

Appendix C – County Cllr. Penny Otton’s Report to Full Council

- Suffolk County Council Budget - The Suffolk County Council Budget was voted through Full Council on February 11th. This year’s budget is based on a 12-month financial settlement from government, rather than the 3- or 4-year agreement which is usually offered. Key points include:
 - A council tax rise of 3.99% (1.99% basic council tax and 2% Social Care Precept), representing an increase of £53.55 for a Band D property, from £1,343.61 in 2020-21 to £1,397.16 in 2021-22.
 - A council tax shortfall of £7.9m less than expected, to be met by using reserves.
 - Planned spending is £597.9m, 7.4% more than 2021-21.
 - £15.3m of spending to address ongoing COVID-19 costs.
 - No proposed reductions in council services or personnel.
- LDGI Group Budget Amendment and Group Leader’s Speech - The LDGI Group submitted a Budget Amendment to Full Council on February 11th alongside the administration’s Budget. The amendment would have authorised the use of the full 3% social care precept to avoid impacting SCC’s reserves and generate an extra £3.452m for social care at a cost of only £13.41 per year to a Band D household. The extra income would have provided funding for a wider service offer for Suffolk residents, including a new officer for the flooding team to unlock more government funding, and the re-enablement of concessionary bus passes on community transport. The amendment was unfortunately not passed.
- Suffolk & Norfolk County Council submit joint bid for £6m flood funding - Suffolk and Norfolk County Councils have submitted a joint bid to the £200 fund for Flood and Coastal Resilience, requesting £6m to invest in flood protection schemes across both counties. The proposed projects would also capture water for reuse. If the bid is successful town and parish councils will be encouraged to get involved through measures like permeable paving, water butts and ‘rain gardens’ that can cope with occasional flooding. These projects would be in place by 2027 if the bid is approved. I have asked if some of the current projects will be brought forward. Am waiting a reply.
- LDGI Group opposes Government’s last-minute approach to local authority grants - Suffolk County Council will receive £27m for highways repairs, maintenance and drainage in 2021-22, a reduction in from £31m the previous year. This has necessitated the use of £2m of reserves to top up the grant. In the view of my Group, these cuts in Government funding make it impossible to plan long-term for road maintenance and repair. Due to the uncertainty as to whether this grant would materialise at all, some vital work has already been postponed.
- Change to School Transport Contract - The cabinet has agreed to give the new contract from September 2021 (currently being run by Suffolk Norse) to Vertas, a wholly company of the county council. This has been challenged by Ipswich buses, as to do so could be illegal. We do not have details of whether there will be changes to how the contract will be run. This will include the swimming service. I queried why not wait until the review if the home to school transport policy has been scrutinised as there may need to be changes.
- Cycle to School Scheme - to encourage pupils are being encouraged to cycle to school by offering a voucher worth up to £70 if they trade in their bus pass. They must have done cycle training. I have forwarded a poster.
- West Suffolk Hospital - I have forwarded details of consultation on proposal for new hospital in Bury St Edmunds
- New Car Park at Woolpit Health Centre - A deal has been made with the developer to give land to the health centre to improve parking facility, which is overloaded particularly when doing vaccinations sessions
- Locality Fund - I have agreed to fund the defibrillator and a computer for the Smart screen at the library.

Appendix D – District Cllr. Harry Richardson’s Report to Full Council

- Mid Suffolk District Council met on Thursday 18th February to consider our budget for the financial year 2021/22 - The budget agreed increases Mid Suffolk’s share of council tax by 1.66%, or the equivalent of £2.80 a year (23p a month) for an average Band D property. The District Council recognises the financial challenges facing many residents and local employers as a result of the pandemic, and the money raised through the council tax increase is therefore being ring-fenced to provide direct support for businesses hardest hit by the pandemic. In addition, Mid Suffolk is now also in a position to invest an additional £4m into the District’s recovery. This money will be invested in the local economy, housing, the wellbeing of

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residents, and in its communities – with a cross-party approach adopted to develop recommendations to Mid Suffolk Cabinet for its use. In addition to further investment in tackling climate change and enhancing biodiversity, the Council has pledged to:

- build the affordable & sustainable homes people need,
- invest in people's physical & mental health,
- support the recovery & growth of the local economy; and
- strengthen & enable civic pride, community spirit & empowered local democracy.

Mid Suffolk are also increasing Council house rent by 1% above the rate of inflation, or the equivalent of a rise of £1.25 per week. Sheltered Housing Service charges are to go up by £1 per week, but there are no changes to Sheltered Housing utility charges or garage rents. The revenue raised from these increases will then fund the development of 254 affordable homes and 119 shared ownership homes across the District.

- There have also been a number of initiatives launched in the previous weeks and so I have included below a summary of the major updates across the District:
 - Stowmarket arts centre gets major boost - Ambitions for Stowmarket to become a hub for arts and culture took a major step forward earlier this month, following Councillors unanimously giving the go-ahead to lease 11 Market Place to the John Peel Centre
 - Go ahead for emission-cutting fuel plans - Mid Suffolk District Council will cut their fleet's carbon emissions by up to 90% – supporting the councils' carbon neutral aims.
 - New service to support residents to live independently and safely in their homes - Mid Suffolk District Council's 'Independent Living Service' has been developed to help improve the quality of life of the districts' most vulnerable adults, young people and children.
 - Housing Delivery Test 2020 - The recently published Housing Delivery Test 2020 (an annual measurement of housing delivery in the area of relevant plan-making authorities) confirms that Mid Suffolk met the Government's housing delivery requirement over the past three years.
 - Census 2021 will provide a snapshot of modern society - Households across Mid Suffolk will soon be asked to take part in Census 2021. The census is a once-in-a-decade survey that gives the Office for National Statistics the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales. It has been carried out every decade since 1801 (except for 1941).
 - New recycling campaign aims to get Suffolk's recycling right -Every year, more than 10,000 tonnes (1 in 5 lorries worth) of recycling from Suffolk homes is rejected. This is due to residents placing the wrong items in their recycling bins. A new campaign 'Together we can get our recycling right' has been launched by the Suffolk Waste Partnership to tackle the problem.

Report from District Cllr. Cllr Wendy Turner to Full Council

- COVID update- The Prime Minister has now outlined the stages necessary to get back to a more normal way of life following the pandemic. For this to proceed as planned it is vital that everyone takes up their offer of a vaccine. There are currently 10 different covid-19 business support grants open for applications. The grants relate to different periods of national or local lockdown restrictions since November 2020. The Home but Not alone phonenumber is still active for those who need it.
- COVID community testing sites - Rapid testing centres are rolling out across the county. The first Mid Suffolk site was at the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket. Elmswell and Needham Market Community testing centres opened on Wednesday 24th Feb and it is hoped to open test centres in both Eye and Debenham in due course. These test centres are for people who are not displaying symptoms of COVID and you need to book an appointment via the SCC website <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/getting-a-test/> . If you do have symptoms you must book a test via the national website or phone 119. <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>
- General Fund Budget 2021/22 - At the February Council meeting next year's budget was agreed. There is to be a 1.66% increase in Council Tax despite budgeting for over £3M surplus each year for the next 3 years. Cross party working groups are to be set up to decide how to spend approx. £4M across all parts of the organisation to help in the recovery following the pandemic.

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- Housing Revenue Account 2021/22 - Since the Government removed the cap of rent increases, MSDC are to increase their Council House rent by CPI+1% (this equates to approx.. £1.25 per week increase). Sheltered Housing Service charges are to go up by £1 per week, but there are no changes to Sheltered Housing utility charges or garage rents. The Council has a Capital programme 2021-24 to develop 254 affordable homes and 119 shared ownership homes. MSDC has engaged Icen Homes to identify development sites. Over the next 3 years it is hoped to bring forward sites at Cedars Park, Bacton and Haughley. MSDC are also bidding for S106 acquisitions in several new developments all over the district.
- Needham Lake Visitor Centre - The Council have completed the procurement process and appointed a contractor to build the Needham Lake Visitor Centre and Café. The facility is a high quality and environmentally sustainable building which will become a real asset to the Lakes as a tourist attraction and as a benefit to the local community.
- Gateway 14 - Gateway 14 has submitted a planning applicant to MSDC for a mixed use business park. This has followed an extensive community engagement exercise. The public consultation on the planning application runs until 3rd March and it is hoped that the application will be determined in April or May.
- Census 2021 - Census day is March 21st. It is vital that everyone completes the survey as the responses will help to identify society's needs now and in the future. This information helps plan and fund services in the locality including transport, healthcare and education. All households should receive information in the post explaining how to complete the questionnaire online or to apply for a paper form if necessary.