

District Councillor Report: Thurston Ward

4th November 2024

New community transport services	<p>The new services have been funded by Mid Suffolk District Council's Rural Transport Grants Scheme, after £820,000 was ringfenced for rural transport provision as part of the council's 2022/23 budget. The two new services will provide community transport options for residents wanting to travel to and from Stowmarket from surrounding villages, and also connect communities in Debenham, Eye and beyond.</p> <p>From 1 November, Mid Suffolk Taxi Bus operated by Swift Taxi Cabs will provide transport services across central and south Mid Suffolk. Initially, they will have two routes available - Stowmarket Circular via Thurston and Stowmarket Circular via Bacton. These routes have been chosen with the areas having been identified as having the greatest immediate need – such as lack of current provision.</p>
Investment in Stowmarket town centre	<p>MSDC have agreed to invest £1.5m generated from the Gateway 14 development into regenerating Stowmarket town centre by bringing empty units back into use. The Stowmarket Town Centre Gateway Fund is now up and running, with applications sought from agents and landlords of empty units, as well as potential tenants, to see how funding may be best used to help new business and community ventures off the ground.</p> <p>Additional new proposals include a £400K grant scheme for existing retailers to improve the appearances of their shopfronts, investing a further £225K in enhanced street cleansing and public realm services for the town, and feasibility work into demand for hotel accommodation. The shopfronts scheme could include new signage, canopies, lighting, or reinstatement of traditional or historic features that have been lost. This would be aimed at small and medium-sized firms, with national businesses excluded.</p>
Community rail partnership	<p>The Council has supported the formation of Greater Anglia's new Community Rail Partnership for the Ipswich to Cambridge line. The aim of the partnership is to help develop and promote rail services along this key regional rail corridor, helping to align the evolution of services in line with local needs.</p> <p>The new Ipswich to Cambridge partnership will look to focus on the communities served by trains along the line (Ipswich, Needham Market, Stowmarket, Elmswell, Thurston, Bury St Edmunds, Kennett, Newmarket, Dullingham and Cambridge). Mid Suffolk District Council will provide funding for the partnership alongside Greater Anglia, Suffolk County Council, the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority, West Suffolk Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Ipswich Borough Council and Cambridge City Council.</p>
Winter social isolation	<p>The Living Well in Winter grant will help local organisations such as town and parish councils, village hall or playing field committees, sports clubs and sports centres, charities, social enterprises, community shops, and community interest companies deliver new and existing accessible spaces and activities during the colder months.</p> <p>Last year, a total of 14 projects received funding from the grant. Successful</p>

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	<p>projects included community cafes, additional family sessions at preschools, coffee and chat sessions, and activity clubs. Now, the grant window has opened again, enabling applicants to address issues like social isolation and decreased physical activity, which are exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, particularly during the winter.</p> <p>Other eligible projects might also include lunch clubs, after-school clubs, the continuation of warm spaces, subsidised family sports sessions, hobby workshops and beyond. Organisations can apply for a minimum of £500 and a maximum of £2,000, and have until Friday 8th November to do so.</p>
Street cleansing and ground maintenance	<p>Mid Suffolk's Cabinet have approved a proposal to enhance public realm services, increasing scheduled street cleaning and ground maintenance work in Stowmarket town centre, and creating REACT – a Respond, Enforce and Clean Team – to provide additional capacity to respond to urgent and reactive street clearing issues across the district.</p> <p>The creation of REACT will allow the public realm street cleansing team to focus on scheduled work across the district's large rural area – including dog and litter bin emptying, litter picking on the main rural road routes and villages, and mechanical sweeping – without the distraction of having to respond to reactive cleansing incidents. The new team would also play a role in education and enforcement, giving advice on street cleansing issues, patrolling problem areas, gathering evidence and issuing warnings and notices, working alongside the council's environmental protection team, where appropriate.</p>
Local issues	<p>The Fishwick junction in Thurston has been closed whilst final construction to the new staggered junction is ongoing; a diversion has been put in place via Pokeriage Corner.</p> <p>Confirmation has been received from Suffolk Highways that a one-way system has been installed in Kiln Lane, Stowlangtoft to mitigate additional traffic using the road whilst the bridge on the A1088 remains closed. The police have also undertaken to monitor the Kiln Lane regularly.</p>

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