

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

**Sept 2021**

Afghan refugees	Following the Government announcement of its new resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees, councils in Suffolk, including MSDC, have expressed their commitment to assist. We have already helped a small number of Afghan interpreters and their families to resettle in Suffolk. There will be ongoing work to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and other refugees entering the UK. You can <a href="#">read the statement in full here</a> and a <a href="#">Suffolk County Council webpage</a> has been created in the event of offers of help from towns and parishes.
Meetings	On Wed. 18 <sup>th</sup> Aug Cllr Matthew Hicks (Cons) chaired Development Committee A where the Hybrid Application for the phased employment-led redevelopment of Land at Mill Lane, Stowmarket (Gateway 14) was decided. Gateway 14 is the largest logistics and business park development site in East Anglia on 160 acres of farmland, designated for future employment use. Gateway 14 Ltd is owned by Mid Suffolk District Council (Mid Suffolk) who are investing at least £37M of borrowed money in the project. They are both the Applicant and granter of appropriate planning permission (although they have the power to defer this to another body should they elect to). This development has much community support, but concerns had been raised because of the divergence from the initial consultation and the ambition for the development to be exemplar in terms of energy and environment use and the stimulus to local industry. Some concessions were made on landscaping and future maintenance and a financial commitment towards community and recreational facilities before the proposal was passed.
Meetings	There are no signs that the Government will renew the legislation to enable virtual or hybrid meetings. Committee meetings are being held in the Council Chamber and it is anticipated that the full Council meeting on 23 September will be held in the Chamber. Staff are continuing to work from home but, when necessary, access to workspace in Endeavour House can be booked by staff and councillors.
Taxi licensing – no encouragement given to switch to electric vehicles	The Conservative administration missed the opportunity to improve Mid Suffolk's environmental credentials when they put forward a new taxi licensing policy at the Council's recent Licensing Committee. Despite the fact that no new diesel or petrol car can be purchased after 2030, the ten year policy included no provisions to encourage cab drivers to move to electric vehicles and contained none of the incentives other councils use. The policy, without mention of any efforts to reduce emissions, was approved on the Chair's casting vote.
Solar Carport in Stowmarket	MSDC has let a contract for the construction of a solar carport in the Stowmarket Leisure Centre car park; works are expected to begin shortly and be complete by spring 2022. More than half of the cost is being met from the Government's Getting Building Fund.
Compost Giveaway	I just wanted to update you on the compost giveaway events ahead of planned comms in coming weeks on our website and social media. The dates and locations for the events are confirmed as: <b>Saturday 11th September</b> - Old staff car park, Bridge Street, Hadleigh <b>Sunday 19th September</b> - Needham Lake, Coddendam Road, Needham Market The events will in essence be 'drive through' events so that we can operate in as safe a way as possible for staff and the public. Each site will operate a managed one way system, and each vehicle will be allowed a maximum of two bags of compost. If a visitor has to leave their vehicle, for example to open the boot, this will be done in line with social distancing, and then the compost will be placed in the boot, along with information on home composting, garden waste collections and material change who produce the compost.
Locality Awards	New grants available now for 2021/22. Open to groups with projects that provide a clear and tangible benefit to the community. Full information available using the link or contact me to discuss your project. <a href="https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/communities/grants-and-funding/locality-awards-2021-22/">https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/communities/grants-and-funding/locality-awards-2021-22/</a>

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<p>All party workshops: These are the proposals put forward by the Green and Liberal Democrat Group – no responses have been received.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. £1m should be directed to exemplar zero-carbon housing projects, in particular selecting those that can be delivered within a 2-year timeframe using innovative techniques. We also propose that a set of Suffolk specific designs and specifications be drawn up and used for these developments, and then made open-source for small-scale developers and self-builders to use. The intention is that more housing will be delivered at social rents.</li> <li>2. Up to £1m should be used to improve the delivery of our planning services, to strengthen and train the staff team, and make the department the best in the region. In particular the role of planning enforcement should be enhanced, so that conditions imposed on developers are followed up and implemented in full, thus moving enforcement into a positive, proactive role alongside its current reactive function.</li> <li>3. £1m to be allocated across the District to each Councillor as a locality “super-budget” (£29,400 per Councillor) to be directed as capital funding for innovative and creative projects, drawing on the many ideas proposed in the workshops. This would allow Councillors to fund a diverse range of projects, combining funds where appropriate. Members would provide the direction and decisions on funding, but implementation would be managed by officers or approved partner organisations.</li> <li>4. £1m to be retained for future response to the Covid pandemic as needs arise over the next couple of years.</li> </ol>
<p>Mental Health and Wellbeing</p>	<p>At the moment councillors are engaged in a series of briefings and workshops the explore their own and their communities mental health and wellbeing needs. Link: <a href="https://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk/suffolk/">https://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk/suffolk/</a> Working with Leisure Centre Operators: Everyone Active – an outreach programme is being developed.</p>
<p>Anti-social behaviour</p>	<p>This can take many forms, environmental, physical and mental abuse and the council has dedicated officers to investigate and support victims. It can be reported via the council’s website or please contact me. Link: <a href="https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/communities/community-safety/anti-social-behaviour-asb/">https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/communities/community-safety/anti-social-behaviour-asb/</a></p>
<p><b>Advance Notice: Local Energy Showcase will champion green businesses</b>  21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> October</p>	<p>Businesses and community organisations are being urged to tackle climate change by joining Suffolk’s first ever showcase event celebrating sustainability and green energy. The Local Energy Showcase, organised by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, will promote how different types of energy can be used by communities and businesses help reduce their impact on the environment, lower costs and contribute to the fight against climate change.</p> <p>FREE <a href="#">Tickets are now available</a> for the two-day extravaganza, at Wherstead Park in Ipswich on 21 and 22 October. The event is open to all businesses with an interest in finding out more about local energy solutions and as well as community groups and parishes who would like to understand and explore the benefits of using local energy solutions.</p> <p>More information: <a href="https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/news/local-energy-showcase-will-champion-green-businesses/">https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/news/local-energy-showcase-will-champion-green-businesses/</a></p>

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