

ANNUAL PARISH COUNCILLORS REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETINGS 20/22

I would firstly like to thank everyone in all the Parishes for their ongoing support and enthusiasm for the entire community. Coming out of lockdown with the covid virus still hanging over us has been challenging for all.

I give you a snapshot of how MSDC has performed over the year and of course issues within our Debenham ward including, Aspall, Ashfield-cum-thorpe, Bedingfield, Debenham Kenton and Winston.

Finance

Because of the Covid lockdowns work at MSDC offices have changed with hybrid working, zoom meetings and working from home. It has encouraged more people to look at committee meetings with over 3,450 viewings. Reducing the workspace at Endeavour house has meant a reduction in rent and it is anticipated a saving of over £67500 over 5 years.

Nearly £400,000 worth of grants were given out to support communities in the first three-quarters of 21/22. A sum of £96,000 was allocated in Community restart funding. Locality budgets totalling £155k has been handed out and my own funds were allocated as follows:-

Debenham football club £13000; Debenham Weathervane £500; Debenham together £800; Debenham Shed £500; Debenham Street Fair group £800; Debenham Village Hall and Playing field trust £1000; Kenton Parish Meeting £800 (SID); Bedingfield village Hall £1650.

The council continues to run a surplus even though more money is being spent on improving the lives of residents than ever before £5.1million has been approved by cabinet to spend on our priorities. Including Environment, Wellbeing, economy, communities, Housing and customers. This has been as a result of our shrewd investments with CIFCO and other investments, which now deliver an annual income equivalent to two – thirds of our total council tax precept and one of the reasons Mid Suffolk has managed to freeze this years council tax while other councils are raising theirs. Our reserves remain healthy and MSDC consistently deliver in year financial outcomes ahead of budget which was approved unanimously for 2022/23 year.

Economy/job prospects

Gateway 14 was given its planning approval and linking it with Freeports (one of 8) will not only help give our community many job prospects but further funding for MSDC. As well as offices and warehouse logistic facilities, the site will include a Tech Hub 'Innovation Centre' making Mid Suffolk a destination for technology and innovation

At the Public sector Transformation awards MSDC won an ISE Gold Award for public sector Transformation for the Virtual High Street project connecting shoppers with 145 High Street businesses In MSDC's main towns and 800 local businesses received digital training skills from Menta.

With over 100,000 spectators for the Women's Tour through our districts this too added to the economy

Environment/Housing

During the past year the Council has put a lot of effort into putting into practice as many of our planned climate change and biodiversity actions as possible. The reduction of carbon emissions from refuse collection vehicles and leisure centres are more or less complete. All RCV's have been running on hydro-treated vegetable oil since November and many older vehicles have also been converted across Waste, Public Realm and Housing.

Solar PVs have been installed on roofs at the four Leisure Centres as well as solar car ports.. Planning permission has been granted for an Air-Handling Heating plant for the Leisure Centre Stowmarket.

In Mid Suffolk 3312 council homes had solar panels installed up to December 2021 and 10 air source heat pumps. Land has been purchased at Barham to deliver another 20 affordable and market homes through Mid Suffolk Growth.

Minor adaptations have been made to 97 homes with residents who have disabilities

MSDC has purchased 2 acres of land near the river Rat for a wildlife reserve. Together with work on biodiversity mapping, completion of a tree canopy survey and the parish tree and hedge planting scheme it has been a busy year. About 300 trees and hedgerow plants have been allocated to parishes for planting and seed distributed for wildflower meadows which will continue early in the year so please identify any areas you may think will benefit.

Planning

The completion of the five year land supply position statement for 2021 shows from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2026 the district is anticipated to have a supply of 5,139 units. The local housing need figure for Mid Suffolk is calculated at 513 dwellings per year plus a 5%buffer, giving a requirement of 2693 Units. There is therefore a deemed surplus of 2446 units and a calculated 9.54 land supply. Although we are ahead as it were one must realise not all the permissions will be built out and as they are the supply figure drops. It does give a breathing space to be selective on where some applications might be located.

On a personal note I am on the joint steering group for the Joint local plan and it is anticipated to have at least 4 more 2 hour meetings over the next few weeks, along with similar timing for a review on enforcement and a set of meetings nearing its end for the planning the peer review on again for more 2 hour meetings but with a progress report shortly.

Planning in Debenham moves ahead within the Debenham Neighbourhood plan and separate plans do come in from time to time in all our parishes.

Debenham Ukraine, entwined together.

I cannot finish my report without thanking Caroline Driver and John Sweet who initiated this group and all the people in it and supporting it.

What a wonderful community we live in.

Cllr Mrs Kathie Guthrie

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