

## STOWLANGTOFT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

**MONDAY 16 MARCH 2020 AT 7.15 PM  
THE MEETING ROOM, ST GEORGE'S ROAD**

Present: Cllrs I Cassidy (Vice Chair), J Catchpole, D D'Lima (Chair) and N Kaines and County Cllr Mrs J Storey. Mrs A Bryant (clerk) was also in attendance. Members of the public also attended.

108 **Apologies for absence:** Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs H Godfrey, Mrs J Godfrey and J Orlopp and District Cllrs Richardson and Mrs Turner.

109 **Declaration of interest:** No declarations of interest were declared.

110 **Minutes of the last meetings: 20 January and 17 February 2020**

### 20 January 2020

The Chairman summarised the minutes for the benefit of members of the public who had not read them. Cllr Kaines proposed that the minutes of the meeting dated 20 January 2020 be approved. Cllr Cassidy seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

### 17 February 2020

The Chairman summarised the minutes for the benefit of members of the public who had not read them. Cllr Cassidy proposed that the minutes of the meeting dated 17 February 2020 be approved. Cllr Kaines seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

111 **Matters arising from the last meeting**

Insurance (20/1) – The Clerk confirmed that the insurance company had clarified that the VAS would be insured under the road furniture clause.

*(Cllr D'Lima stated that, with the agreement of the Parish Council, agenda item 10 regarding St George's Church would be considered next. He welcomed Reverend Katherine Valentine to the meeting who would provide an update).*

112 **St George's Church**

Reverend Valentine thanked those present for allowing her to address the Parish Council. She apologised that Mrs Harrison, PCC Treasurer was not present, but she had sent her apologies due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Reverend Katherine explained that she took over the role of Priest in Charge in 2015 and had a regular congregation of 3 people. She understood that services prior to this date had been sporadic, however attendance at Christmas and harvest were always higher. She therefore suggested that St George's Church could become a festival church. Reverend Katherine added that services at Stowlangtoft Hall were flourishing.

Following the withdrawal of the fundraising bonfire and fireworks, the low attendance at service has been insufficient to cover costs. She acknowledged that Cllr Kaines had investigated alternative locations for the bonfire and fireworks with no success for various health and safety reasons.

A meeting with the PCC and Church Committee had been held covering all 6 benefices. At this point the church wardens from Pakenham had volunteered as wardens for St George's. Mrs Harrison had also volunteered to undertake the role of treasurer. A public meeting had been held in February 2018 which had limited attendance but all had acknowledged that

radical change would be required. Some suggestions for fund raising had been suggested and had been held.

Reverend Katherine explained that the current position was that St George's Church had run out of funds. At present some electrical work had to be undertaken to ensure the building could be insured. The Diocese had agreed to pick up any short fall and pay for the insurance in the short term.

Various options for St George's had been suggested. One was that it became "A Chapel of Ease" which would require the church to cease being a church and become a chapel with a nearby church taking St George's into its parish. Weddings could not happen if the church became a chapel. St George's could become a "United Church" however a neighbouring PCC would still be required to look after 2 buildings.

St George's Church is a beautiful listed building but is no longer used. It needs to remain accessible to those who do wish to use it and be preserved for the future. Reverend Katherine suggested that the most sensible option would be to make an application to the Churches Conservation Trust as this would allow the building to remain consecrated and allow 6 services per year. She added that any funds raised at services would have to be passed to the Churches Conservation Trust. St George's would cease to be a parish church; however an area of the churchyard would have to have a special license issued to allow burials. A special license could be applied for for weddings, but it would be costly.

Reverend Katherine reported that the Churches Conservation Trust were keen to keep the building open and a report had been prepared which outlined the churches historic value. The report has been submitted to the Churches Office in London. If the application were successful, the Churches Conservation Trust would canvas the village for support and would need to be satisfied that there was enough support available.

Reverend Katherine thanked the Parish Council for the financial support provided by the Parish Council to date.

Reverend Katherine concluded that an application to the Churches Conservation Trust could take several years as there are lots of churches in the same situation. She reiterated that the Diocese were providing help at present. St George's could be used as a public hub for use by the village but necessary facilities such as toilet provision would need to be installed and a suitable, viable business plan would need to be presented. She added that there had been rumour that the hanging wooden carvings would be sold. She advised that this was not the case, and in fact the Churches Conservation Trust would like them to remain as they are integral to St George's.

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the public meeting had been postponed until at least June 2020. There would be an Annual Church meeting on 29 April at 7.30 pm which parishioners and Councillor were welcome to attend. On 31 May, the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday, there would be an evensong at St George's at 6.00 pm.

*(Reverend Katherine Valentine left the meeting at 8.00 pm)*

#### 113 **County Councillor's report**

County Cllr Mrs Storey submitted her report, previously circulated, and took questions. A copy is attached to the minutes for information. She added that consultation regarding Fishwick Corner in Thurston would be released in due course.

Cllr D'Lima questioned whether County Cllr Mrs Storey had been able to progress the highway matters (Kiln Lane 30 mph speed limit and white lines) for Stowlangtoft at all Parish Councillors were receiving no reply from the Highways Department. County Cllr Mrs Storey replied that she does always mention it and is trying to progress matters, however the introduction of a speed limit in Kiln Lane was dependant on house numbers. She suggested that the Chair invite the Cabinet member for Highways, Andrew Reid to visit the site and see the issue for himself. **Cllr D'Lima agreed that he would arrange for County Councillor Reid to visit.**

*(County Cllr Mrs Storey left the meeting at 8.10 pm)*

114 **District Councillor's report**

Cllr D'Lima, in District Cllr Richardson's absence, presented his report, previously circulated. A copy is attached to the minutes for information.

Cllr D'Lima, in District Cllr Mrs Turner's absence, presented her report, previously circulated. A copy is attached to the minutes for information.

115 **Police report**

The Parish Council noted that there was no further information available from the Police and reiterated that it was also available online at <https://www.suffolk.police.uk/your-area/snt-newsletters>. Cllr D'Lima updated on issues facing the Bury St Edmunds area.

The Parish Council noted acts of criminal damage which had occurred in St George's Road. The residents had reported each incident to the Police and CCTV had been installed.

116 **Speed Reactive Sign Procurement**

In Cllr Godfrey's absence, Cllr D'Lima read out a statement which confirmed that VAS had been installed in the village after 4 years of trying. The VAS appeared to have been well received by villagers and the wider community and Badwell Ash Parish Council had been in contact regarding the supplier.

Cllr Godfrey had reported that if similar devices were required for the A1088 then the Parish Council would need to discuss how these were financed. He also requested that someone else lead the installation of the posts.

Cllr D'Lima thanked Cllr Godfrey for all the hard work undertaken in finally getting VAS to the village.

117 **Clerk's report**

The Clerk had nothing to report.

118 **Finance Report:**

Councillors agreed the financial report and the cheques were signed.

End of Year Balance Sheet

The Parish Council noted the End of Year Balance sheet as at 15 March 2020 and noted that some cheques would need to clear before a final position was known.

2020 – 2021 Budget

The Parish Council noted the updated spreadsheet containing the figures discussed at the meeting held on 20 January 2020. **Cllr Kaines seconded by Cllr Catchpole proposed the contents of the 2020 – 2021 budget be accepted. The vote was unanimously carried.**

### Annual Statement

The Parish Council noted the annual statement for the period ending 31 March 2020. **Cllr Cassidy, seconded by Cllr Kaines, that the content of the Annual Statement be accepted. The vote was unanimously carried.**

#### 119 **Planning matters:**

The Parish Council noted that conditions 6, 12 and 13 of application DC/19/03862 (Street Farm) had been discharged and application DC/20/00214 (Land at Street Farm – irrigation reservoir) had been approved.

Cllr D'Lima reported that Cllr Mrs Godfrey had highlighted public footpath W496/001/0 ran up the track leading to the construction site and stated it should not be compromised during construction or after completion.

#### 120 **Highway matters**

Cllr D'Lima stated that some potholes had been repaired and the pothole on the A1088 had already been reported. He reminded people to report potholes using the online tool.

#### 121 **Correspondence**

The Clerk reported that SCC had emailed the grass cutting programme for 2020 out. It outlined dates for SCC cuts but also contained a Highways Contractor Agreement for those who wish to cut the verges in between times. The Clerk reported the following proposed cutting dates :-

Stowlangtoft village – 6 July 2020

A1088 – 4 May and 20 July 2020

The Clerk handed the Highways Contractor Agreement form to Cllr Catchpole.

#### 122 **Councillors' Forum**

Stowlangtoft Charity - Cllr Cassidy reported that the Charity Commission had given approval to spend the charity funds on a couple of benches for the benefit of the village. Cllr Cassidy suggested a couple of locations which would be investigated further. **Cllr D'Lima agreed to contact County Cllr Mrs Storey to check locations from a highways perspective.** Cllr Cassidy stated that if there were any funds remaining after purchasing the benches then additional bulbs would be purchased for around the village.

Dog Bin – Cllr Kaines reported that the new larger bin had been installed. Typically, between installation and the Parish Council meeting, MSDC had been to empty the bin and found it locked. Cllr Kaines advised that he would adapt the bin to make access easier and without the need for a key. **The Clerk added that he had received an email from MSDC requesting the key which she would forward on to Cllr Kaines.** Cllr Cassidy stated that there appeared to be an increase in dog fouling in Primrose Meadow and towards the A1088. All those present agreed to keep an eye and clear up where found.

Litter Pick – Cllr Kaines confirmed that the litter pick was planned for 29 March at 9.30 am. Leaflets would be delivered to all households.

#### 123 **Public Forum**

Kiln Lane Surface Water - Further to the meeting held on 20 January 2020, Mr Paterson reported that Miles Drainage had visited the site to review the surface water in Kiln Lane. They had proposed a couple of proposals, with differing quotations. Mr Paterson advised that he had met Cllr Catchpole on site, and they had concluded that there was most probably a damaged drainage pipe. If the damaged pipe could be located it could be repaired. The ownership of the land where the possible blocked pipe is located is in

dispute. **Cllr D'Lima agreed to contact County Cllr Mrs Storey to ascertain whether the Highways department could visit the site to conclude where the blockage was and on whose land it was on.**

St George's Church – County Cllr Mrs Spicer attended the meeting and offered her assistance regarding St George's Church.

VAS – The VAS signs had been welcomed by parishioners and there was a view that they had impacted on speeding through the village. However, there were a few who continued to drive in excess of the speed limit. It was felt that the information could be extracted and reviewed, and the Police called where appropriate.

Laurel Bushes, St George's Road – There had been various laurel bushes in St George's Road which had unfortunately died. The bushes had acted as a wind break and residents questioned whether replacements could be planted by MSDC or perhaps by residents. **Cllr D'Lima agreed to contact MSDC to obtain approval for residents to plant replacements.**

124 **Date of next meeting:** Monday 18 May 2020 at 7.30 pm in the Meeting Room, St George's Road. The AGM meeting would be held at 7.00 pm.

The Parish Council noted that a Planning meeting would be held Monday 20 April 2019 at 7.15 pm in the Meeting Room, St George's Road, if any planning applications were received. However, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, this situation may be reviewed and meetings held using email.

The meeting concluded at 8.52 pm.

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Chairman

## **March 2020 Thedwastre North Monthly Newsletter**

### **Ipswich Northern Route will not proceed to the next stage**

On 25 February, the Cabinet of Suffolk County Council voted to accept a recommendation that the Ipswich Northern Route should not proceed to the next stage of development.

The Cabinet recommendation noted that the project had failed to attract the widespread political support needed to proceed with projects of this size and financial scale. The Cabinet paper also made it clear that local planning authorities were unable to agree to any of the additional housing growth, over the level already agreed in their local plans, which would be needed to help fund the local contribution before government funding could be requested.

The Cabinet agreed to the recommendation to create a task force to build on existing work to increase modal shift within Ipswich (reducing trips by car and increasing use of buses, walking and cycling) and to improve capacity at key junctions. More information about this will be provided in the coming weeks.

### **New street lighting proposed to reduce the county's carbon footprint**

Suffolk County Council is looking to reduce its carbon footprint by investing £9.8m in street lighting, after Cabinet approved an LED street lighting replacement project.

Following a review of its street lighting policy in 2010, and with energy prices set to increase at between 8% and 12% a year, the Council has decided the high energy consumption of its existing lanterns could create further pressure on its resources in the near future.

The Council owns and maintains over 60,000 streetlights. Back in 2010, the Council took numerous steps to help reduce both the energy costs and carbon footprint of its lighting stock. This included the introduction of part-night lighting arrangements and conversion to LED for those lighting units that were consuming the highest level of energy.

The proposal to convert the remaining street lighting stock to LED will help to reduce both Suffolk's energy consumption and carbon footprint, whilst providing crisper illumination of the streets for residents. The project will also ensure that Suffolk remains resilient to any future energy price increases. The project will be completed in the autumn of 2022.

### **County Council approves budget to spend more on services for vulnerable residents**

On 13 February 2020, Suffolk County Council approved its annual budget. The Council will increase its spending power again this coming financial year, particularly in Children's and Adults services, where demand continues to rise year on year.

In 2020/2021, the Council's budget will rise to £556million which represents an increase of £37m (7.1%) from 2019/20. Children's and Adults Services represent around 70% of the Council's overall spend.

As well as addressing the need to maintain funding for key services, the Council will invest an additional £3.5m into two one-year programmes, the Suffolk 2020 fund (£3m) and a highways investment fund (£500k).

The Suffolk 2020 fund will be used for projects that can deliver a real difference for local communities. The intention is to adopt good ideas covering more than one area of Suffolk, rather than having a number of small-scale projects. To qualify for the fund, projects must link to one of the following themes: carbon reduction; carbon offset, road safety, natural environment; built environment; innovation; and use of technology.

The £500k highways investment fund will focus on improving the safety of pupils and parents travelling to and from school, by refreshing lines and cleaning and repairing signs in and around school zones.

The funding is allocated for use within the 2020/21 financial year and looks set to benefit areas around many Suffolk schools, complementing the road marking renewal programme, which is taking place as part of the move of civil parking powers. Suffolk Highways officers are developing a plan of how these extra works will be identified and delivered. Further information will be announced in due course.

### **Suffolk Highways waives fees for VE and VJ Day Commemoration events**

In commemoration of the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe and Victory over Japan Days, Suffolk Highways has confirmed it will waive road closure application fees and help support communities with event traffic management.

Communities in Suffolk will be organising commemorative events, some of which may require an application to Suffolk Highways for a road closure.

SCC Is waiving application fees and will provide some help in supporting these events with the necessary road closures and management of traffic; enabling them to run as smoothly as possible. I encourage anyone who is interested in holding an event to visit our website, see what is involved and get in contact."

Communities can find out more about how to apply for a road closure as part of a commemorative event they're holding, by visiting: [\*\*www.suffolk.gov.uk/eventroadclosure\*\*](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/eventroadclosure)

### **Suffolk County Council issue school crossing patrol staff with body cameras**

Suffolk County Council is issuing body cameras to some of its crossing patrol officers after 'drive-through' incidents and verbal abuse at school crossings.

In Suffolk we have 61 school crossing patrol officers. Increasingly, more officers have reported incidents and have said they feel abuse is becoming a regular occurrence with little respect for what they do.

In the past six months, 19 'drive-through' incidents have been recorded in Suffolk where drivers have ignored the crossing patrol officer and did not stop when the officer stood in the road to allow children to cross safely.

The cameras have been purchased by Suffolk's Roadsafe partners Suffolk County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Suffolk Constabulary with money from the Driver Diversionary Fund, which comes from motorists who have taken part in speed awareness courses.

The ten body cameras will be rotated around the county, focusing on sites where officers have reported an incident. This includes sites in Lowestoft, Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds.

The body cameras follow the work of the 'Stop Means Stop' campaign from the Eastern Region School Crossing Patrol Group, which aims to remind drivers of the potential seriousness of their actions. Drivers are legally obliged to obey the school crossing patrol sign under the Road Traffic Act 1988. Failure to stop can lead to a prosecution and a fine of up to £1,000 and three penalty points.

### **Have your say on improvements to the Tollgate junction in Bury St Edmunds**

A package of improvements is planned for the north-west area of Bury St Edmunds.

The aim is to reduce traffic congestion and improve sustainable transport facilities for pedestrians at the Tollgate junction.

As part of planning conditions, funding for the improvements will be provided jointly by Abbeygate sixth form centre on Western Way, the Marham Park housing development in Fornham All Saints, and the highways authority, Suffolk County Council.

The three options for the future layout of the Tollgate junction contain a variety of solutions, including adding a pedestrian phase to the traffic lights, the addition of an extra lane and changing the direction of travel.

Options also consider the value of the greenspace to the local area, with the proposals seeking to maintain as much of this space as possible.

The consultation will be open until 11:59pm on Tuesday 17 March 2020. Members of the public will be able to take part via [www.suffolk.gov.uk/tollgate](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/tollgate).

The results of the consultation will be presented at the end of April 2020 and improvement works will begin in early 2021.

### **Refilling your weekly shop without unnecessary plastic is getting easier in Suffolk**

A number of shops in Suffolk are offering refills for a host of household items in a bid to cut down on the amount of plastic and packaging we use. The Suffolk Waste Partnership has launched a handy online directory which lists the shops, businesses or charities that host refill points for items such as cleaning products and toiletries, and dried foods such as rice or oats and even loose-leaf tea and chocolate. At the moment there are 22 organisations that stock refills, but the partnership is encouraging other businesses to consider introducing similar schemes.

Residents can search their local area on the directory to find where their nearest refill point is. The directory can be found here <https://suffolkrecycling.org.uk/reduce-your-waste/refill-directory>. If any retailers or businesses would like to offer refill services and get listed on the online directory, please contact [Waste.Management@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Waste.Management@suffolk.gov.uk).

### **East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust public consultation**

East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust are consulting on plans to build a new centre at Colchester Hospital for all of their patients who need planned orthopaedic surgery, such as hip and knee replacements. The consultation closes on 1 April.

There are a number of public meetings scheduled for the week beginning 9 March:

- 9 March, 6pm – 8pm, [Bank Arts Centre, 2 Castle Street, Eye](#)
- 10 March, 6pm – 8pm, [Central Library, Northgate Street, Ipswich](#)
- 13 March, 10.30am – 12.30pm, [Community Hall, School Street, Needham Market](#)

The new centre would open in 2024 and would have at least 48 beds and up to six specialist operating theatres. Every patient would stay at the centre in Colchester while having their surgery. All other care before and after the operation – such as x-rays, pre-assessments and physiotherapy – would be provided at either Colchester or Ipswich hospital, depending on which is closest to their home. Emergency orthopaedic surgery would also continue to take place at the patient's nearest hospital.

People can respond to the consultation at [www.esneft.nhs.uk/publicconsultation/](http://www.esneft.nhs.uk/publicconsultation/) or by email on [hello@esneft.nhs.uk](mailto:hello@esneft.nhs.uk). All of the feedback they receive will be taken into account when North East



Essex and Ipswich and East Suffolk clinical commissioning groups make a final decision on the proposal in the summer.

Jane Storey  
1<sup>st</sup> March 2020

## District Councillor Report: Stowlangtoft Parish Council - March 2020

<p>General Fund Budget 2020/21</p>	<p>The budget was discussed and agreed at the full Council meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> Feb. The administration proposed a 1.66% increase in Council Tax (5p per week on a Band D property). The Government funding proposals for district councils were announced at the beginning of February, and MSDC are expecting to receive just over £4M made up of base funding, new homes bonus and rural services delivery grant. Total net expenditure of the Council is in the region of £10M so a further £6M odd is needed via Council Tax. The Council still has over £9M in reserves, some of which is to be used in specific projects, including another round of Member Locality Budgets and £500k for projects suggested by the Climate Change Task Group and an art trail in Stowmarket.</p>
<p>Housing Revenue Account 2020/21</p>	<p>Housing Revenue Account is separate to the General Fund. The Government are now allowing rents to increase by CPI +1% so this is what is proposed. This equates to a rent increase of 2.7% (average £2.19 a week). The Debt Cap has now been removed so Councils are now able to borrow funds for Housing without worrying about breaching the cap. MSDC have gone into partnership with Icen Homes to deliver a number of affordable housing development over the next few years. There is a commitment to retain RTB receipts and to increase borrowing moderately to fund such developments.</p>
<p>Opposition groups' alternative proposals.</p>	<p>The Green group and Lib Dem group have been working together on an alternative budget since November. Some of the ideas put forward were incorporated into the administration's budget, but we still didn't feel enough was being done to future proof Mid Suffolk. We proposed that MSDC should build some zero-carbon homes, and promote more EV charging points in our towns, encourage more residents to spend time in Stowmarket and increase resources for additional highways expertise in planning. This proposal fell.</p>
<p>Gateway 14</p>	<p>MSDC agreed to go enter a development management agreement with Jaynic Properties Limited to promote and develop the Gateway 14 site. The site currently has outline planning consent for B1, B2 and B8 uses. It is hoped that by entering into this working partnership the site can be promoted and developed in the near future. Part of the site was designated a Food Enterprise Zone and hopes to benefit from low carbon heat and energy solutions.</p>
<p>Planning</p>	<p>BMSDC Development Management team has been shortlisted in the Best Use of Digital and Technology category at the annual iESE – Public Sector Transformation Awards 2020. This award recognises the innovative use of digital tools and technology in order to improve services for residents. The planning application process has been streamlined for residents and we have become one of the top performing authorities for timely planning decisions. Public searches for planning information leapt from 600K in 2017 to 1.3m in 2018, with the introduction of electronic case management.</p>
<p>Woolpit Housing</p>	<p>After a testy debate at the planning referrals committee meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February as another development of 300 houses was passed, despite strong opposition from Woolpit PC, residents and Green Councillors.</p>

Locality Grant	A total of £7,350 of 2019/2020 Locality Grant has be awarded to: New Green Community Centre Thurston - £1,820 towards CCTV cameras and £500 towards new picnic benches. Norton Village Hall - £2,100 towards fire shutters. Thurston Parish Council - £1000 towards the Gym Trail. Friends of Thurston Library - £1,305 towards IT/ Programme training and SmartScreen equipment. Tostock Toddler Group - £625 towards equipment for their sensory area and a dance teacher.
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Wendy Turner Cllr  
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Phone number 07548155748 (please note change of number)

## **District Councillor's Report: Harry Richardson – March 2020**

Following on from the Council's Cabinet meeting on 10th February, Councillors approved MSDC's budget for 2020/21, including a 1.66% increase in its share of council tax, adding £2.76 a year to the bill of a Band D Property. This was previously reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and included a number of schemes proposed by the Green and Liberal Democrat groups on the Council.

I included a summary of the proposed Budget in my January report but for ease of reference I have reiterated these below:

- A proposed increase of 1.66% to council tax, equivalent to just £2.76 over the course of a year for a Band D property (increases range from £1.84 per annum for the smallest Band A property to £5.54 for the largest Band H property).
- No change in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme that sees poorest residents pay just 5% of their bill.
- A change to empty property discount, reducing the period that unoccupied and unfurnished properties pay discounted council tax from three months to 28 days, in order to bring empty properties in the district back into use.
- Continued investment in CIFCO – the council's property investment company, as agreed in last year's budget. CIFCO currently contributes over £1.4m a year in income to Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and makes a significant contribution to the money required to run the councils' services. Without this income, residents would face the choice of either a substantial hike in council tax bills to fund the shortfall or cuts to services.
- A reserve of £500,000 set aside for 2020/21 to tackle climate change.

The increases are in the face of reduced Government finance and changing funding landscape, with local councils increasingly incentivised to deliver local economic and housing growth – making both essential to the financial future of the council.

The budget report also recognises the cumulative savings/income of £30.9m achieved by the Council since 2011/12, through shared services, efficiencies, better use of technology and commercial opportunities – with a further £2.7m in savings/income identified for 2020/21 and beyond.

Councillors are also considering the introduction of penalties to tackle council tax fraud, alongside the adoption of a new protocol produced by Citizens Advice and Local Government Association for the collection of council tax arrears, in order to help those in genuine need.

In the meantime, residents can easily check their details and let the councils know of any changes 24/7 by signing up for an online account via the councils' website. Through an online account, residents can opt for paperless billing, check their balance, see instalments, update their details and see council tax reduction and housing benefit claim information as well as viewing bills online.

In addition, the Council also approved the budget for the Housing Revenue Account for 2020/21. MSDC has increased its rent for social housing by 2.7% (equating to an average of

£2.19 per week), in line with government guidelines that allow rental increases of up to 1% above the rate of inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index. In addition, the Council's debt cap has been removed, which will allow Mid Suffolk to borrow to increase its supply of social housing. Across the District more broadly there have been a number of updates in recent weeks and I have included a summary of these below:

### **Needham Market on track for bright future**

Needham Market railway station is set to receive £380,000 in government funding to improve accessibility.

The funding from the Department of Transport's new Access for All programme gives a further boost to the council's plans to regenerate the town, working in partnership with other organisations and the local community.

### **Helping ratepayers high on the agenda**

Proposals to enable the council to provide discretionary discounts to ratepayers as quickly as possible was agreed at Mid Suffolk's cabinet meeting last month, and will be implemented as soon as the Government provides full details of the discretionary retail discount, local newspaper discount and pub discount schemes.

### **Ipswich Town Football Club teams up with Active Schools**

Ipswich Town Football Club has joined the drive to get more youngsters active. The Club has become the first ambassador of the £80,000 three-year Active Schools project which aims to increase the number of people taking part in sport and physical activity.

### **Services provided at leisure centre are named as some of the country's best**

Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre and Stradbroke Swim and Fitness Centre have recently been named as some of the country's best, following a national industry assessment. Following their GP exercise referral scheme assessment by Quest both schemes were awarded the status of 'excellent'.

I hope that this report has been useful but if a member of the Parish Council wishes to discuss any of the above further then please do not hesitate to contact me via the email address below.

With kind regards,

**Cllr Harry Richardson JP**

Cabinet Member without Portfolio

Mid Suffolk District Councillor for Thurston Ward

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