

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

- LDGI Group motion on carer’s database receives unanimous support - On March 18th the LDGI Group presented a motion designed to improve the county’s support offer for carers. The motion will see the Council working with Suffolk Family Carers to create an opt-in register for carers, who will be offered increased support including advice, signposting to key services, and the option to be consulted on key policies affecting carers. The motion received unanimous support from the Council.
- Automatic number plate recognition camera project (ANPR) - Suffolk County Council is working with the police to run a 2-year ANPR camera trial in speeding hot spots across the county. The cameras will be used to help detect and deter speeding offences that have been highlighted in towns and villages and educate drivers on the importance of road safety. *If Thurston wants to have one installed you need to fill in a detailed form and I will be happy to support your request. I have sent details to the clerk.*
An ANPR camera will be installed at a site where it has been identified by a local council, with support from their county councillor, that there is a problem with speeding and/or rat-running on roads with a 20 or 30mph speed limit. The devices will be moved between sites and will remain in situ for up to one week per site. There is the option of extending this period if needed. An ANPR device identifies a speeding vehicle by capturing an image of the number plate of the vehicle. Data will then be shared with the Police and the County Council. The County Council will write to the owner of the vehicle on behalf of both parties explaining that their vehicle has been registered as speeding. Repeat offences at a particular location could prompt the deployment of SafeCam (the Police’s enforcement team) and the issuing of fines to those who breach the speed limit.
- Freeport East bid successful - A combined bid from Suffolk and north Essex for a designated freeport has been approved by the Government. Freeport East will have sites at Felixstowe, Harwich and Stowmarket, and could create 13500 jobs over the next ten years. The freeport will operate its own customs zone, allowing businesses to import goods without paying duties until the goods are exported again.
- £500k for highways improvements near schools - Locations around schools across Suffolk have benefitted from new road markings and signs, following an investment of £500,000 from the Highways Investment Fund (HIF). The extra funding has been focussed on improving the safety of pupils and parents travelling to and from school, refreshing lines and cleaning and repairing signs in and around school zones. 146 locations were identified as requiring new signs to replace those that were damaged or missing. Additionally, 218 areas with faded road markings are receiving a refresh.
- Quiet Lanes scheme launched - SCC has announced new support for the Quiet Lanes scheme, which will cover over 300 miles of lanes in Suffolk. Quiet Lanes is a nationally recognised designation for narrow, rural roads which can be shared with walkers, horse riders, cyclists and other road users. It encourages drivers to take their time when they see the Quiet Lanes sign, to allow for all road users to travel with greater safety. The initiative has another 50 proposed lanes going through planning for April 2021. A new website allowing residents to find the Quiet Lanes near them will be available in May.
- New sustainable travel website launched - The Way To Go Suffolk provides information and advice on walking and cycling, public transport, car sharing and electric vehicles. The new website will feature up to date information on how people can travel more sustainably across the county and will also include support and guidance on how to write a Travel Plan for a Business, School or a New Housing Development.
- Meadow Lane - I met with Sam Harvey last week and asked her to make sure all is carried out by the developer to put Meadow Lane back into its proper original state. She assured me she would do so.
- Road Signs - with you I have instructed the highways to deal with the road sign and urgently remove the graffiti asap.
- POST 16 Travel for Students - I have opposed the rise of £90 this year as I feel that this is not the time to increase the cost of education for many families.

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

- Mid Suffolk District Council met on Thursday 25th March for our last meeting of the municipal year. We will not be conducting Cabinet or full Council meetings in April due to the ‘purdah’ period before the County Council and Police & Crime Commissioner elections on 6th May.

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- Most of the full Council meeting concerned procedural recommendations or appointments, but an important motion on access to green spaces was agreed unanimously after being proposed by Cllr Rachel Eburne (Leader of the Opposition; Leader of the Green & Liberal Democrat Group) and seconded by Cllr Suzie Morley (Leader of the Council; Leader of the Conservative & Independent Group).

The key aspects of this motion included:

- developing a wildlife network map - to help identify and create important wildlife corridors, and tree and hedge planting areas. This will aim to enhance connectivity and improve management of existing as well as future Local Nature Reserves and wildlife sites in the district;
 - planting wildflower meadow verges and changing strict grass cutting regimes where suitable; encouraging bees and insects;
 - working with town and parish councils and local communities to identify areas where trees and hedges can be planted;
 - increasing hedge planting through the DEFRA Hedgerows and Boundaries Grant scheme, and helping to fund planting which isn't eligible where possible;
 - developing a Supplementary Planning Document linked to the Joint Local Plan - to strengthen biodiversity protections and set out the districts' expectations for design, landscaping and open space elements of new developments;
 - exploring the possibility of a green burial site.
- 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:
 - Community testing - 1 in 3 people who have Covid-19 do not have symptoms and may be unwittingly spreading the virus to other people without knowing. To tackle this, Suffolk has introduced community testing (also known as lateral flow testing or rapid testing) for those who are unable to work from home. A number of community testing centres have recently opened across Mid Suffolk, including sites in Stowmarket, Elmswell and Needham Market. To find out more, or to make an appointment please go to the Suffolk County Council website.
 - Councils pledge to provide further financial support for struggling households - Thousands of households across Mid Suffolk will be eligible for a reduction in their council tax bill after councillors approved further support for residents facing financial difficulties due to Covid-19.
 - Covid support grants for businesses - There are several business support grants available which cover different local and national lockdown periods. For businesses mandated to close (including those in retail, leisure and hospitality) that have applied and received a lockdown grant since November 2020, our plan is to automatically pay additional grants following pre-payment checks. However, for businesses that may be eligible but have not heard from us, or are yet to apply for any grants, we are encouraging them to find out more and to submit an application form as soon as possible. Further information about all the covid business support grants can be found on our grant funding schemes webpage.
 - An extra £3m for warmer, greener Suffolk homes - More Suffolk residents, including those in Mid Suffolk, are set to benefit from Government Green Homes Grants thanks to a further successful bid for £3m funding by a Suffolk consortium of local authorities.
 - Councils help combat holiday hunger - Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have continued to fund a joint initiative offering food and activities for families in need during the school holidays.
 - Plug in Suffolk - Plug in Suffolk is now providing grants for the installation of Electric Vehicle charging points at non-profit locations such as community centres, parish council car parks and village halls.
 - The Postbox Project - Many of our residents will have experienced feelings of isolation and loneliness since the Covid pandemic began. To combat this we've partnered with The Forge Church and Suffolk County Council to launch The Postbox Project. Our aim is to connect people across Suffolk, using letter writing to build new friendships. We are currently recruiting volunteers to write letters, so if you can spare a little time, please let us know.
 - Postponement of the Women's Tour - The Women's Tour, the international cycle race originally scheduled to finish in Suffolk on 12 June 2021, has been postponed due to COVID-19. Organisers, Sweetspot Group, have requested alternate race dates of Monday 4 to Saturday 9 October from the sport's governing body.

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Once new dates are confirmed, we will begin our community activity and work with local schools and businesses to promote the tour coming to our district.

Report from District Cllr. Cllr Wendy Turner to Full Council

- COVID update - We have now passed the first anniversary of the initial COVID lockdown. The deadline for the application for COVID business grants was extended to 31st March. Since November the Councils have paid out grants worth almost £16M to businesses across both districts.
- CIL expenditure framework - The Council has adopted the revised CIL Expenditure Framework and the revised communications strategy at the meeting on 25th March. A joint member panel is in place to review the framework at periodic intervals. The main amendments relate to collaborative bids for infrastructure outside our district. The limit of funding available to parish or community groups is to be £75,000 or 75% of the total project cost, unless it is for sporting or recreation infrastructure. The next bid round is due to start on 1st May. Any group wishing to apply for CIL funding should first approach the Infrastructure team at BMSDC to discuss their options.
- CIL Funding - The council approved £4.39 million in CIL funding from housing growth since March 2020 benefitting a range of local projects.
- Consultation on the future of New Homes Bonus - Both Councils are to form a cross-party working group to discuss the joint response to the Future of the New Homes Bonus Consultation. This group will make a recommendation to the Assistant Director for Corporate Resources to formally submit the consultation response.
- Solar Carport - MSDC Cabinet has agreed to proceed with the installation of a solar carport with battery storage at the Gainsborough Road site in Stowmarket by March 2022. This is to include five 22kW fast charge points and one 50kW rapid charge point. There will be scope to increase provision of charging points if there is demand in future.
- Council of the Year competition - Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are joint finalists in a national competition to find the 'Council of the Year'. In addition, BMSDC have also been identified as finalists in two other categories – Customer Focus and Asset Management. The overall winners will not be announced until 8th September.
- Carbon saving technology at leisure centres - BMSDC are to install PV panels and air source heat pumps at their leisure centres, including Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre. This is to be partly funded by a £1.4M carbon-saving grant from Government. Feasibility studies are also to be carried out for the installation of solar carports as well.
- Green Spaces - Councillors voted unanimously to launch a review of the district's green spaces in order to make the best use of the natural environment to improve residents' wellbeing and to tackle climate change.
- Covid Testing centre closure - Elmswell Covid Testing centre will close on April the 16th due to lack of demand and because home testing kits are becoming more accessible and offer more flexibility.