

District Councillors' Report: Bacton ward - September 2021

(Bacton, Cotton, Finningham, Westhorpe & Wyverstone)

Afghan refugees	Following the Government announcement of its new resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees, councils in Suffolk, including MSDC, have expressed their commitment to assist. We have already helped a small number of Afghan interpreters and their families to resettle in Suffolk. There will be ongoing work to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and other refugees entering the UK.
Devolution	Together with other councils in Suffolk, MSDC have written to the Secretary of State responsible for local government to indicate a desire to discuss a possible devolution deal for Suffolk. It is important that any deal should avoid an extra tier of government and extra costs added to our council tax.
Gateway14	The development proposals for this business park on the outskirts of Stowmarket have been granted planning permission with a number of conditions. One of these is a financial commitment towards community and recreational facilities.
Covid and MSDC Council meetings	There are no signs that the Government will renew the legislation to enable virtual or hybrid meetings. Committee meetings are being held in the Council Chamber and it is anticipated that the full Council meeting on 23 September will be held in the Chamber. Staff are continuing to work from home but, when necessary, access to workspace in Endeavour House can be booked by staff and councillors.
Taxi licensing – no encouragement given to switch to electric vehicles	The Conservative administration missed the opportunity to improve Mid Suffolk's environmental credentials when they put forward a new taxi licensing policy at the Council's recent Licensing Committee. Despite the fact that no new diesel or petrol car can be purchased after 2030, the ten-year policy included no provisions to encourage cab drivers to move to electric vehicles and contained none of the incentives other councils use. The policy, without mention of any efforts to reduce emissions, was approved on the Chair's casting vote.
Cycling and Walking	Babergh and MSDC have set up a Joint Task and Finish Group to prepare a Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan (LCWIP) to prioritise locations across the Districts for new or improved cycle and pedestrian provision.
Solar Carport in Stowmarket	MSDC has let a contract for the construction of a solar carport in the Stowmarket Leisure Centre car park; works are expected to begin shortly and be complete by spring 2022. More than half of the cost is being met from the Government's Getting Building Fund.
Locality Awards	There is still funding available from my locality budget. Amounts of £250 or more are available to local community groups and organisations. Please encourage groups in the village to contact me for an application form or telephone for further information and help in applying.

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