

District Councillor's Report: Harry Richardson

At our recent meeting on Thursday 26th September Mid Suffolk District Council reviewed updates from Cabinet members regarding their respective portfolios. The reports themselves are available on the MSDC website but I have included a few highlights below for your information.

Mid Suffolk District Council, having already obtained its' five-year land supply earlier in the year, has increased its position to 5.61. This is a welcome development as it means that, as a result of planning applications already approved, we have met and exceed the government's target for housebuilding and so are under considerably less pressure to approve additional development, particularly on sites that are not identified in the draft Joint Local Plan.

We have continued with the Active Wellbeing Project, which last year supported 150 older residents to promote their physical wellbeing. This is a three-year programme and year 2 locations have now been confirmed: Debeham, Bidleston, and East Bergholt. In addition, we have also been working in partnership with Suffolk Artlink, Rural Coffee Caravan, and Dance East to provide social and physical activities for older, more isolated residents, particularly in rural areas.

Similarly, alongside West Suffolk CCG and East Suffolk & Ipswich CCG we are continuing the roll out of a social prescribing scheme in the District. This was first piloted in Stradbroke and Laxfield and, following a high uptake and positive feedback, this is due to be extended to Debenham and Eye, with further proposals to extend this scheme across Mid Suffolk in the near future.

The financial year-end position for MSDC for 2018/19 resulted in a positive variance of £3.462m against the planned budget. This was largely due to unanticipated additional income from business rates, planning fees, and CIL revenue, however, and so does not reflect under-spends in Council budgets. Initial data from April onwards suggests this trend is likely to continue, with a reported variance of £180k against the planned budget for Q1 of 2019/20, for similar reasons.

At the Council meeting on 26th September we also debated an opposition motion to increase the number of trees across the District. The principle of this initiative received cross-party support, however the details continued within the proposal – committing the Council to unfunded purchases of unspecified agricultural land – led to its refusal by a majority of Councillors (myself included).

Instead, Cabinet members suggested that such proposals could be included within the remit of the working groups set up to support MSDC's net-zero carbon emissions target and to preserve our biodiversity corridors, given the considerable overlap between these pieces of work.

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

Green light to transform Stowmarket Middle School into much-needed homes

Planning permission has been granted to transform the former Stowmarket Middle School site into 38 affordable homes for the town. At a meeting of Mid Suffolk's Development Control Committee on 18th September, Councillors voted to grant permission for the redevelopment of the site in Walnut Tree Walk, which has been redundant since the closure of the school in summer 2015.

Official opening for expanded Botesdale Health Centre

An official opening event took place on Monday 9th September for a new two-storey extension at the Botesdale Health Centre, funded in part by money raised by Mid Suffolk's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The expansion, which provides two new GP and two new health care assistant consulting rooms, a triage room and a training-meeting room, will enable the practice to better meet the demand for primary care services in the area..

Joint Local Plan consultation closes

Thank you to all our Town and Parish Councils, and to all residents, who took part in our Joint Local Plan consultation. This has now ended, with the deadline for responses arriving yesterday (30 September). Our Strategic Planning Team will now be going through all of the comments received and considering how to amend the draft plan accordingly.

Recycling information at your fingertips

June's parish briefing included information about the renovation of the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) in Great Blakenham as well as helpful online links to find up to date information on recycling in Suffolk.

With recycling included on the agenda for the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September, and in line with our 2030 carbon reduction and greenest county ambitions, we have highlighted the key online resources available to our parishes and residents 24/7 when navigating the 'dos and don'ts' of recycling.

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,



Cllr Harry Richardson JP

Mid Suffolk District Councillor for Thurston Ward

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