

**Mid Suffolk District Councillors' Annual Report (2020/21)  
For the Great Bricett Annual Parish Meeting on Tuesday 4th May 2021**

---

- **Governance**

Due to the Covid 19 emergency, there were no Council meetings from 23 March 2020 until the new Government legislation to allow virtual meetings was approved in May. Council staff have been working from home where possible and all Council and committee meetings are currently being conducted virtually using the Teams platform.

The Annual Council meeting was deferred until September. The Green Party councillors formed a political group with the Liberal Democrat councillors, so we now form 50% of the total number of councillors. The chair of the Council is from the Conservative and Independent group.

- **Budget and investments**

The COVID pandemic is continuing to have a financial impact on the Council's budget. There are already losses of approximately £1M with projected losses of a further £1M during 2021/22. The Government has provided support but not sufficient to cover all the losses.

Despite having about £10M in reserves the Council increased Council Tax by 1.66%. It has been agreed that £4M of the reserves are to be allocated to the following departments Communities, Housing, Economy and Well-being.

The new rules about PWLB loans for the 'invest to save' scheme, have not halted the current round of acquisitions, but in future the Council will have to fund such activities in other ways.

- **Climate Change and Biodiversity**

The Climate Change working group made a number of proposals to Council, including projects such as Solar Carport at the Mid Suffolk Leisure centre site. Work is also underway at the leisure centres to reduce the carbon footprint. The waste fleet are to be converted to use biodiesel fuel. There is to be a biodiversity mapping project across the district and the public realm team to are hoping to work with parish councils to promote more tree and hedgerow planting.

- **Housing**

Council housing rents are set to increase by CPI+1%, which is on average £1.25 increase per week. Garage rents are to remain the same. Sheltered housing service charges are to increase by £1 per week, and sheltered housing are to remain the same as last year. In principle 'right-to-buy' receipts are to be retained for use to develop and acquire new council dwellings.

There is a programme of decarbonising Council dwellings. This year (20/21) 62 Air Source Heat pumps, 169 boilers have been installed in Council properties and there are a further 200 planned boiler installations over next year at a cost of £1.8m. A pilot project in Harleston in underway to test various schemes to find out the most suitable approach for our housing stock.

- **Planning**

The Regulation 19 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan was agreed by both Councils and is now awaiting a response from the Planning Inspectorate.

- **Supporting the community**

Many community groups have struggled during the pandemic, but I was pleased to support the following organisations in the ward with CIL and Locality Fund this year.

- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds of £16,651 were secured to fund a new sewerage system for Ringshall Village Hall.

- Offton and Willisham Village Hall was awarded £542 towards the costs of a planting scheme to improve the car park. The Locality Fund provided a further £612 to support the LED lighting system upgrade for the village hall.
- Great Bricett Parish Council received £800.00 towards the costs of refurbishing the village hall floor.
- Barking Parish Council received funds towards an ecological survey and management plan for Barking Tye.
- Orchard Barn, the community-run environmental education centre based in Ringshall was awarded funds towards a solar energy scheme.

Community grants of over £150k have been awarded to community projects throughout the district as well as £100k specifically targeted at COVID related support groups.

Mid Suffolk District Council information is available via [www.midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk) or by phone **0300 123 4000**

We would like to thank the Parish Council for all their work done throughout the year.

Dan Pratt  
Mid Suffolk District Councillor – Battisford and Ringshall Ward  
Email: [daniel.pratt@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.pratt@midsuffolk.gov.uk)  
Phone: 07775389193