

# **District Cllr Report Battisford and Ringshall Ward**

## **Barking, Battisford, Great Bricett, Offton, Ringshall, Willisham**

### **July 2020**

#### **Operations during Covid-19**

Staff are continuing to work from home, making use of Microsoft Teams to hold virtual meetings with colleagues, councillors and residents. Some officers are beginning to return to their normal jobs having been seconded to different duties arising from the pandemic. Home but not Alone Line: 0800 876 6926.

#### **Cycling Strategy**

MSDC is commencing work on rewriting the Cycling Strategy which is out of date. The Green Group have asked for better provision for cyclists within the town of Stowmarket and between neighbouring villages to improve links to schools, local retail outlets etc as well as for leisure. Within our ward improved links between Barking and Needham Market that utilises existing track called 'the causeway' could be proposed. Residents in the ward have suggested a link between the airbase and Ringshall Primary School.

#### **Climate Change Task Force**

Proposals from the Cross-Party Task Force of Mid Suffolk Councillors are due to be considered by Cabinet on 6 July. They contain several environmental measures which could form the councils' first Carbon Reduction Management Plan, setting out how they aim to fulfil their ambitions of becoming carbon neutral within the next ten years. The proposed actions are the first steps in achieving the long-term objective to reduce the councils' current emissions of approximately 5,452 tonnes (Mt) of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) per year, looking into how best to invest in order to reduce this to net zero.

#### **Joint Local Plan**

We remain unsure when the Joint Local Plan will be available and ready to be considered at a meeting of the Full Council. A timetable will soon be provided for the remaining steps that need to be followed. The next version of the Plan may well be very different from the consultation draft of July 2019. If the District Council approves the Plan it will be subject to further consultation and an Inspector's Examination before it can be formally adopted as planning policy.

#### **Out-of-County Investments**

MSDC and Babergh set up an investment company (CIFCO) which has so far borrowed around £60 million to buy commercial properties, almost all of which are outside Suffolk. The scheme was set up to make profits to improve services for residents of the districts. A recent revaluation of the portfolio shows a loss in the last 12 months of around £3 million; with fees of some £500,000. In recent months only 50% or so of the rental due to CIFCO has been paid. A recent scrutiny of the CIFCO Business Plan for 2020/2021 raised many concerns which need to be considered before full Council is asked to approve the Business Plan at the meeting on 23 July.

#### **Disabled Facilities Grant**

In the recent Performance Reporting we raised concerns, again, that the grant available is not being spent. If you know anyone who needs any kind of adaptation to their home, from a handrail to a wet room, please ask them to get in touch. The application process is very straightforward.

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