

Mid Suffolk District Councillor's Report – Palgrave Parish Council, Feb 2024

MSDC Plan	<p>Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC) has approved the priorities set out in its new plan (agreed after extensive consultation). The core of the plan is putting environmental and social responsibilities at the heart of everything we do, “helping to create thriving and resilient communities”.</p> <p>This encompasses: Housing and infrastructure, Resilience, Community wellbeing; and Environmental sustainability. A key principle is to work collaboratively with communities.</p>
MSDC 2024/25 Budget	<p>The draft budget for 2024/25 has been approved by Cabinet. This includes a 2% council tax increase to ensure stability for day to day services in the wake of shrinking government grants.</p> <p>A financial reserve has been built up over the last eight years; this will be spent on areas to benefit Mid Suffolk residents including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bringing disused land back into use for amenity or other uses - Land for biodiversity and to meet Biodiversity Net Gain - Stowmarket town centre regeneration - New foot/cycle paths to improve connectivity <p><u>Housing budget:</u> in order to fund improvements to the Council’s housing stock, it is proposed that rents increase by 7.7% (in line with the Government formula – CPI+1%). Many tenants receive housing benefit or universal credit; due to recent increases in the rent portion of this, the majority of tenants will not see an increase in rent.</p>
Council Tax increases for Empty Homes and Second Homes	<p>The District has over 500 long-term empty homes. To incentivise bringing homes back into use, MSDC is proposing to increase the amount of Council Tax payable on long-term empty homes.</p> <p>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 1-5 years, 200% for 5-10 years and 300% for 10 years or more. Exceptions will apply – such as property under probate or properties undergoing major repairs. If approved, this will be from April 2024. (It also 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.)</p> <p>The Houses4Homes team can work with property owners to help empty bring homes back into use: https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/empty-homes</p>
Gateway 14	<p>The proposed Green Skills and Innovation Centre business plan was approved by Council subject to funding from Freeport East.</p>
New sports facilities	<p>MSDC has approved plans to allow the first stage of the Stowmarket Sports Health and Leisure Project. This includes a 3G pitch, multi-games area (MUGA), and a number of other facilities.</p>
Forest for the Nation	<p>A DEFRA competition has been launched (value £9M) for applicant authorities to bid to create a Forest for the Nation, inspired by the achievements of the National Forest. As a confirmed partner with Norfolk County Council, MSDC has joined early scoping discussions to develop an Expression of Interest in the first instance.</p>

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