

District Councillor Report: Walsham Le Willows Parish Council

January 2024

Call for sites	Following the adoption of the Joint Local Plan Part 1 Mid Suffolk Council is progressing with the production of the Joint Local Plan Part 2. The Council is inviting site submissions to be put forward for residential land use for consideration for future development. This is known as the 'Call for Sites' process. It is important to note, the Call for Sites exercise will not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for development and the submission of a site through the Call for Sites process does not give them any planning status.
New Council Houses	<p>Mid Suffolk added 86 new Council homes in 2023 bringing the total housing stock to 3,373 homes.</p> <p>The new properties include several built on repurposed council land. The former Stowmarket Middle School (4 homes and 38 planned) and Needham Market Middle School (17 homes) sites were bought from Suffolk County Council when the schools closed, with the brownfield sites then earmarked for social housing.</p> <p>The councils have also secured a number of new homes through Section 106 contributions to provide a certain amount of affordable housing as part of each development .(Badwell Ash (5), Cedars Park Stowmarket (27), Laxfield (17) and Bramford (16))</p>
Council Tax increases for Empty Homes and Second Homes	<p>To incentivise bringing more homes back into use, MSDC is proposing to increase the amount of Council Tax payable on long-term empty homes. Currently these attract a levy of 50% on the Council Tax payable. The new policy will be levies of 100% for empty homes being left for one (to five) year, 200% for five (to ten) years and 300% for ten years or more. Exceptions will apply – such as property under probate or properties undergoing major repairs. If approved, this will be from April 2024.</p> <p>Additionally, it is proposed that second homes attract a 100% levy. If approved, this will be from April 2025 as a year's notice has to be given. There had been the opportunity to increase some of these from 2019 but the previous Administration did not take these up.</p>
Warm Spaces This Winter	A wide range of organisations have now received grants between £500 and £2,000, with successful projects offering warm spaces, coffee mornings, movie nights, skill development workshops, lunch clubs, activity sessions, and safe spaces for a range of ages, from toddlers and teens to senior citizens.
Flood forum	There will be a public meeting to discuss the recent flooding - Debenham Community Centre Fri 26th January 1-3pm & 5-7pm.

	<p>The forum will be presented by the Environment Agency and have specialists attending along with representatives from County and District Councils to form a panel for Q&A's.</p>
New sports facilities in Stowmarket	<p>MSDC Cabinet is proposing approval of the full business case of the Stowmarket Sports Health and Leisure Project to allow the first stage, covering new and updated sports facilities, to go ahead. This includes a 3G pitch, special athletics track, multi-games area (MUGA), improving existing pitches and other facilities. If Council approves this, it is hoped work can start in 2024.</p> <p>Money has also been allocated for sports facilities outside of Stowmarket over the next few years.</p>

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