

## **District Councillor's Report – June 2022**

### **Council Considers Plan To Help Residents Tackle Cost Of Living**

Mid Suffolk District Council are to consider a five-point action plan during meetings next month, to support residents and staff through the cost-of-living crisis. In a report published this week, the council outlined the stark financial challenges faced by many families, with increasing food and energy bills and rising inflation leading to falling living standards and risk of recession. In response, the council is considering a 5-point plan, bringing together work already underway with new initiatives, under five key headings:

#### Cost of Living:

- 1) Co-ordinating Government support – getting help to those who need it.
- 2) Exercising discretion providing welfare support and advice to support those facing hard times.
- 3) Maximising partnership working and established systems to provide targeted support where there is a particular trend and need.

#### Preventing Crisis:

- 4) Maintaining good health – such as referrals for mental health support, use of council gyms, community-led “wellbeing” initiatives
- 5) Ensuring access to food and nutrition – such as healthy eating exercises/initiatives, community gardens and larders, or extra support for local food banks.

The plan brings together a suite of measures that focus on providing advice and support, maintaining people's health, and building on work already underway since the launch of the councils' Communities and Wellbeing strategies. This includes support and funding for local Citizens' Advice centres and local community organisations; specialist support for council tenants struggling to pay their rent; a wide range of discretionary payments, grants, and reductions for those facing financial hardship; and the Holiday Activity and Food programme to combat holiday hunger for families who are struggling through the school breaks.

In addition, the council will be looking to expand the work it is already doing around social prescribing, working in partnership with health colleagues and partners to help residents maintain good health – whether in our green spaces or through access to leisure facilities. Proposals also exploring new possibilities such as a discretionary fuel and travel voucher scheme to tackle loneliness for people who are isolated or vulnerable – ensuring family and friends can continue to visit. Pending approval at next months' meetings, one of the first actions will be to appoint a Cost-of-Living Co-ordinator to help key agencies across the district to join forces so help can be deployed where it is needed most.

### **Visitors Welcome For A Cuppa At The Duck & Teapot**

The doors of the Duck & Teapot, the new café and visitor centre at Needham Lake are now open. Visitors to Needham Lake, Mid Suffolk's most popular free visitor

attraction\*, will now be able to enjoy a range of drinks, freshly made meals, snacks, cakes and ice cream when they come to enjoy the lake to get close to nature, exercise or to explore the open space.

Designed to complement the natural surroundings, the Duck & Teapot meets Mid Suffolk District Councils' climate change ambitions with several environmental features. These include solar panels, sustainable drainage and building materials and an air source heat pump. Feathered visitors will also be able to enjoy new bird boxes which have been introduced around the building. Visitors will be able to enjoy both indoor and outdoor seating; overlooking one of Needham Lake's play areas, while the introduction of a Changing Places facility will make the lake more accessible for people with disabilities.

### **Plans To Revitalise Sport, Leisure, And Wellbeing In Stowmarket To Be Considered**

Stowmarket could soon benefit from a new leisure and wellbeing hub if funding is agreed by Mid Suffolk District Council next month. The funding will enable Mid Suffolk District Council to take the proposals to the next stage and will include developing a detailed design for the masterplan, holding public consultation events to share plans and prepare and submit a planning application for the project. During this phase, the council will work in collaboration with partners and stakeholders to ensure the site will be used most effectively for everyone involved. The proposal for the health and wellbeing hub in Stowmarket will outline plans to bring together a range of sports, leisure and health facilities to create a real benefit to local communities.

### **£1.6m Boost For Babergh and Mid Suffolk Neighbourhoods**

Town and Parish Councils across Babergh and Mid Suffolk have received £1.6 million in the latest round of neighbourhood CIL payments – paving the way for a range of vital community facilities and projects. Developers are charged Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) when building new homes in the districts – enabling local infrastructure to keep pace with housing growth, as well as supporting the councils' vision for its communities to be attractive, successful, and connected places for people to live and work. A proportion of this funding is automatically paid to town and parish councils, who are eligible for up to 15% of collected funds from their area, subject to a financial cap, with the potential for this to increase to 25% if they have successfully adopted a Neighbourhood Plan. They can then decide how to spend this money to support the development of their local area – ensuring that the funding best meets the needs of the community.

The latest payments, made during April, saw £1,593,662 distributed to 84 town and parish councils across Babergh and Mid Suffolk. Of this £1,025,936 was allocated to 49 town and parish councils in Mid Suffolk, whilst 35 of Babergh's town and parish councils received a share of £567,726. In addition, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils allocated £4.5 million to 15 CIL bids during 2021/22, allowing funding to be invested in community infrastructure improvement initiatives including a new car park at Woolpit, regeneration of Botesdale Recreation Ground and an extension to Brooklands Primary School in Brantham.

## **Cllr James Caston Elected Mid Suffolk District Council Chairman**

Cllr James Caston was elected Chairman of Mid Suffolk District Council at its Full Council meeting on Thursday 26 May and succeeds former Chairman Cllr Paul Ekpenyong. Cllr Caston, conservative Member for Bramford, was elected to Mid Suffolk District Council in 2015 and has served as on the council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Joint Audit and Standards Committee and Development Control Committee B.

Cllr Paul Ekpenyong, Conservative Member for St Peter's ward, was elected as Vice Chairman. Cllr Ekpenyong was first elected to Mid Suffolk District Council in 2015. He has since served on the Licensing & Regulatory committee, Suffolk Joint Standards Board, and the council's Overview & Scrutiny committee and council Chairman

Regards

*Rick*

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