

District Councillor's Report for Gislingham Ward
Mellis, Gislingham, Thornham, Wortham & Burgate, Wickham Skeith Parish Councils
October 2020

Annual Council meeting	The annual meeting was held virtually on 24th September. Barry Humpheys was elected as Chairman and Paul Ekpenyong as Vice Chair. The Committees and Chairs were all agreed, with the Chairman using his casting vote to elect all the chairs and vice chairs from the Conservative and Independent Group, except for Overview and Scrutiny which is traditionally chaired by an opposition member and will continue to be chaired by Keith Welham, with Keith Scarff as vice chair.
Government consultations on planning	<p><i>Changes to the current planning system</i> is about changes to planning policy and regulation including how the housing numbers for each local government area are calculated (which would be upwards for Mid Suffolk). It also recommends changing the threshold of homes built (from 10 to 40) on a development before which affordable homes must be built. The Council's response to this consultation was discussed at the September Council meeting, following which the response has been amended by the Corporate Director in consultation with the portfolio holder for planning and the opposition spokesperson for planning, and has now been submitted.</p> <p><i>Planning for the future</i> is a White Paper that proposes major reforms to the planning system. These include reducing the timeframe in which a Local Plans must be created to a maximum of 30 months; and dividing land into zones for development, renewal (brownfield) and protect (green belt, national parks etc) then automatically granting outline planning permissions within the development and renewal zones. Planning Committees at a district council would therefore only consider design and not the principle of development. The White Paper also considers greater digitalisation, a different system for developer levies and a fast-track system for "beautiful buildings". The consultation closes on 29th October and the Mid Suffolk response to this will be discussed by a cross-party working group of members before being submitted.</p>
Public Realm	A Joint Cabinet meeting was held in September to discuss the findings of a review of the management of the public realm service. The review occurred because Babergh's contract with an outside contractor is due to end in October 2021. Mid Suffolk Cabinet decided to continue with an in-house team and Babergh Cabinet decided to be part of the same arrangement. The Public Realm service for both districts will now be managed by the same in-house team.
Homelessness	Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils have been awarded a grant of £100,000 to help cover the cost of temporary accommodation for homeless people over the winter. In Mid Suffolk there are few (possibly only 2) people sleeping rough but pre-Covid many others had been sofa-surfing or staying with elderly relatives. In order to protect vulnerable people, some of these people became homeless and have been accommodated in hotels. This will need to continue for some months at least.
Stowmarket Leisure Centre/ High School site	Officers are working together with representatives from Stowmarket High School to develop the school and leisure centre site to improve leisure facilities. Stakeholders from local sports clubs will be consulted in order to fully assess what is needed.
Gateway 14	A public consultation on proposals for Gateway 14, which now includes land up to A14, was launched on Monday 14 th September and continues until 31 st October – to comment or just to see the scale of the development, go to G14yoursay.co.uk .

Councillor Rowland Warboys
rowland.warboys@midsuffolk.gov.uk
01379 783412