

District Cllr Report Battsford and Ringshall Ward

Barking, Battsford, Great Bricett, Offton, Ringshall, Willisham

March 2022

MSDC Annual Budget

Mid Suffolk Council discussed the budget 2022/23 at the Council meeting held on 24th February. Council tax is to remain at the same rate so annual Mid Suffolk proportion of the council tax bill for a Band D property be £171.59. Sheltered housing charges and garage rents also remain frozen at 2021/22 levels.

Mid Suffolk Electric Bus

MSDC agreed on the proposal from the Green and Liberal Democrat group to fund two electric buses that will meet scheduled rural services that are not currently being met. The buses, funded with £820,000 from the growth and efficiency fund, will help residents to make 'zero-emissions' journeys to and from Stowmarket.

Housing Revenue Account

Mid Suffolk District Council tenants face a proposed increase of 4.1% to their rents, to cover inflationary pressures and allow investment in improving the quality of council homes. This means average weekly social rent would increase by £3.45 from £84.42 to £87.84. For affordable housing, weekly rents would increase by £4.99 from £121.34 to £126.33.

Biodiversity Officer

A biodiversity officer has been appointed, joining us in April, and will be overseeing the parish tree and wildflower scheme over the next 2 years. The officer will likely need to carry out a second resident consultation for the proposed wildflower scheme on 'the green' at St Mary's Close, Offton. There are a number of other parishes looking to create wildflower meadows but as yet there has been no local consultation by the parishes, or the schemes are at an early stages. Also, our 'cut and collect' mower has been purchased which will help us to improve conditions for wildflowers on council-owned land and verges.

Neighbourhood Planning

MSDC formally adopted the Needham Market Neighbourhood Plan as part of its Development Plan after Needham Market residents voted overwhelmingly in favour of the plan. The document carries statutory weight and will be used to inform planning decisions. This referendum comes at a time when the power of Neighbourhood Plans are being highlighted in other local news. Thurston Parish Council lodged a judicial review into the granting of planning permission for 210 new homes off Beyton Road. The allegation that the planning committee had been wrongly advised on the weight given to the Neighbourhood Plan, which had not allocated that site for development, was upheld by the High Court.

Thurston by-election

Following the departure of Cllr Wendy Turner there was a by-election for a new district councillor for the Thurston Ward. Green party candidate Austin Davies was elected and MSDC remains balanced with 17 members in each of the two groups.

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