

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

- Cost of Living help and advice:
<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>
- Benefits advice and support:
<https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>
- Flooding in Suffolk - Recent high rainfall has led to many Suffolk residents’ homes being flooded, and flooding more generally on roads. At Council on 7 December, a motion was passed for the council to review the frequency of drain and gully clearance in areas at risk of flooding, and to work closely with districts and boroughs, Anglian Water and the Environment Agency to help prevent future flooding. My group had hoped to introduce further measures on regularity of maintenance, but this was not supported by the Conservative administration. The motion that was passed was preceded by an announcement by the council of £1m in extra funding to investigate flooding incidents in the county.
- Thurston Road - under the flyover and on Drinkstone road again suffered badly
- Details of a government-funded scheme from DEFRA whereby Suffolk residents can apply for up to £5,000 to help protect their property from future flooding can be found at this link, with applications from January 2024: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>
- DEFRA’s Property Flood Resilience Grant - As well as the initial £500 grant payment and council tax/business rate discounts, residents whose homes have been flooded may also be eligible for up to £5,000 from the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Grant, which the government requires Suffolk County Council to administer on their behalf. The application process will begin in early 2024 and after initial eligibility checks by SCC, property owners will be responsible for sourcing an independent surveyor and PFR contractor. Payment of up to £5,000 including VAT will be paid retrospectively to the property owner once the Council receives proof of the completed installation and invoicing for the approved measures. Further information about the grant eligibility, conditions and the forthcoming application process can be found here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/property-flood-resilience-grant>
- SCC Carbon Net Zero Ambitions - The council’s Scrutiny Committee met on Monday 11 December to review the council’s progress towards becoming carbon net zero by 2030. Overall there had been a 10% reduction in emissions in 2022/23, due to reduced energy use for street lighting (a recent upgrade programme) and reduced gas consumption at SCC property and schools. However, the council is not on target to be carbon neutral by 2030, at least partially due to the third scope of indirect emissions – this includes emissions by suppliers and contractors used by the council which are difficult to measure accurately and control. The supply chain represents 91% of the council’s total footprint, and it has updated its contract terms and conditions to include annual reporting on reducing carbon emissions, and also requires suppliers to sign up to its Carbon Charter and Climate Change Commercial Ask.
- Getting Children Ready for Education - On Thursday 14 December, the council’s Education and Children’s Scrutiny Committee met to review the support the council provides to prepare children for school. This includes the county’s nurseries and early years providers, health services for 0–5-year-olds and Family Hubs (formerly children’s centres). In recent years the council has worked with the National Literacy Hub to try and engage children with reading, after research in 2020 concluded that educational attainment for Suffolk children was much lower than it should be. The Committee acknowledged the good work that was going on in a challenging area and urged that recruitment of health visitors be prioritised by SCC to fill the current vacancies (21%). There were also plans to improve the council’s digital platform - in partnership with parents - so they were able to find information and support more easily.

- Budget - The council is facing a huge budget deficit and is proposing cuts to children's services, arts and museums, and councillors locality fund by £2K PLUS increasing council tax . I have asked the cost of not charging for DIY waste has been included.
- Locality Fund - I have agreed £200 for your new notice boards, £2000 towards new work for the village hall and £500 to the Guides to help the cost of their visit to France.

Appendix D - District Cllr's Report to Full Council – Cllrs. David Bradbury and Austin Davies

- MSDC Meeting - There was no Mid Suffolk District Council meeting in December. Mid Suffolk District Council's cabinet will be asked to approve a full business case for delivery of the first work package of the Stowmarket Health, Education and Leisure Facilities (SHELF) project. The initial works also include an improved pitch for Stowmarket Rugby Club, community running track, cricket nets and additional paths and fencing. The cabinet, which meets on 9 January, will consider a recommendation to put £450,000 towards the £2.4million scheme, with the remaining funding already identified from a range of external sources alongside Section 106 contributions.
- There are more than 680 empty houses in Mid Suffolk, which the councils are keen to bring back into use to help meet growing housing need. The councils already impose a council tax premium on the owners of properties that are empty and unfurnished for two years or longer, but under new legislation, the councils would be able to target empty properties after just one year from April 2024 – and impose a levy on second homeowners from April 2025.
- MSDC has continued with its 'cozy homes' initiative which makes insulation available to appropriate households in our District. It is for:
 - Residents of Mid Suffolk: Whether you are a private tenant, a homeowner, or a landlord with fewer than five properties, this scheme is for you.
 - Financial Criteria: Your household income should be less than £60,000 per year, with savings not exceeding £16,000.
 - EPC Rating: Your home should have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating between D and G.
 - Council Tax Banding: Your property should fall within council tax bands A to E.It covers loft insulation (including loft clearance), cavity wall insulation, draft proofing and possibly also other forms of insulation where appropriate.
- Planning - Target date has been set as the 17th January for applications DC/23/02429 and DC/23/02430.
- Network Rail - Still no sign of the final report which was due by the end of November.
- Thurston Community College - The fitness suite is now available for community use.
- A14 - Continuing to support the Tostock campaign to have the village speed limit further along Church Road and additional restrictions in Norton.
- Locality grants - We would welcome applications, particularly from Tostock and Stowlangtoft Parishes.

Briefing Note for town and parish councils – from Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils -

[New Year in new homes – council housing boost](#)

Tenants have picked up the keys to more than 120 new affordable, high-quality council homes across Babergh and Mid Suffolk over the last 12 months.

[New sports facilities for Stowmarket under first stage of major project](#)

Improved sports facilities in Stowmarket, including a new 3G football pitch, multi-use games area and mini athletics track, could move a step closer following a meeting of Mid Suffolk District Council cabinet on January 9.

[Business case for £18m Skills and Innovation Centre at Gateway 14 approved](#)

The state-of-the-art centre at Gateway 14, Stowmarket, will cost up to £18.75m, and offer opportunities for business growth, innovation, enterprise and training, with a particular focus on emerging sectors linked to ‘green’ and ‘digital’ skills.

[Councils award funding to provide warm spaces this winter](#)

31 community projects have received a share of more than £36,000 to help their communities this winter.

[Councillors to consider tax premiums for second homes and empty properties](#)

Councillors at Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are considering higher tax premiums for owners of second homes and long-term empty properties, following the introduction of new government rules.

[Last chance for parents to claim free tree before January](#)

Applications for a popular free tree scheme for new parents who welcomed arrivals in 2023, will close on January 10.

[£2 million pledged to accelerate climate emergency action in Suffolk](#)

A further £2million has been pledged by Suffolk Public Sector Leaders to tackle the climate emergency.

[Orchestra helps council hit the right notes](#)

Mid Suffolk District Council has partnered with a national charity and a renowned professional orchestra to bring an exciting musical experience to older residents and those living with long-term health conditions such as dementia and Parkinsons.

[Homelessness and rough sleeping strategy open for consultation](#)

The councils are asking residents and organisations for their view on tackling homelessness and rough sleeping to help shape their future strategy. The consultation runs until January 14.