

## **District Councillor's Report May 2020**

### **Mid Suffolk's response to the Covid-19 crisis**

Attached is the latest briefing to District Councillors on the Covid-19 Cri for your information. Listed below are additional points that may be of interest.

#### **Garden Waste**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are poised to re-launch their garden waste collections during May, having stopped them to protect essential collections during COVID-19. Monday 11 May will see the green button pressed on garden waste collections across the Babergh and Mid Suffolk districts, after they were stopped to allow crews to prioritise essential waste streams; general rubbish, clinical waste and recycling during the coronavirus outbreak. This difficult but crucial decision was essential to allow recycling and rubbish to be collected, whilst equally ensuring the safety of waste crews, staff and residents. Despite the financial impact of the virus on the councils, no residents will be out of pocket from the stoppage. No new invoices have been issued since the collections were forced to stop and subscriptions will be amended to reflect the missed collections. To prioritise collections of missed garden waste bins, the councils are currently not accepting new subscriptions until further notice.

#### **Approval For 98 Homes Enables Sports Facility For Haughley**

Detailed plans for 98 new homes in Haughley have received the go ahead – providing a range of community benefits for the village. Part of the 11-acre site to the East of King George's Field on Green Road has been earmarked for a junior football pitch, fulfilling Sport England's objective to provide new opportunities to meet the needs of current and future generations. Outline planning permission for the development was granted by Mid Suffolk District Council's planning committee in May 2018, with proposed plans for the site receiving support from Haughley Parish Council. The development by Bloor Homes, also includes public open space, off-site highways improvements and the provision of 34 affordable housing plots - meeting the council's affordable housing policy. The council's chief planning officer used emergency delegated powers to sign off the details of this project today, in the absence of regular face to face committee meetings due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Work on site is expected to start later this year.

#### **£17m COVID-19 Grant Funding Unclaimed By Small Businesses in Babergh and Mid Suffolk**

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Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils estimate that approximately 1,300 businesses and organisations have yet to claim the grants that they are entitled to and are urging small businesses and shop owners, those in the hospitality industry and leisure sector, as well as organisations such as sports clubs, community buildings and village hall committees who pay business rates to find out if they are eligible for the grant.

### **Green Light For £2.2m Extension at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre**

Plans for a £2.2m development and refurbishment at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre in Stowmarket have been given the go ahead, which include an extension to the existing building. The works to improve leisure provision in the district will include:

- An extension to the current building housing a newly refurbished fitness suite
- Refurbishing the front of the existing building, including new signage
- Essential repairs and decorating

This follows approval by cabinet in February this year, for the work to be funded by £2.2m from the council's Growth and Efficiency Fund. The development will provide modern facilities at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, with Stradbroke Pool and Fitness also seeing an equipment refresh using the current 2019/20 budget.

In light of COVID-19, Mid Suffolk District Council's chief planning officer has used emergency delegated powers to give the green light to plans which would allow works to get underway in coming months after lockdown restrictions are lifted. The extension and refurb form part of the council's re-procurement of Mid Suffolk's leisure facility management contract. Before works begin, a raft of environmentally-friendly options including solar panels and electric vehicle charging points are to be explored.

### **Online Democracy In Action**

Mid Suffolk District Council today held its first planning meeting using virtual technology – allowing public meetings to continue safely despite the lockdown. The Mid Suffolk Development Control Committee B meeting, conducted via Skype, allowed councillors and officers to openly discuss and vote on applications in Great Finborough and Buxhall, with members of the public able to listen to the meeting's livestream. The historic session was chaired by Cllr Kathie Guthrie, who welcomed

the technological solution to democracy during lockdown and thanked everyone involved in staging and participating in the session.

### **Local Community Groups To Receive Over £64,000 In Emergency Funding**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have approved grants totalling more than £64,000 to support local communities in their response to COVID-19. The Emerging Needs Grant, set up earlier this month, allows both new and existing groups in Babergh and Mid Suffolk to apply for funding of up to £2,500 to cover increased costs incurred as a result of the Coronavirus (Covid-19). These costs include ongoing staff costs, volunteer expenses, utility bills and the purchasing of food or other consumables.

A straightforward application process has enabled 62 community groups across both districts to apply for the grant, with this figure set to increase over coming weeks. The councils' Grants Team has worked around the clock to respond to over half of applicants so far - helping to ease the challenges faced by residents during the crisis. As a result of this over £48,000 of much-needed funding has been paid out during the past month to groups in Babergh and Mid Suffolk, who are playing a key role in protecting vulnerable residents and helping our communities remain resilient during the COVID-19 outbreak. Another £16,000 of grants are currently at offer stage and will be paid shortly.

### **Recognising The Volunteers At The Heart Of Mid Suffolk's Coronavirus Response**

Mid Suffolk District Council is saluting the unwavering community spirit within its neighbourhoods, as selfless heroes prove an incredible force in the fight against Covid-19. Mid Suffolk District Council is offering grants of up to £2,500 to support groups with increased costs incurred as a cost of coronavirus (COVID-19), including general running costs, ongoing staff costs, volunteer expenses, utility bills and purchasing of food or other consumables. Larger requests for funding will be considered under exceptional circumstances.

Now, in addition to offering financial support, and with so many different groups to recognise, the council is launching a #communitychampions social media campaign to encourage community groups to highlight what they are doing – making residents aware of what local help is available as well as generating further support and offers of volunteering. Taking part in the campaign couldn't be easier, simply tag @MidSuffolk in your social media posts so that these can be shared

## **Council Rejects Homes To Protect Haughley's Heritage**

Mid Suffolk District Council today refused outline planning permission for 120 homes to be built in Haughley, citing poor connectivity and harm to local heritage. Applicant Amber REI Holdings sought permission for the development of a former poultry factory site, adjacent to the listed Haughley Park Jacobean manor house, between Elmswell and Haughley. This followed a previous application for 149 properties to be built at the same location, which was unanimously rejected by the council's development control committee in February 2019. Refusal was issued at that time on the grounds of the development being unsustainable and too far away from amenities, forcing residents to travel by car to shops, train stations and schools.

In response to that decision, the applicant made changes to the scheme to try to address concerns previously raised, with a new application for 120 homes being lodged in May 2019. The council's chief planning officer used emergency delegated powers to refuse the project today, in the absence of regular committee meetings due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Reasons cited include continued concerns about the overall harm caused by the proposed development outweighing the public benefits that may arise from it, plans failing to provide appropriate affordable housing to meet the council's policies and the site's poor connectivity to necessary facilities. The impact to the adjacent historical setting was also a significant factor in the decision against the proposal.

## **Cyber Cons Capitalising On Coronavirus Crisis**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are urging vigilance against rising numbers of coronavirus cons, with over 2,000 online scams identified nationally in the last month alone. Opportunistic traders and scammers have made almost £2 million by taking advantage of the Covid-19 crisis. The UK's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) is encouraging consumers to fight back, with the launch of its Cyber Aware campaign today, which both councils are supporting. This follows the government body successfully stopping over 2,000 incidents of cyber fraud last month. Included in this figure was 471 fake online shops found to be selling fraudulent coronavirus related items.

There have been numerous reports nationally about phony shop fronts selling highly sought-after items such as anti-bacterial hand sanitiser and face masks. To protect themselves consumers should only make purchases directly from reputable stores and websites. This isn't the only retail scam that victims can fall prey to, as the sale of 'miracle' health products is another tactic employed by scammers. Fraudsters are creating convincing personal testimonials to support their claims, but these are easy to fabricate and are not a substitute for scientific evidence or government guidance.

Phishing, another ploy used by cons to convince victims to give away sensitive information or click on links within a scam email or text message, is also on the rise, with the NCSC shutting down over 200 phishing sites in March. Not revealing personal or financial data on an unsecure website or in an e-mail, or responding to requests for this information, is the best way to combat this crime. Some of the

common phishing emails include messages fraudulently claiming to be from HM Revenue & Customs offering tax rebates as a result of the crisis. Other emails report to have news about the disease and prompt readers to download malicious software or visit malware distribution sites, set up to cause significant damage to visitors. 555 such sites have recently been removed by the NCSC.

Installing the most up to date software and apps will protect devices from the latest cyber threats. A strong password, which is made up of three random words and differs to others, should be used for personal email accounts, as this is a gateway for other online accounts. Any suspicious emails should be forwarded to [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk), as the NCSC's automated scanning system will check for email scams and immediately remove criminal sites.

### **It's qOasis for Mid Suffolk Winter Sports Complex**

Major proposals to build a £500 million snow centre, creating over 5,000 jobs in the area, have been finalised. SnOasis, set to occupy a 350-acre former quarry in Great Blakenham, near Ipswich, will provide world class winter sport facilities such as a professional level ski slope, ice rink and bobsleigh run. The site will also accommodate an entertainment centre – with scope for further facilities such as retail units, a hotel, hostel and chalets.

Outline approval for the development was granted by central government in 2008 and again by Mid Suffolk District Council in 2011. Final details of the project, known as reserved matters, were considered and assessed against both local policy and the latest national planning policies, before being approved by the council last March. After assurance from the developers that detailed conditions addressing local concerns would be met, the council's planning committee voted by 11 to three in favour of the project. Following the resolution to approve the reserved matters in 2019, Mid Suffolk District Council and the developer have been working hard on a range of measures and public benefits that needed to be agreed for construction to start. The package of conditions and obligations upon the developer include a requirement to operate to a highly efficient standard; with at least 75% of the development's energy coming from decentralised and renewable/low-carbon energy sources, substantial upgrade works to Stowmarket railway station, and a raft of environmental, ecological and amenity controls to mitigate the impacts of the development from the start of construction right through to the ongoing operation of the development.

### **Gateway 14 Appoints Jaynic As Development Manager For New Stowmarket Mixed-use Business And Logistic Space**

Mid Suffolk District Council's vision for Stowmarket has taken a major step forward with the announcement of a partner to deliver Gateway 14. The major new development site, adjacent to junction 50 on the A14 at Stowmarket, will deliver a multi-million pound boost for the wider economic area of Mid Suffolk, especially the

growth of creative and technology businesses, while also maximising opportunities for inward investment, job creation and wider community benefits.

Jaynic has been appointed as the development manager by Gateway 14 Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Mid Suffolk District Council, to deliver up to 2.3 million sq ft of business, logistics and commercial accommodation over the next 10-15 years. The proposed timeline will see planning applications submitted by the end of 2020, to enable a phased development on the 156-acre site. It is intended that the main infrastructure will commence by Spring 2021 so that occupation can start in early 2022.

Gateway 14 will consist of a mixed-use, market facing business park for warehousing and logistics with an innovation cluster within the “space to innovate” enterprise zone. The masterplan layout is still being developed; however, the site could accommodate logistics buildings up to 1,000,000 sq ft, with roadside uses alongside the A14 frontage, and headquarters office/R&D campus style buildings.

### **Further Financial Support For Struggling Households In Babergh and Mid Suffolk**

Families already struggling with financial hardship are to be given further support to reduce their council tax bills, with letters due through the doors of more than 4,000 households in Babergh and Mid Suffolk over coming days. The Government recently announced a new Hardship Fund to support those households already in receipt of means-tested working age Local Council Tax Support (LCTS). This means that bills for these households will be reduced by up to £150 – which will ensure that the most financially vulnerable households in the districts have nothing to pay in 2020/21. These awards will be applied automatically if households are already in receipt of this support - there is no requirement to apply. We are writing to the 4,372 working age households affected across both districts – with letters expected to start hitting doormats this week. In addition to those on LCTS, anyone whose household financial circumstances have been affected may be entitled to help – with further advice available on the councils’ website.

Stay Safe

Regards

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