

## STOWLANGTOFT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

**MONDAY 16 MAY 2022 AT 7.15 PM  
ST GEORGE'S CHURCH, THE STREET**

Present: Cllrs D'Lima (Chair), Cassidy (Vice Chair), Catchpole, Cuff and Suggett. A Osman (clerk) was also in attendance along with 3 members of the public.

- 1 **Apologies for absence.** Cllr Sherwood sent apologies which were accepted.
- 2 **Minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2021.** The Chair summarised the minutes. Cllr Cassidy proposed that the minutes of the Annual Parish meeting held on 17 May 2021 be approved. Cllr Suggett seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.
- 3 **County Councillor report.** In the absence of County Cllr Mellen, the Chair presented his report, previously circulated. The Parish Council noted the contents. A copy of the report is attached to the minutes for information.
- 4 **District Councillors report.** In the absence of District Cllrs Davies and Richardson, the Chair presented their reports, previously circulated. Copies of the reports are attached to the minutes for information.
- 5 **Police report.** No Police report was received. Previous newsletters are available at <https://www.suffolk.police.uk/your-area/snt-newsletters>.
- 6 **Annual Reports from Village Groups:**

Churches Conservation Trust. The Chair welcomed Jane Hatton from the Churches Conservation Trust to the meeting. She gave an update on the 2 year engagement with St George's Church aimed at generating more use of the building to reduce the risk of closure. A recent meeting of community church volunteers recommended modifying the church to provide a community space for events/meetings. This proposal was due to be discussed with the Diocese in September to confirm a way forward. A request to continue funding the Church newsletter was made which the Chair agreed to discuss further in the Parish Council meeting that followed the Annual Parish Meeting.

Community Fund. Cllr Cassidy indicated that he had spoken to one of the trustees of the Community Fund who had welcomed the use of the fund for worthy community causes.

Parochial Church Council. The Chair welcomed Stuart White from the Parochial Church Council to the meeting. He reported that the quinquennial church inspection had recently taken place with some minor repairs to the church roof being identified.
7. **Chairs Report.** Cllr D'Lima, as Chair, thanked his fellow Councillors for their continued hard work over the past year. He also thanked Cllr Cassidy for his work on the Jubilee Tree and the clerk for his work and advice since taking over last year.
8. **Date of next meeting:** Monday 15 May 2023 in St George's Church.

The meeting concluded at 7.41pm.

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Chair

# Annual Parish Report 2021/22

**Councillor Andy Mellen**

Division: Thedwastre North

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**Monday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

It is almost a year since I was elected to be your County Councillor in the May 2021 local elections. Since then I have sought to represent these communities to the best of my abilities. I have attended all Parish Council meetings unless a clash prevented it. I always try to find an answer to residents' queries, and continue to follow up on long-standing issues of concern. The subject that I get the most e-mails and phone calls about is Highways: potholes, flooding, signage, speed and safety. There is clearly a shortage of funding for Highways work at this time, which can cause an enormous amount of frustration for communities who want their problem resolved straight away. However, I am learning how to get things done, and with strategic use of my limited local highways budget I have been able to progress a few small projects.

Please do contact me if you have an issue where I can help.

## **May 2021 elections**

At last year's elections, the Conservative gained a large majority on the County Council: 55 of the total 75 Councillors, so they continue to lead the Council. In total 9 Green Councillors were elected, and joined with 4 Liberal Democrats and 2 Independent Councillors to form the official opposition group (Green, Liberal Democrat & Independent, GLI). Our role is to scrutinise what the administration is doing, hold them to account and also bring forward ideas and motions of our own. Opposition members also sit on various committees: I myself am a member of the Scrutiny committee and the Constitutional working group.

## **Budget Meeting: GLI Amendments Declined**

Suffolk County Council voted in their budget for 2022-23 earlier this year. Our Group were concerned that the budget relied too heavily on transformation savings, and that the Conservative's did not increase the social care precept to the maximum amount allowed by Government.

The GLI Group highlighted the need to invest more in adult social care, as well as putting forward an innovative project to reduce the energy bills of those most vulnerable, considering the current energy and cost of living crisis. Both ideas were rejected by the Conservatives, but our Group will continue to champion more investment into our social care and green technology that can lower bills.

## **No Carbon Budget for Scrutiny**

The Conservatives brought forward the first Carbon Budget for Suffolk, but it wasn't part of the main budget, so wasn't put through the Scrutiny process in the same way. The Carbon Budget is aimed to help us understand the level of emissions the Council are responsible for and helps to achieve the Council's ambition of being carbon-neutral by 2030. It is important the Carbon Budget is scrutinised, as there are many issues with data collection and performance measures that weren't addressed. Our Group raised

concerns about this and has been assured that this will form part of the general budget process for next year.

### **Levelling Up: A Devolution Deal for Suffolk?**

The Government published its White Paper on Levelling-Up, within which it has agreed that Suffolk will be one of nine initial 'County Deals' up for negotiation. A new deal will potentially give local leaders more powers to make decisions for their communities for the first time. Our Group welcomes the idea of bringing more power to the communities of Suffolk. However, we are concerned about a potential Mayoral position created in Suffolk and the effect this may have on marginalising districts in Suffolk.

### **Report into SEND Provision: Review & Recommendations**

Suffolk County Council commissioned an independent review into Special Educational Needs and Disability provision. The report found severe failings in the delivery of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans for children, serious issues in communicating with parent/guardians, as well as an inefficient work environment within the service. The scrutiny committee have met since the report to listen to lead officers within the service and parents, debate necessary changes, and submit recommendations for improvement. This included extended training, newly appointed managerial posts, and new accountability structures to help deal with the issues outlined in the previous report.

### **Bus Back Better: Initiative from the Department for Transport (DfT)**

The Bus Back Better scheme was launched this year, aimed at updating, expanding, and improving our bus services in Great Britain. The Cabinet at Suffolk County Council approved a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) submitted to Government. All proposals of the BSIP that were passed by Cabinet can be viewed here: [https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/DocSetPage.aspx?MeetingTitle=\(12-102021\),%20The%20Cabinet](https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/DocSetPage.aspx?MeetingTitle=(12-102021),%20The%20Cabinet)

Unfortunately, in the last couple of weeks the DfT has announced its funding allocations, and Suffolk has not received any extra funding. Officers are now working out how the limited existing funding can be best deployed.

### **Biodiversity Recommendations to Enhance**

Suffolk County Council will be doing more for the county's natural environment, as it confirmed plans to enhance the biodiversity of at least 30% of its land by 2030. Our Group had a major influence in providing recommendations to SCC which are now a part of the Council's ambitions moving forward to enhance biodiversity. Examples include planting more hedgerows, improving highway trees, and developing nature-based flood management solutions. For more information, visit: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/show/councilscommitment-to-further-enhancing-suffolks-natural-environment>

### **Sizewell C: Where are we now?**

A final decision on going ahead with this project is expected this summer> Our Group has asked searching questions regarding this project, arguing that the environmental and socio-economic impacts on local communities are far too great. The Government announced their strategy to retain investors, by shifting the costs of Sizewell C onto consumers, in the form of a taxpayer subsidy known as a 'Regulated Asset Base' funding strategy. We have questioned this strategy, and strongly recommended that the Government reconsiders before it puts the burden of cost onto our local communities, and instead looks into investing in cleaner, cheaper, and quicker forms of renewable energy available to Suffolk. Suffolk County Council have announced their general support for Sizewell C but have taken up 'important concerns' to the Secretary of State.

### **New Investment in Drainage and Footway Infrastructure**

The Cabinet approved £10m to replace broken pipes and new installations, as well as an additional £10m to increase the maintenance of selected footways in Suffolk.

### **Lorry Route Map Review in Suffolk: Interactive Map to be Published**

Suffolk County Council undertook a review of recommended lorry routes across the county; the first major review of the network since 2011. Suffolk County Council invited parish and town councils to submit their views, and to provide up to three routes where they believe HGV traffic has the highest impact on their communities. The review will be completed in Spring 2022 and the County Council will publish a new interactive Lorry Route map. For further information, please contact [lorry.routes@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:lorry.routes@suffolk.gov.uk)

### **Local Electricity Bill: Suffolk GLI Motion Passed by Council**

A motion submitted by our Group ask Suffolk County Council to support the Local Electricity Bill, which is a proposed Bill waiting to be debated in Parliament for its Second Reading, was passed unanimously by the Council. The Bill seeks to localise energy supply, making local electricity cheaper, more reliable, and community based. Details of the motion and Local Electricity Bill can be found here:

<https://powerforpeople.org.uk/local-electricity-bill-briefing-for-councillors>

# District Councillors' Annual Report 2021 / 22

## Covid-19 Response and Community Grants

As part of Suffolk's county-wide Covid recovery during the 2021/2022 financial year, the following amounts have been allocated from the Mid Suffolk Community Grant allocation of Suffolk Community Restart funding:

- £313,226.26 has been allocated to 24 voluntary/community organisations from Capital Grants to develop/enhance community facilities.
- £10,815.75 has been allocated to 10 voluntary/community organisations from Minor Grants.
- £228,235.00 has been awarded to 19 organisations that include Mid Suffolk CAB, Community Action Suffolk, Rural Coffee Caravan, etc, which provide services across the District, through the Revenue Grant funding scheme.
- £94,456.47 Suffolk Community Restart funding has been allocated to 68 different voluntary and community organisations since the funding launched in May 2021.

## Gateway 14

Gateway 14, near Stowmarket, was officially designated as a tax site as part of Freeport East in December last year. The tax reliefs that will be available in the designated tax sites are; Stamp Duty Land Tax Relief, Enhanced Capital Allowances, Enhanced Structures and Buildings Allowance, National Insurance Contributions rate relief and business rates relief.

Freeport East will create a global trade hub, resulting in economic growth, bringing more jobs and prosperity to the region. The project will accelerate opportunities in green energy and will help level-up the national economy. In addition to the three tax sites, Freeport East will have customs sites at Felixstowe, Harwich, Gateway 14, Port One Logistics Park, Horsely Cross, Uniserve and PD Ports.

## £5.1m for Mid Suffolk recovery

An investment pledge of £5.1million has been made by Mid Suffolk District Council to help deliver a range of projects to boost the district's recovery from the impact of the Covid pandemic.

At November's meeting, Mid Suffolk District Council's cabinet allocated the seven-figure sum, announced in February, to priority areas around communities, environment, economy, customers, housing and wellbeing, following a series of cross-party task groups to discuss areas in need of support.

The fund allocations are split across 39 projects. Among the headline schemes are £75,000 of support for domestic abuse victims, including security measures like alarms and stronger locks; a £300,000 loan fund for community land trusts to obtain deposits for mortgages; £100,000 for a targeted apprenticeship scheme for those at risk of homelessness; £100,000 towards increasing aspirations for young people, including youth market stalls and youth social prescribing, and £100,000 to fund a business case for a skills and innovation centre at Gateway 14.

Further £100,000 grants will go towards supporting a sustainable travel plan, supporting town centre visions for Stowmarket, Needham Market and Eye, and Covid recovery grants for community

groups, while £38,000 will go towards expanding the Active Schools programme to tackle obesity in schools, and £30,000 will fund the continuation of school holiday activity programmes.

### **Delay to Joint Local Plan**

Public examination of the Local Plan, the strategic outline for future development of the districts, was paused last year to allow the Mid Suffolk further time to review their evidence. An exploratory meeting was held with the councils and inspectors on 16<sup>th</sup> December during which a proposed work programme was agreed that would see the councils have an adopted plan next year, helping to shape the future for Babergh and Mid Suffolk's communities.

The plan – which outlines housing requirements and considers the long-term impact of climate change, including flood risk, water supply and biodiversity, as well as other matters such as supporting the economy and our town centres – is now nearing the final stages of the process. This involves a review by Planning Inspectors, who are appointed by the Secretary of State, to carry out an independent examination before recommending whether or not it can be adopted.

The Inspectors' proposals, agreed on Thursday, will see the councils now proceed with their Joint Local Plan in two parts. Important social, economic and environmental objectives will be put in place first, while remaining work on spatial strategy matters and housing allocations are addressed in part two. This means the councils will have an up-to-date plan for decision making.

### **Budget 2022 / 23**

Mid Suffolk District Council has frozen its element of council tax this year – helping residents through post-pandemic recovery while still investing in priority areas to improve quality of life.

The 2022/23 budget, which was approved unanimously by councillors at February's full Council meeting, allows continued investment in the council's strategic priorities, including the economic regeneration of the district, and tackling climate change. This also included a proposal from the Green and Liberal Democrat group for a trial of two electric buses to be used across Mid Suffolk.

### **Thurston Judicial Review**

In response to the High Court's decision to uphold the Judicial Review launched by Thurston Parish Council, Mid Suffolk have confirmed in the last week that they have sought leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal. This decision has been made by the Monitoring Officer and Assistant Director for Planning in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Planning.

The Council has made this decision on the basis that their legal team has advised them of a 'reasonable prospect of success' at appeal. This application does not bind the Council if, should permission be granted, it subsequently declines to appeal the High Court's original decision. Officers at Mid Suffolk believe that the outcome of the application will be reached by May at the earliest. If permission for an appeal is granted, and Mid Suffolk chooses to pursue this, then the final appeal decision would likely be made in the autumn.

### **Corporate Peer Review**

Mid Suffolk is this week undertaking a corporate peer review, something which Councils are obliged to do once every 5 years. It offers Mid Suffolk the opportunity to validate our direction of travel and approach; and test, stretch and further evolve our thinking for the future. It covers five

compulsory elements and three additional areas which we have asked the peer review team to explore:

- Local priorities and outcomes (compulsory)
- Organisational and place leadership (compulsory)
- Governance and culture (compulsory)
- Financial planning and management (compulsory)
- Capacity for improvement (compulsory)
- Our approach to well-being (additional)
- The future and sustainability of partnership working between Babergh and Mid Suffolk  
(additional)
- Pace and our capacity to deliver (additional)

The outcome of a separate peer review last November, focusing specifically on planning, is due to be published imminently with a set of recommendations for improvement. These do not however overlap with the findings of the Judicial Review.

I hope this report has been informative but if Parish Councillors or members of the public wish to ask any further questions then please do not hesitate to contact me via the details below.

With best wishes,



**Cllr Harry Richardson JP**

Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing  
Mid Suffolk District Councillor for Thurston Ward  
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# District Cllr Report Thurston Ward

Beyton, Norton, Thurston, Tostock, Stowlangtoft

May 2022

## MSDC Meeting

There was no Mid Suffolk Council in April.

## Housing Revenue Account

Mid Suffolk District Council tenants have been selected to take part in a satisfaction survey during late March and Early April. Results available in May.

## Council Tax

MSDC is arranging for those eligible in bands A to D to receive their £150 central government payment, whether they pay by direct debit or cheque etc.

## Gateway 14

The ground breaking ceremony has now taken place at the Gateway 14 site. The development is on track with all Councillors being briefed on progress and issues. All buildings have the capacity to have solar panels, however, the National Grid does the local capacity to accept the levels of electricity this site could generate. MSDC officers have been asked to explore possibilities including 'Green Hydrogen' generation.

## MSDC ring fenced CIL

Officials briefed your Ward Councillors on the MSDC ring fenced CIL position. Of the £3.385 Million, only £2.215 Million is currently unallocated. Further extension to Thurston Community College is planned. Then there are 3 emerging bids. These are Thurston rail station improvement, Site for a MUGA and a suitable site for a skate board park. It was explained that, where residents from surrounding communities use a facility, that communities CIL fund can be proportionally allocated to create this new infrastructure.

Thurston Library has now submitted a CIL enquiry (sponsored by A Davies) with a proposal to expand its floor area to enable it to provide a public toilet, rooms for IT access groups (study areas, social meeting spaces, maker spaces). Thurston Library has recently invested in the children's area to great effect and would now wishes to invest in Teen areas and additional inclusion services.

## Planning

MSDC passed the application for 54 unit extra care affordable housing scheme comprising 40 apartments, 14 bungalows and communal areas.

## Ukrainian support

Members of our community have welcomed the first Ukrainian refugees into their homes. Their children are joining appropriate local schools. MSDC carries the responsibility for inspecting prospective homes whilst the SCC is responsible for all other aspects of our support.

## Austin Davies

Mid Suffolk District Councillor

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