

District Councillor Report: Gislingham Ward **Mellis, Gislingham, Thornham, Wickham Skeith, Wortham and Burgate** **Parish Councils**

January 2020
General Election – December 12

Last month saw the General Election on 12 December with many of our staff involved administering and counting the votes. You can [find the full results on our website](#).

Mid Suffolk councillors consider budget for 2020/21

The first draft of Mid Suffolk District Council's budget for 2020/21 is set to be considered by councillors later this month, including a 1.66% increase in its share of council tax, adding £2.76 a year to the bill of a Band D Property.

District Council Budget and Council Tax Notes

Members received a briefing on the draft budget for 2020/21. This draft budget will be considered by Cabinet on 13 January and Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 January; it is expected to be approved at full Council meeting on 27 February.

Government have agreed that Shire Districts may increase council tax by £5 or 2% whichever is the greater. There are no new proposals for Central Government grants to District Councils. Government propose to phase out or replace New Homes Bonus. Any new grant is likely to be based upon achieving higher house building targets. New Homes Bonus for 2020/21 will be £1.612M, an increase of £232k over 2019/20 but is likely to reduce (possibly by 50%) in 2021/22.

Baseline business rates will increase by 2%. Government propose a full business rates revaluation in 2021; a fundamental review of business rates is also likely. Factors taken into account in preparing the draft budget include: a recent increase in the Public Works Loans Board interest rate; the Climate Emergency and continuing uncertainty over BREXIT.

There is £5.8M in Suffolk Pooled Business Rates Fund; £280k remains unallocated from the Mid Suffolk Business Rates pilot; MSDC is holding CIL of £8.5M; Mid Suffolk Growth and Efficiency Fund has £3m unallocated;

The effect of the Provisional Settlement from Government is £213k better than previously assumed.

£500,000 is being allocated this year for measures to mitigate climate change, followed by a further £500,000 next year.

The net revenue budget is proposed to be £10M and the Capital Programme £12M, the latter includes a proposed further investment of £8.7M in commercial properties.

Housing Revenue Account

After four years of government-enforced reductions, the council is also proposing putting up council house rents by 2.7% - 1% above Consumer Prices Index. This will result in an average increase of £2.19 per week increase for tenants. Sheltered housing tenants also face an increase of £2 a week on their bills plus a 62p a week increase to their utility bills. It is proposed to build or acquire 200+ new homes over the next two years at a cost of £45m, and it is proposed that £16.2m will be needed to fund the maintenance and improvements to council properties.

Stowupland High School CIL Bid

MSDC Cabinet on 6 January will consider an application for CIL Funding for the new Sixth Form Centre at Stowupland High School. The bid is for £2.45M (total project cost £2.98) and is subject to the completion of a Community User Agreement. The concerns of Stowupland Parish Council, in respect of traffic, safety, parking etc, are included in the report to Cabinet.

Council Tax Payments

MSDC Cabinet on 6 January are to discuss an initiative to introduce new fines for Council Tax fraud.

Cabinet will also consider adoption of a new protocol produced by Citizens Advice and Local Government Association for the collection of council tax arrears. This seeks to assist those falling behind with their payments in a less confrontational way.

[Read the full story](#)

Councils to consider move to clamp down on Council Tax fraud – while helping those in need

Penalties may be introduced in Babergh and Mid Suffolk to tackle council tax fraud, alongside a new Citizens Advice council tax protocol to help those in genuine need, following cabinet discussions this month.

[Read the full story](#)

Next phase in development of Needham Lake visitor centre and café agreed

Plans for a £600,000 visitor centre/cafe at Needham Lake have been approved and a local operator selected to run it – supporting local youth work and boosting tourism to the town.

[Read the full story](#)

1000 Endangered Animals

Over Christmas the Suffolk Waste Partnership's celebration of recycling took on a theme of endangered animals.

The artwork created by schools across Suffolk will be on display at Ipswich Town Hall café Gallery until 11 Jan, and The Apex , Bury St Edmunds until March 2020.

[Read the full story](#)

More than £791k funding boost for communities

Communities across Babergh and Mid Suffolk received a funding boost totalling £791,000, for local projects including a new car park and bus shelter.

[Read the full story](#)

New recycling wrap up The festive and New Year period are always a great time to encourage residents to think about [reducing waste](#) and improving their recycling knowledge and this year Suffolk Recycling launched a new [Christmas Wrap Up](#).

The guide has tips on how to reduce waste and improve recycling habits over Christmas, all in one place - including information on what to do with old fairy lights, wrapping paper, baubles, trees, food, metals and more. [You can find the full guide on our website.](#)

Suffolk's Recycling Centres also offer free 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle - not a Waste of time!' sessions to interested parties to learn more about ways to reduce waste and recycling. Providing an alternative way to access information about recycling which is also available on the [Suffolk Recycling website.](#)

To book a visit from their Information and Education Manager any interested parties can email [Sharon Lockhart](#)

Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice - Mid Suffolk CAB recently held their AGM. During the last year they addressed nearly 10,000 issues and helped 3,400 clients. So far their client numbers are up 17% on last year. In 2018/19 the CAB helped clients in Mid Suffolk achieve over £1.4 million in financial gains through benefit claims, employment negotiations, consumer refunds and charitable support. The work done by the 45 volunteers has been officially valued at more than £380,000. The Overview and Scrutiny committee had commenced a scrutiny of CABs in Suffolk but the work was halted because of the General Election. This work will start again in January.

Tree Planting/Tree Wardens – The missing section of Cowpasture Lane between Mellis Common and Thornham Parva, south of the Railway Line has been restored by planting native trees and hedging to redefine its ancient boundaries and establish a wildlife corridor linking the intact sections of the lane. 2,500 plants and trees were planted on Saturday 30th Nov. A tremendous effort by local residents, made possible by the partnership formed by the landowner, Nigel Patel, The Woodland Trust, Suffolk County Council and the Suffolk Tree Warden Network coordinated by Frances Jannaway, Thornham's Tree Warden.

Useful Websites -

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/pre-application-advice/free-online-planning-guidance/interactive-mapping-service/>

This takes you into an interactive map that you can zoom into individual houses, check what planning applications are associated with these properties and indicates planning constraints.

<https://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/>

This takes you to a reporting site, again map based, where any concerned member of the parish may paste comments.

Rowland Warboys 05/01/2020