

**District Councillor's Report for Gislingham Ward: Mellis, Gislingham,  
Thornham, Wortham & Burgate, Wickham Skeith Parish Councils**

**March 2021**

**Appendix 2**

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| <p>Current COVID-19 Information</p> | <p>Home But Not Alone number and underpinning services. <b>0800 876 6926</b>. The phonelines are open from 9am to 5pm, Mon to Fri. Demand on the Home But Not Alone phone number has grown but the most significant calls involve help with complex mental health issues.</p> <p>Latest news: <a href="https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/features/our-covid-19-response/">https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/features/our-covid-19-response/</a></p> <p>Suffolk Advice and Support Service:<br/>Hardship Fund: For financial advice or support with access to food, call The Suffolk Advice and Support Service on 0800 068 3131.</p> <p>Covid-19 business grants now available<br/>Businesses in Babergh and Mid Suffolk who have had to close their doors to customers, or have been significantly financially impacted by Covid-19 restrictions, may be eligible for support.<br/>Further info.<br/><a href="https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/features/support-available-for-businesses-in-babergh-and-mid-suffolk">https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/features/support-available-for-businesses-in-babergh-and-mid-suffolk</a></p> <p>The numbers of COVID-19 cases and deaths are on the Suffolk public health site which can be accessed at: <a href="HTTPS://www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/jsna/coronawatch">HTTPS://www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/jsna/coronawatch</a></p> |
| <p>INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICE</p>   | <p><b>New 'Independent Living Service'</b> developed to help improve the quality of life of the districts' most vulnerable residents needing home adaptations - offering advice and support to help them live independently and safely in their homes.</p> <p>More information:<br/><a href="https://www.babergh.gov.uk/housing/private-sector-housing-grants/independent-living-service/">https://www.babergh.gov.uk/housing/private-sector-housing-grants/independent-living-service/</a><br/>You could receive a Disabled Facilities Grant if you or someone in your household is disabled and changes to your home are needed.</p> <p><b>Who is the service for?</b><br/>The service is for residents who: live in Babergh or Mid Suffolk, have a registered (or able to be registered as) disability, own a home or rent from a private landlord</p> <p>If you are a Council or housing association tenant, contact your Housing Officer for help and advice on how you can remain safely in your home or consider alternative accommodation.</p>  |
| <p>New West Suffolk Hospital</p>    | <p>As the plans for a new hospital for West Suffolk get underway it is important that as many people are involved in developing the proposals as possible. The vision for the West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (WSFT) project is to ensure the way that health services are delivered is fit for the local population's current and future needs and the team need your help to do that. The new facility is for West Suffolk people and is to be designed by West Suffolk people.</p> <p>The project team are establishing a Co-production Community Engagement Group (CEEG) which will help shape the public engagement around the hospital redevelopment.</p> <p>If you would like to join the CEEG or to find out more information, please visit the website at <a href="https://www.wsh.nhs.uk/New-healthcare-facility/Get-involved.aspx">https://www.wsh.nhs.uk/New-healthcare-facility/Get-involved.aspx</a> and complete an expression of interest form.</p>   |

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| Advance notice -elections                       | B&MSDC will be observing a pre-election period moratorium (purdah) in respect of the forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioner and Suffolk County Council <b>Elections on Thursday 6 May 2021</b> . The moratorium will run from 25 March 2021 – the date that the notice of election is published – through to 7 May 2021. Please note that the Mid Suffolk full council meeting will not be affected as the notice will be published after the meeting has concluded.  |
| CENSUS 21<br>21 <sup>st</sup> March             | <p>Feb 22-27 Advance Card Lands<br/>           Mar 3-12 Initial contact Packs <b>Digital-first pack:</b><br/>           Aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Digital-First households (89% of all households) with their household access code for the electronic questionnaire.</li> <li>• Replicate messaging that appears on the front page of the paper questionnaire.</li> <li>• Provide help options - including where to request a paper questionnaire.</li> </ul> <p>Followed by reminders, a “Field Force”, non-compliance measures 30<sup>th</sup> April<br/>           From 2011 Census: Household Spaces with at least one usual resident 40,306 – 96%<br/>           Household spaces with no usual residents 1,623 – 4%</p>   |
| MSDC<br>Financial<br>Report                     | <p>The latest financial report shows that MSDC incurred additional costs due to Covid of £1.1m and a reduction in income of £950k. All but £138k of these losses has been reimbursed via central government grants.</p> <p>The anticipated total underspend for the current year to the end of March 2021 is £1.8m. The underspend on staff due to unfilled vacancies is £450k. Many key areas of provision of much needed services to our residents are underspent. However, the target for investment in commercial properties across the country is likely to be met despite a huge loss in the value of properties already purchased.</p> <p>The medium-term forecast is that by the end of March 2021 MSDC will have built up a cash surplus of £1.m, excluding New Homes Bonus which is expected to be £1.6m in 2020/21.</p>   |
| The Housing<br>Revenue<br>Account               | The Housing Revenue Account is heading for an underspend of £2.7m in 2020/21. This is almost entirely due to delays in developing new council homes. To keep the underspend as low as possible, a substantial programme of acquisition of homes for rent is being undertaken in the last 3 months of the current financial year.   |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> Feb MSDC<br>Council<br>Meeting | <p>2021/22 Budget. The Council was asked to vote to approve the budget, in particular: That the General Fund Budget for 2021/22 is based on an increase to Council Tax of 1.66% which equates to £2.80 per annum (23p per month) for a Band D property. This will raise a total sum in the region of a total of £104,000. This increase was opposed by the opposition on the grounds that the budget was being set year on year to create a surplus that would increase reserves further and this increase was unnecessary and inappropriate in these difficult times. A 20% underspend.</p> <p>In response to detailed amendments proposed by the opposition the administration added an extra item to the published agenda.</p> <p>The extra item was: “That the General Fund Budget proposals for 2021/22 and four-year outlook set out in the report be approved, <i>and that recommendations to Cabinet be prepared, using a balanced, cross-party approach, for the allocation of the additional £4m of funding for investment in our local economy, housing, the wellbeing of our residents and in our communities. This cross-party approach would also give consideration to the budget amendments proposed in 2020/21 and 2021/22.</i>”</p> <p>This was in response to the amendments to the budget from the Greens and Lib. Dems. that were targeted to achieve the council’s strategic priorities and support the ambition of achieving carbon net zero by 2030. Transfers will be made from the Growth and Efficiency Fund into the following reserves which are aligned to the Councils key strategic priorities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £1m for Economy,</li> </ul> |

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|                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● £1m for Housing,</li> <li>● £1m for Communities,</li> <li>● £1m for Well-being,</li> <li>● £104k towards Covid related business recovery</li> </ul> <p>will be used as directed by cross party work groups to be set up in May and due to report by July. The published amendments were withdrawn, and the new additions were supported by both the administration and the opposition.</p> <p>The administration also put forward the Housing Revenue Account Budget which was carried by one vote, it was opposed because it included increases in Social Rents - £1.30 per week, for the most vulnerable that were again considered inappropriate and unjustified in the context of reserves being held.</p>  |
| Environment Briefing    | <p>Solar Carports at leisure centres coming to cabinet. Will include battery storage. There will be a conduit between carport and leisure centre. LC can feedback to grid if needed.</p> <p>Decarbonisation of Public Assets - successful grant bid for further greening projects of the leisure centres at Stowmarket and Stradbroke. £650,000 for Mid Suffolk (£1.4 M between Babergh and Mid Suffolk). Scoping works to use the award, Solar Carports at leisure centres coming to cabinet. Will include battery storage. There will be a conduit between carport and leisure centre. LC can feedback to grid if needed.</p> <p>Gateway 14 – Greater South East Energy Hub – discussions on how to make it more sustainable using ground source heating, PV etc</p>   |
| Biodiversity            | <p>Will Birchnall Corporate Manager - Public Realm, Planning and communities, has looked into tree canopy surveys with Islington who have surveyed their trees to gain a monetary asset value.</p> <p>Tree and hedge planting. Web form for parish and community groups will be going out and running through March. Interested parties who own land can receive free trees to plant on their land next autumn/winter. Tree wardens will be involved and have helped to develop this form. Give a heads up to people in our wards.</p> <p>Meadow planting – open spaces and verges. Procurement team were re-deployed on business grants. This is being done now. Will B is scoping potential sites. Plan is for Yellow-Rattle seeding in Autumn. Two other pieces of equipment are purchased including scarifying machine.</p>  |
| Sustainable Transport   | <p>Katherine Davies - new sustainable transport officer in post now for 4weeks.</p> <p>Working with County, looking at Local Transport Plan. Mechanism to capture views of communities will include a mapping tool where communities think routes should be instated. Parish Councils can register. Cycling facilities can also be mapped. A vision document will set out intent for plan.</p>   |
| Tetra Pak               | <p>There has been much debate amongst councillors and residents regarding the recycling of Tetra Pak. At present the only way to recycle them in Mid Suffolk is to take them to the recycling depot in Stowmarket. You should not add them to your green recycling bin.</p> <p>It has been suggested that perhaps there should be a scheme like Terracycle operates for Walkers Crisp packets, or manufacturers should be more responsible for the cost of recycling their packaging. What would residents like to see happen? Please let me know.</p> <p>Environment Bill will bring in the Resource and Waste Strategy. 3 consultations imminent on 1) implementation of consistent waste scheme country-wide 2) deposit return scheme on cans and bottles to supermarkets. 3) Extended Production Responsibility (EPR) in 2027- manufacturers to bear the costs of waste produced. So Tetrapak would have to pay for collection banks and for the disposal of any waste product after recycling</p> |
| Gateway 14 FREEPORT BID | <p><b>As detailed in our recent briefing notes, Gateway 14 Ltd has submitted a planning application to Mid Suffolk District Council for the development of Gateway 14, a mixed-use business park planned for land adjacent to junction 50 of the A14 in Stowmarket, Suffolk.</b></p> <p><b>We are delighted that Gateway 14 is one of a variety of sites in our region to be granted Freeport status, as recently announced by Chancellor Sunak.</b></p>   |

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|  | <p>The government’s Freeports initiative aims to attract major domestic and international investment and offers a wide range of tax reliefs, simplified customs procedures and support to promote regeneration and innovation.</p> <p>In our region, Freeport East – a partnership made up of businesses and local government – has stated that its ambition is to create manufacturing, green energy and innovation hubs that capitalise on the unique qualities of the Eastern Region and will become an important part of the post-Covid recovery.</p>   |
| Local Plan                             | <p><b>On Wed 31/03 Tom Baker Asst Director Sustainable Communities announce:</b></p> <p>Dear Councillors,</p> <p>This email is to inform you that we have today submitted the Joint Local Plan for independent examination by the Secretary of State.</p> <p>“This is a significant milestone for our councils and I would like to thank all those involved in the process so far, including our councillors, communities, officers, and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Following both councils opting to prepare a <a href="#">Joint Local Plan</a> in 2016, careful consideration has been given to how the districts will balance the delivery of housing growth, important infrastructure, and essential employment, while safeguarding our natural and historic environment until 2037.</p> <p>Residents, local businesses and other stakeholders were invited to have their say on proposals at a public consultation in 2017, when more than 14,000 representations were received. This helped inform the <a href="#">preferred options consultation</a> in July 2019, during which a further 4,000 comments were made by consultees.</p> <p>Public feedback has been reflected in the <a href="#">final version of the plan</a>, which outlines how and where future development should take place – enabling Government housing targets to be met, whilst also supporting the councils’ ambition to build thriving communities</p> |
| Council Meeting 25 <sup>th</sup> March | <p><b>In a rare moment of unanimity the full council voted in favour of the motion:</b></p> <p>That the Council carries out a review of green space to ensure that it is optimising the biodiversity and wellbeing aspects of natural and amenity green space in Mid Suffolk.</p> <p>This was proposed by Cllr Rachel Eburne (Green Party) and seconded by Cllr Jessica Fleming (Cons.)</p> <p>The Council has already agreed to prepare supplementary planning guidance to support its biodiversity commitments, and inclusion of well-designed green spaces as a material consideration for all new housing developments would add a health and wellbeing element to the biodiversity programme; the Council is urged to set out a time frame which is consistent with the new Joint Local Plan implementation.</p>   |
| End to Virtual Meetings after May 7th  | <p><b>Updated guidance has been published following confirmation that emergency legislation regarding virtual council meetings will not be extended.</b></p> <p>Next Full council Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> May.</p> <p><a href="https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-stewardship/local-authority-remote-meetings-call-for-evidence/">https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-stewardship/local-authority-remote-meetings-call-for-evidence/</a></p>   |

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| The above is a link to a survey asking for evidence of the current arrangement allowing meetings to take place virtually. Closes 17 <sup>th</sup> June |
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Councillor Rowland Warboys

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