the power when it comes to policing.

A major media campaign trying to raise awareness of the elections has begun, but it could be a case of too little too late for what could turn out to be a hugely expensive and very unpopular white elephant.

More pain in store?

Judging from the bleak warning issued by its leader Derrick Murphy, there could be more pain in store at Norfolk County Council.

The authority is midway through a £135m package of savings, but speculation is mounting that the government will, next October, put even more of a squeeze on funding for local councils.

In the last spending review, the government reduced council budgets by more than 7pc a year and there are predictions it will be at least as bad again.

That's clearly not good news for Norfolk County Council and it is vital that frontline services are protected. But some may raise an eyebrow that these warnings are being made by an authority which has £200m in reserves stockpiled in its coffers.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY



DANIEL BROOKS-LAURENT

DOG DAYS: Daniel Brooke-Laurent's dog enjoys a run to keep warm at sunrise. If you would like to submit a picture for this feature, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

'Our' words crop up all over the country

PETER TRUDGILL

email: newsdesk@archant.co.uk



The EDP recently published a letter from Richard Shephard in which he wondered, rather regretfully, if there really was any such a thing as a truly Norfolk word. It depends what you mean, I suppose, but if we're looking for words which are used in Norfolk and nowhere else, then the answer is probably "no". Many of our local words are shared with Suffolk, especially north-eastern Suffolk, as well as with the old Essex dialect.

But it also turns out that some of "our" words are also shared with other more distant parts of the country.

The English Dialect Dictionary, which was published by Oxford University Press between 1898 and 1905, is a remarkable record of 19th-century English.

It has about 70,000 entries. Look at what it says about that well-known Norfolk dialect word, mawther.

The EDD definition seems entirely correct to us: "a girl just growing into womanhood, especially a great rough awkward wench; a little girl; an unmarried woman".

But look too at one of the examples the dictionary gives: "a gret stawgin' mawther". What's this word stawgin'?

We don't know what that means because this example comes from North Yorkshire (where stawging apparently means "simple, foolish, half-witted").

The dictionary also reports that mawther



PURE SPEECH: The dwile, much beloved of flonkers, appears to be a purely East Anglian word these days.

was used in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Happily, it does cite the usage of mawther in East Anglia – but in the 1890s that included Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Essex as well as Norfolk and Suffolk.

And what about that other famous Norfolk word "squit", beloved of Keith Skipper? The EDD gives a definition we can all agree with: silly talk, nonsense. And the examples it cites are familiar to us – "your talk's all squat".

But it's a bit of a shock to see that last example came from Warwickshire; and the dictionary shows the word as being used in Hampshire as well.

Some words we think of as being part of our local dialect were once in much wider

usage in the country, but their usage has gradually receded geographically under the influence of London-based usage until they have become confined to the more peripheral (even if more important!) parts of England.

But some good news for Richard: that good old Dutch/Norfolk word dwile (floorcloth, dishcloth) is listed in the EDD as being purely East Anglian.

According to the Dictionary, it's found only in Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, and Suffolk.

Probably that's the best we can hope for.

■ What do you think? Email: EDPletters@archant.co.uk

WORDS FOR LIFE

Wisdom will multiply
your days.

Proverbs 9:11

