

Andrew Mellen - District Councillor Report for Bacton Ward – March 2022

(Bacton, Cotton, Finningham, Westhorpe & Wyverstone Parishes)

Budget 2022/23	Mid Suffolk Council discussed the budget 2022/23 at the Council meeting held on 24 th February. Council tax is to remain at the same rate so annual Mid Suffolk proportion of the council tax bill for a Band D property be £171.59. Sheltered housing charges and garage rents also remain frozen at 2021/22 levels. The Green and LibDem opposition put forward a proposal to fund two electric buses to provide new scheduled services. The funding for this project will be from the Growth and Efficiency fund.
Housing Revenue Account	Mid Suffolk District Council tenants will have a proposed increase of 4.1% to their rents, to cover inflationary pressures and allow investment to improve the quality of council homes. This means average weekly social rent will increase by £3.45 from £84.42 to £87.84. For affordable housing, weekly rents will increase by £4.99 from £121.34 to £126.33.
Thurston By-election	Following the departure of Cllr Wendy Turner there was a by-election for a new district councillor for the Thurston Ward on 17 th Feb. Green party candidate Austin Davies gained more than double the number of votes of the Conservative candidate and was duly elected. This leaves MSDC as a "hung" council – i.e. it remains balanced with 17 members in the administration and the opposition groups.
Endeavour House office accommodation	Babergh and Mid Suffolk are reducing their office space in Endeavour House. Following COVID there is now more home working and less space is needed, so the office will be reconfigured at a cost of about £250,000 but should provide longer term net savings in the region of £675,000 over the next 5 years. This decision was made by Cabinets of both Councils. The new configuration should be in place by autumn 2022.
Digital skills programme	Babergh and Mid Suffolk are providing virtual workshops for business owners to improve their digital skills, as part of the COVID recovery programme. The workshops are run by MENTA and are free of charge.
New affordable council homes	MSDC received the keys to 9 new affordable homes in Botesdale in February. These new homes are part of the current investment programme which includes 68 new homes in the pipeline for this year in Needham Market, Haughley and Woolpit.
Thurston Judicial Review	Thurston Parish Council some time back lodged a judicial review into the granting of planning permission for 210 new homes off Beyton Road, Thurston. The case was based on the priority given to the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan, which had not allocated the site – and this was upheld by the High Court, so the planning permission has been quashed. Neighbourhood plans should get more weight in the planning process as a result.

Cllr Andy Mellen

andrew.mellen@midsuffolk.gov.uk

07790 992619