

District Council Report for Battisford and Ringshall Ward

Including Barking, Battisford, Great Bricett, Ringshall, Offton and Willisham

January 2025

Budget updates

Proposals for the General Fund budget were approved in December's cabinet meeting, and discussed later on in the Overview & Scrutiny committee on the 19th December. This shows the council's finances to be surplus, unusual for District councils, in part due to expanded housing developments and income generated from Gateway 14, with these surplus funds being used to proceed with the Mid Suffolk Plan. Key figures include an increase of £1.689m in net revenue service expenditure, a £2.660m increase in gross expenditure, no increase in council tax from 2024/25, and a capital budget of £29.986m in 2025/26.

CIL Expenditure updates

New updates regarding the Community Infrastructure Levy programme were discussed in by cabinet. This includes approval of half a million pounds of investment into the Stowmarket Health Education and Leisure Facilities (SHELF), and £188k of funding for Thurston Community College.

Devolution White Paper

The White Paper regarding devolution was published in December, which despite not mentioning Suffolk directly, strongly suggests a change to the two-tier local government structure. This could potentially suggest one or two Unitary Authorities covering Suffolk, abolishing district councils. The paper also includes the use of introducing a "Strategic Authority", which is likely to include a Mayor for both Suffolk & Norfolk.

National Planning Policy Framework

Changes have been made to the National Planning Policy Framework to assist with the Government's housebuilding plans. This includes mandatory housebuilding targets for councils, with a priority on brownfield sites. The new plans have sparked both praise and backlash, with concerns over the role of individual councils. Mid Suffolk's portfolio holder for Heritage, Planning and Infrastructure Cllr Andrew Stringer has commented on the new proposals. Statement in response to Government's National Planning Policy Framework announcement - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk

Council Meetings

There was no scheduled MSDC Full Council meeting in December. The next meeting will be held on 23rd January 2025.

Dr Dan Pratt

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