

District Councillors report to 27 March 2023

So what has Mid Suffolk District Council and the District Councillors done for you since the elections in 2019 to 2022? You might well ask.

Millions of pounds of investment, action to combat climate change, and support for thousands of residents and businesses are amongst our achievements captured in a report published towards the end of last year. It is for the period 2019 – 2022 and I have attached the link below.

The report covers economic development, planning supporting communities and tackling climate change.

It outlines the support given to thousands of residents and businesses during the pandemic, initial work during the cost of living crisis.

It also maps where millions of pounds in community Infrastructure Levy payments have been made across the District. Please do read the report for yourselves.

Many of you will be aware that I have been chair of planning and licensing for the last 16 years. It isn't just about that. Parish Council Meetings and dealing with individual issues throughout the ward are a prime source of work.

I have attended many focus groups in the background working on a joint Local Plan with Babergh District Council. This has been a mammoth task incorporating Neighbourhood Plans and interpreting their intentions, whilst dealing with endless changes to the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) Again this hasn't always been straight forward. For example the Thurston Parish Council took the Mid Suffolk District Council to a Judicial Review with the NHP being part of their claims, many legal decisions were made for and against, with the Parish Council appealing an overturned decision. The Councillors in Thurston were against this particular planning application (and many others in fact) but in the end a legal challenge by Mid Suffolk District Council was upheld and the Committee's decision, for which I was chair, was sanctioned and passed. The committee had been split over this but sometimes the chair has to take difficult decisions.

Many of you know I spoke out against the proposed large planning application opposite the school in Debenham and received many thanks from within the community as I spoke at committee and persuaded them to refuse the application. One cannot say no without an alternative. Afterwards with much input from the Parish Council aided by Mid Suffolk District Council the Debenham Neighbourhood Plan was born.

I have been suggesting that Debenham reviewed their NHP so they are not behind the curve when it comes to applications coming in, which will continue to come in, and have to be assessed, against amongst other things a five year land supply, and the NHP. Whilst up dating the NHP the clerk recently passed it to me for comment. I did offer some further input. These are living documents.

Still on the subject of planning Mid Suffolk District Council has a local housing need of 2777 houses for the period 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2027. I am pleased to say our five year land supply currently stands at 10.88 which is an amazing achievement .

During the Covid Pandemic once government authority given it was planning as usual and I was the first person as Chair to host an on line planning meeting going out live, certainly in East Anglia if not the country. Nerve wracking but with lots of practice it was achieved with good success.

Licensing has also had its moments and what you read in the press is not necessarily all that goes on. That too has a quasi judicial sub committee which must sit with a legal adviser, read, assess, listen, question and decide on some controversial applications.

My locality budget which has to be spent on things which are none political and available to all has been spent as follows:-

Street Fair Debenham £800; Bedingfield jubilee £250; Debenham Shed £1500, Kenton Parish Meeting £2400 – defibrillator to be available to all parishes within Debenham ward, Bedingfield village Hall new floor etc £900, Debenham Project – new sounding boards £500; new toilets Debenham village Hall £1000.

Mid Suffolk's Financial position sits well and once again Mid Suffolk District Council is holding the council tax the same as last year with no increase in their share. It is Suffolk County council and Police who have any increases

My report is tinged with sadness as I have decided it is time to move on and will not be standing in the forthcoming election this year but would like to thank all of you who not only put your faith in me, but year on year increased my overall share of the vote.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve you all.

Thank you

Councillor Mrs Kathie Guthrie

