

## District Councillors' Report for Westhorpe Parish Council – September 2020

MSDC Council meeting	The first full Council meeting since February 2020 was held virtually on 23 July and broadcast live via YouTube. The next meeting will be on 24 September; this will be the delayed Annual Meeting at which the Chair is elected; and committees and outside appointments are agreed. The meeting will be held virtually and can be viewed on YouTube.
Environment and Climate Change	The Environment and Climate Change Task Force put forward their proposals to the July meeting of Cabinet and they resolved to approve in principle the Carbon Reduction Management Plan. The Cabinet Member for Environment and the Cabinet Member for Finance now have delegated authority to consider business cases for each proposal and approve expenditure up to a total of £500,000.
Green and Liberal Democrat Group	The Green Group and the Liberal Democrat Group of Councillors have joined forces to become 'The Green and Liberal Democrat Group' in order to more effectively hold the current administration to account. The new group has 17 members, one more than the Conservatives who will need to rely upon the Independent member and Chairman's casting vote.
CIFCO	A motion put forward by Green Councillor Eburne to halt all future investment in the Councils' commercial property investment arm, CIFCO, failed by one vote. The Green and Liberal Democrat Group proposed that any remaining borrowing of around £13 million be used to provide housing within Mid Suffolk for rent or sale on the open market.
MSDC out of county investments	Council debated CIFCO's business and trading and performance report and business plan for 2020/21. Councillors questioned the directors on the current situation, raising concerns around the risks in investing in out of town offices, fitness centres, retail premises and car showrooms, given the current and predicted future downturn in the economy. The report showed that for 2019/20 there was a combined income to the two councils of £1.6 million and an 'impairment' of £3.5 million, which is made up of costs (such as professional advice) and a revaluation of the properties held.
Joint Local Plan	A new timetable was agreed detailing the next steps for the Joint Local Plan. It is now likely to be published in the autumn, followed by a six-week consultation period. The plan is not likely to be adopted before late 2021 or early 2022 leaving the Councils vulnerable to speculative development in the meantime.
Sustainable Travel Action Plan	Council approved a joint 'Sustainable Travel Action Plan' along with Babergh Council. This was proposed by Green Councillor Dan Pratt and received cross party support. Its aim is a sustained shift away from car use towards cycling and walking.
MSDC to install solar carport	Babergh and Mid Suffolk are to share a £800,000 grant from the "Getting Building Fund" for the introduction of micro-generation and electricity storage solar carports in Sudbury and Stowmarket. The funding will provide 50% of the budget for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council to install multifunctional solar carports which will generate and store electricity and provide a point for electric vehicle charging. The locations currently being assessed are carparks at Station Road, Sudbury and Gainsborough Road, Stowmarket. A detailed feasibility study is expected to be complete by November 2020 and the two initial projects completed by March 2021.
Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, Stowmarket	More of the facilities at the leisure centre are gradually becoming available. For the latest information visit: <a href="https://www.everyoneactive.com/reopeningmeasures/">https://www.everyoneactive.com/reopeningmeasures/</a> Work has commenced on a £2.2m upgrade and extension to the Leisure Centre, including a new gym, poolside features, changing rooms and catering facilities.

Public Realm Review	The Councils have carried out a review of the delivery of the public realm service which includes maintenance of open spaces, litter picking, public toilets and tree maintenance. Currently the service is provided by MSDC staff in Mid Suffolk, whereas in Babergh that work is contracted out. The aim is to have a common service delivery across both districts. Decisions on the preferred method of service delivery will be taken in the next few weeks and changes implemented in summer 2021.
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