

District Councillor's Report: Harry Richardson

At our recent meeting on Thursday 24th October Mid Suffolk District Council approved the draft our new Corporate Plan to cover the 2019-2027, which will replace our existing Joint Strategic Plan (2016-2020). The Corporate Plan outlines the District Council's priorities over the coming years, and is divided into six distinct categories: the Economy, the Environment, Communities, Wellbeing, Customers, and Housing.

Much of these themes already existed in the Joint Strategic Plan, but the focus on the Environment is a new addition following our declaration of a climate emergency earlier this year. The previous Sport and Leisure strategy has now been expanded to include Wellbeing in its broader sense, incorporating both physical and mental wellbeing in line with several of the initiatives that I referenced in last month's report.

The document before the Council was in its draft form, so the specifics of these strategies are still in development, but the broad aims of the Council were considered and approved. I will provide you with an update as and when the details of this are confirmed – likely to now be in the New Year. At October's meeting we also approved the Neighbourhood Plans for Thurston and Haughley, and details of these are available on the MSDC website.

Our next Council meeting had been scheduled for Thursday 12th December but for reasons that I am sure are obvious this has now been rearranged to January, so there will be little in terms of substantive updates between now and then.

Across the District more broadly there have been a couple of new announcements in recent weeks and I have included summary of these updates overleaf:

Tree for Life for new arrivals

A new Tree for Life scheme means families across Babergh can join those in Mid Suffolk in claiming a free tree to mark the arrival of a child, enhancing biodiversity in the districts. The initiative, which has been running in neighbouring Mid Suffolk since 2018, offers parents with a new born or newly adopted child the chance to mark their arrival by planting a tree – benefiting families, communities and the environment by boosting the number of trees in the district.

Open to families who have welcomed a new arrival between 1 January and 31 December 2019, the scheme is also available to parents who may have lost a child during the same period to apply for a memorial tree. Any Tree for Life must be planted within the two districts, however, a plant pot grown tree will also be available for those without access to a garden.

Families in both Babergh and Mid Suffolk are now being encouraged to apply for this year's trees, ahead of the 12 January 2020 deadline.

More free swimming for youngsters

During October half term and the Christmas holidays this year, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are extending their free swims offer for under 17s to help promote healthier and active lifestyles in the districts.

This follows a successful free swim offer over the summer holidays which saw thousands of under 17s take part, equating to more than 14,000 swims across the two districts.

Free swimming will now also be available during the October half term from 19 - 27 October 2019, and the Christmas holidays from 20 December 2019 to 5 January 2020 inclusive at the following centres in Mid Suffolk:

- ☐ Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, Stowmarket
- ☐ Stradbroke Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre

I hope that this report has been useful but if a member of the Parish Council wishes to discuss any of the above further then please do not hesitate to contact me via the email address below.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Harry Richardson', with a horizontal line drawn underneath the name.

Cllr Harry Richardson JP

Mid Suffolk District Councillor for Thurston Ward

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