

STOWLANGTOFT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

**MONDAY 20 MAY 2024 AT 7.15 PM
ST GEORGE'S CHURCH, THE STREET**

Present: Cllrs D'Lima (Chair), Bourne, Cuff, Marsh, Suggett and White. A Osman (clerk) was also in attendance along with District Cllr Bradbury and 3 members of the public.

- 1 **Apologies for absence.** None
- 2 **Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2023.** The meeting agreed the minutes of the 15 May 2023 meeting.
- 3 **County Councillor report.** A report from County Cllr Mellen was pre-circulated, copy attached.
- 4 **District Councillors report.** A report from District Cllrs Bradbury and Davies was pre-circulated, copy attached.
- 5 **Police report.** No Police report was received. Community policing newsletters are available at: <https://www.suffolk.police.uk/police-forces/suffolk-constabulary/areas/about-us/about-us/community-policing-team-newsletters/>
- 6 **Annual Reports from Village Groups:**

St Georges Church. Cllr White confirmed that the architects visit had recently taken place to look at options for creating a community space in the church; a report was expected in about 8 weeks. Minor breaks in stained glass windows were due to be repaired.

Friends of St Goerges. Cllrs Marsh and Suggett indicated that the group was looking to hold a summer fund raising event.

SpeedWatch. Cllr Cuff reported that the group of 9 volunteers had been operating for a year at 2 approved sites on a weekly basis. Last year over 200 vehicles were reported for speeds over 35mph. The work of the group seems to be having a positive effect on speeds through the village.
- 7. **Chairs Report.** Cllr D'Lima, as Chair, thanked his fellow Councillors and the Clerk for their continued hard work over the past year.
- 8. **Date of next meeting:** Monday 19 May 2025 in St George's Church.

The meeting concluded at 7.35pm.

D D'Lima

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Chair

Annual Parish Report – 2023/24

The work of Suffolk County Council during the past municipal year

Councillor: Andy Mellen

The dwastre North division (Badwell Ash, Elmswell, Finningham, Great Ashfield, Hunston, Langham, Norton, Stowlangtoft, Tostock, Westhorpe, Wyverstone & Woolpit).
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Suffolk NSIPs

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) are major infrastructure projects of national importance, and the majority of Suffolk's NSIPs are associated with the generation or transmission of electricity. The decision to allow an NSIP to proceed is made by the relevant Secretary of State, not councils, although the county council is a statutory consultee for many projects. There are a high number of projects in Suffolk currently, with more in the pipeline:

- Drax – a gas power plant on the former Eye Airfield
- East Anglia Three offshore windfarm is under construction
- Two new offshore windfarms, East Anglia One North and East Anglia Two, were approved by the Secretary of State in March 2022
- EDF began construction of Sizewell C nuclear power station in January 2024
- National Grid are proposing grid reinforcement works from Bramford to Twinstead, with a decision expected later this year
- National Grid's Norwich to Tilbury stretch of the 'Great Grid Upgrade' programme, a controversial pylon route proposed for construction through the middle of the county
- SeaLink proposals for an undersea cabling route between Suffolk and Kent is due to see significant onshore infrastructure at Friston, near Aldeburgh
- LionLink (previously known as Eurolink) proposes undersea cabling to link the UK with the Netherlands, with landfall proposed either above or below the Blyth estuary
- Sunnica Solar Farm, a 2,500 acre proposed solar development for Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk, has still not been approved by the government, with a decision due in April
- A new 750 acre solar farm, White Elm, has been proposed for Mendlesham in Mid Suffolk, with consultation due to begin in the autumn

Flooding in Suffolk

From end of October 2023, Suffolk suffered a winter of repeated flooding, most notably Storm Babet, when Debenham, Framlingham and Needham Market were particularly badly affected.

Suffolk's total rainfall during October 2023 was 117.9mm (4.5in) which the Met Office report as being 90% more than the average expected rainfall for the month. The drainage systems in the county were unable to cope with the volume of water. Suffolk County Council have committed an extra £1m for flood investigations to try and prevent future incidents; where usually there are only three or four such investigations each year, for 2023 the number is likely to be near 100 investigations.

The government offered funding to households affected by flooding, with many also able to access further money for preventative works.

RAAC/Condition of School Buildings

In September the council held a scrutiny session on the condition of school buildings, which was very timely as the news has just begun reporting on the number of schools with RAAC, some of which had to delay the start of term or close buildings due to safety concerns. RAAC, which stands for Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete, is a lightweight building material, cheaper than

concrete, which was used extensively in buildings between 1950 and 1990 but has a lifespan of 30 years. Nine schools in Suffolk reported they had RAAC onsite, out of around 230 nationally.

Councillors were able to question council officers from the council's Schools Infrastructure team about RAAC, the schools in Suffolk affected and the support they were being offered.

New Suffolk Fire and Rescue Control Centre

The Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) have recommended that the council leave the current control centre partnership with Peterborough and Cambridgeshire councils and open a new control centre in Suffolk by the end of 2024. This would create significant extra cost, but it was agreed that it was necessary for the safety of Suffolk residents as the Fire Service had significant concerns about the running of the joint venture, particularly a new IT system which had been significantly delayed. A new temporary site for the control centre was needed from December 2023, and work will now begin to find a more permanent site in the centre of the county close to major roads.

New Highways Contract

From 1 October 2023, Suffolk County Council entered into a new Highways contract with Milestone, following the end of the previous contract with Kier. The new contract promises better communication with councillors and Suffolk residents, and contains incentives for the new contractor to work efficiently – for example, undertaking other works needed in the same geographical area when they are called out. The performance of the contract will be scrutinised after 12 months to assess Milestone's performance and is for an initial period of 10 years, with the option to increase it a further 10 years.

At the same time, a new contract for street lighting was entered into with McCann. This contract is due to last for seven years.

Budget Meeting: Green, LibDem & Independent Amendments Declined

In February 2024, the Council's budget for 2024/25 was voted in. The Conservative budget proposed an increase in council tax of the maximum 4.99%, which breaks down into a 2% rise for the Social Care Precept and a 2.99% increase in general tax.

Council services have faced another year of spiralling demand and additional cost pressures, and the council's administration have had to draw £16m from council reserves to balance their budget.

The proposed budget included a 100% cut to arts and museums funding, with a temporary fund set up for 2024-25 using the remaining Covid funding from the government to allow some time for these organizations to adapt and find other sources of income.

It also proposed that all local archives and records be centralised to The Hold in Ipswich, a decision which has been vigorously opposed in both Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds, where communities want to keep their record office buildings in the area.

My group acknowledged the difficulty of the council's financial position and proposed a minor amendment – that instead of using all of the leftover Covid funding for arts and museums, half should be allocated to supporting young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), a service the Conservatives were planning to cut.

Funding for the Arts

The element of the budget which proved most controversial (and even reached the national press) was the Conservatives' decision to cut 100% of arts funding from April 2025. As mentioned above, their budget proposed to use the last of their Covid funding from the government to provide arts and museums funding for the 2024-25 financial year.

We proposed that £250k of the 2024-25 funding for arts and museums be allocated from the council's core funding, as this is an important distinction for arts organizations when they are applying for other sources of income. This amendment was declined.

The Conservatives backed down on the 100% reduction in funding from April 2025 onwards, and shortly before the budget meeting announced a £500k funding pot which arts and heritage organisations can bid for in the 2025-26 financial year. This could mean the funding for arts and museums is spread more thinly, but means more organizations are likely to benefit. As budget decisions for 2025-25 will not be made until the February 2025 council meeting, this decision is not yet ratified.

Ofsted/CQC Inspection of Suffolk SEND Provision

Suffolk County Council and its NHS partners who provide SEND services (the 'Local Area Partnership') were inspected by Ofsted and CQC in November 2023, with the inspection report being published on 30 January 2024. The inspection found 'widespread and/or systematic failings' in the county's SEND provision and is the second poor inspection result since SEND inspections were introduced in 2016 (the previous inspection being in November 2016). The Local Area Partnership had to submit a priority action plan to Ofsted and CQC by 7 March 2024 detailing how they would address the systemic problems rapidly, including improving the quality and timeliness of EHCP plans (previously known as statements of special educational needs) and annual reviews, improving communication with families and reducing school exclusions for young people with special educational needs.

As a result of the inspection, the two Cabinet Members for children's services and education at the council stood down, and new Cabinet Members have been appointed to these roles. A new full time and permanent Director for Children's Services (DCS) has also recently been appointed, who will start at the council in July.

Suffolk Devolution Deal

After much talk of devolution in the last few years, it looks like this may now happen in Suffolk – though first it has to be agreed by councillors at a debate in July.

Devolution is a process by which regions or cities in the UK can have greater control over decisions in their areas. The government agrees a deal with the area which gives them more freedom to make local decisions about how to spend government funding. This is due to happen in Suffolk from 2025 in areas such as transport and adult education. There will also be a £16m annual investment fund for economic growth, a £5.8m lump sum to regenerate brownfield sites across the county, and a £3m one off investment in retrofitting homes to make them more energy-efficient.

The devolution deal also means the leader of Suffolk County Council would be directly elected by the people of Suffolk, so every four years residents will have two votes, one to elect their local county councillor and the other for leader of the county council. The first election for the directly elected leader will be in May 2025, which is the next county council election. There could be problems with having an elected leader if they are from a different political group to most of the other councillors; the leader can choose a Cabinet and control the council's agenda, but without the votes in the council chamber they might find it difficult to get things done.

There is a consultation being held about the deal right now, and you can find out more about it and fill out the survey here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/devolution>

Libraries Consultation

On Tuesday 25 March, Cabinet reviewed the results of the recent consultation about the Suffolk library service, which is due to go out to procurement in the summer. Broadly, the members of the public who responded to the survey agreed with what libraries currently provided, including community and digital services, and the mobile library and home library services for people who

were housebound. Recent pop-up libraries in village halls did not score highly in the consultation and it is unlikely these will form part of the service in future. It is also likely that mobile libraries will run from smaller vehicles in future. The successful bidder for the new libraries contract is likely to be announced in November, with the new contract starting from June 2025. The contract will be for six years with an option to renew for a further six years.

Sizewell C Construction Begins

In January 2024, construction work officially began for Sizewell C nuclear power station on the coast near Leiston. EDF are building a two-reactor nuclear power station that will generate 3.2 gigawatts (GW) of electricity that could power the equivalent of six million homes. The development is highly controversial, not only for those opposed to nuclear power, but also to those in the local communities opposed to the upheaval and impact of the construction on the natural environment, the beauty of the coastline and the effect on tourism and transport routes during the construction period. The construction is projected to take between nine and 12 years, but in practice nuclear power stations often take far longer than planned to build – for example, Hinkley Point C nuclear power station, which began construction in 2017, is now predicted to be operational in 2036, 11 years after it was supposed to be finished.

The government and EDF still need to raise an extra £20bn for the project from private investors which they claim will be in place by the end of 2024.

Motions to Council

With the Conservative administration at SCC having a large majority, motions that our opposition group bring to full council meetings are usually voted down. We did manage to get one motion passed successfully during the year to May 2024, which was for the council to work with its partners to better signpost members of the public to benefits they may be entitled to. This motion was raised as a result of reports that over £15bn of means tested benefits are going unclaimed because people were not always aware of the support they could access to help them, even in times when costs of living are putting serious pressures on families all over the country.

Other motions the group had been unable to bring forward or were voted down included solar power 'Roofs before Rural', to ask the council to commit to prioritise solar panels on buildings and brownfield sites over solar farms on good quality agricultural land, and to lobby the government to reduce barriers to community energy projects. Community energy projects enable local people to produce electricity (for example, by solar panels on schools) to reduce bills, with any extra electricity sold to the grid, making a profit which can be reinvested locally.

In July my group proposed a motion to make it easier for communities to lower speed limits on rural roads where the safe speed for driving is clearly lower than the current National Speed Limit. The motion suggested that on these roads, a lower speed limit than 60mph would encourage many drivers to slow to a more appropriate, safer speed, thereby reducing accidents and making roads safer for all users. This motion was voted down by the Conservative administration.

We also tabled a motion on flooding in December, which among other things, proposed to increase the frequency of clearing drains and gullies around the county; however, the Conservatives proposed an amendment removing this recommendation and passed a weaker motion which did not include any changes to the usual schedule of drainage works.

District Cllr AGM Report Thurston Ward

Beyton, Norton, Thurston, Tostock, Stowlangtoft

2023/2024

Summary

The new Mid Suffolk District Councillors continued the growth of Gateway 14 with 1600 new job created and more to come in 2024. It was agreed to invest £18.7 million in building a skills and innovation centre on the Gateway 14 site. This will consist of office space and training areas. This will focus on providing a starting place for new businesses and the skills needed for the new 'Green Industries'. This will increase the skills level of our residents.

'Cozy Homes' initiative with £2 million available for residents as grants for insulation to make their homes warmer and lower their heating costs.

The Joint Local Plan was approved. We have a land supply of over 10 years.

2024/25 budget was approved. The MSDC part of the council tax will be increased by 2% which is lower than most councils in the country. The MSDC part of the council tax bill is about 8% with the rest to Suffolk County Council and the Police. The council also approved changes to the second home and empty home council tax charges. There are more than 680 empty properties in Mid Suffolk, which councillors are keen to see used to meet growing housing need.

Councils already impose a council tax premium on the owners of properties that are empty and unfurnished for two years or longer, but under new legislation, the councils would be able to target empty properties after just one year from April 2024 – and impose a levy on second homeowners from April 2025. Both councils agreed a new joint policy that will see the owners of properties left empty for a year or more paying double, with a premium of up to 100% from April 2024; properties empty for five years or more seeing their council tax bills treble with a premium of up to 200%; and owners of properties left empty for 10 years facing quadrupled bills, with a premium of up to 300%.

Cllr David Bradbury became a member of the Licencing Committee and the Council representative of the Network Rail East West Rail Partnership. He agreed to take a special interest in all matters relating to railways and integrated transport within the Thurston Ward. £100 k CIL funds was invested with Network Rail on a feasibility study to replace the Thurston barrow crossing. The final report is expected shortly. Council have agreed to set up a Community Rail Partnership with Anglia rail.

Following specific training support is now available for '20 is plenty'. Support was given to Tostock and the community wish to have a speed limit on Church Road. All £7500 locality funds were invested within the ward during the year.

Cllr Austin Davies accepted roles as Director of the MSDC holding company and CIFCO, a member of the planning committee and the joint Audit Committee. During 2023 CIFCO added the Stanton Co-op to the 21 commercial real estate properties. MSDC originally invested £100 million. 2024 valuation has a further reduction in value to £80 million. A capital expenditure plan was created during the year. It has been agreed that MSDC, in the next 3/4 years, will not be making any further funds available. Rental income remains strong, however, higher interest rates are like to reduce the net income to £1 million. Established a plan to upgrade the Energy Performance Certificate to at least a C rating by 2027.

Worked with Gatehouse/CAB and Thurston Parish Council to set up a system of the provision of food parcels for those that are eligible. Please encourage families in need to contact either Gatehouse in Bury St Edmunds or CAB in Stowmarket.

By the end of 2023 helped (along with many other folks) to obtain community access to the Thurston Community College fitness suite. In addition, various clubs can now use the sports hall

(pickleball) and the main hall. All £7500 locality funds were invested within the ward during the year.

Full report:-

MSDC meeting

First of this administration was on the 22nd May.

Mid Suffolk District Council welcomed the newly elected Councillors. Rowland Warboys was elected Chairman and Councillor Andy Mellen as leader. A six member cabinet was announced. Elections to all the appropriate MSDC posts was carried out. Presentation of long service awards was made following this meeting. A wide range of Councillor training was delivered. Cllr David Bradbury became a member of the Licencing Committee and the Council representative of the Network Rail East West Rail Partnership. He agreed to take a special interest in all matters relating to railways and integrated transport within the Thurston Ward. Cllr Austin Davies accepted roles as Director of the MSDC holding company and CIFCO, a member of the planning committee and the joint Audit Committee.

Mid Suffolk District Council held its July meeting in Elmswell at the Blackboure Leisure Centre. A motion asking the Government to think again about the overland route of renewable energy from Norwich to Tilbury was passed. Reduction position of greenhouse gases by Mid Suffolk District Council was presented. Our Chief Executive reported on the conduct of the May elections and outlined the plan to ensure that the errors did not occur again.

At the August MSDC meeting 'Pride in your Place' initiative was launched. All Parish Councils were invited to apply for grants to help improve the look of all of our villages.

Mid Suffolk District Council meeting held in September. The State of the District report was considered at last month's Full Council meeting, which set out an overview of Mid Suffolk. This is part of the evidence base underpinning the new Corporate Plan. Mid Suffolk Cabinet will be endorsing the engagement strategy for the development of the new Corporate Plan. It is hoped to engage with as wide a section of the district as possible, including some groups which seldom get involved, as well as businesses and Town and Parish Councils. The CIFCO business plan was agreed which included a reduction in payment to the council. Given the change in administration this included a thorough review of operations prior to the next business case being brought to Council to inform MSDC's long term strategies.

MSDC discussed the Electric Bus project at Cabinet this month. They hope to bring forward the ringfenced £820k and agree to work towards a 'grant' scheme to enhance existing rural transport provision with set routes.

Mid Suffolk District Council meeting held in October. MSDC asked all residents views on what matters most to each of our communities completing the survey which was available on the website until the 15th November.

Working with Groundwork East MSDC provided help to local businesses to reach net zero.

CIFCO completed the purchase of the Co-Op building in Stanton.

MSDC will be launched its 'cozy homes' initiative in November which will make insulation available to appropriate households in our District. This was the £2 million special provision set aside in our Councils 2023/24 budget.

It is for:

- *Residents of Mid Suffolk:* Whether you are a private tenant, a homeowner, or a landlord with fewer than five properties, this scheme is for you.
- *Financial Criteria:* Your household income should be less than £60,000 per year, with savings not exceeding £16,000.
- *EPC Rating:* Your home should have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating between D and G.
- *Council Tax Banding:* Your property should fall within council tax bands A to E.

It covers loft insulation (including loft clearance), cavity wall insulation, draft proofing and possibly also other forms of insulation where appropriate.

Council passed a planning guidance note on Solar Farms. Applicants are encouraged to work closely with local communities before making an application. Weight is given to food production and also landscapes, however, there has been no response to the request to the Minister for guidance.

Mid Suffolk District Council meeting held in November and the BMSDC Joint Local Development Scheme and BMSDC Joint Local Plan was passed. This sets out the planning policy for the District. Joint Local Plan, Part 2 which included the settlement boundaries for all our towns and villages, is being prepared.

There was no Mid Suffolk District Council meeting in December.

Mid Suffolk District Council's cabinet approved a full business case for delivery of the first work package of the Stowmarket Health, Education and Leisure Facilities (SHELF) project. They accepted a recommendation to put £450,000 towards the £2.4million scheme, with the remaining funding already identified from a range of external sources alongside Section 106 contributions. The initial works also include an improved pitch for Stowmarket Rugby Club, community running track, cricket nets and additional paths and fencing.

Mid Suffolk District Council met in January and thanked our local volunteers and residents for their work during the flooding caused by storm Babet. About 300 homes and 40 businesses were flooding within our district. It was agreed that the MSDC chair would write to all Parish Councils asking them to revisit or create their flooding plan.

A new council strategic plan was approved and focuses on four elements (housing, residents, wellbeing, and environment).

The siting of polling stations was confirmed. (Beyton – All Saints, Norton and Stowlangtoff – Norton Village hall, Tostock – Village Hall, Thurston- New Green Centre and Cavendish Hall.

It was agreed to invest £18.7 million in building a skills and innovation centre on the Gateway 14 site. This will consist of office space and training areas. This will focus on providing a starting place for new businesses and the skills needed for the new 'Green Industries'.

Finally, Council agreed to create a Community Rail Partnership with Anglia rail.

Mid Suffolk District Council meeting in February. The budget was approved. The MSDC part of the council tax will be increased by 2% which is lower than most councils in the country. The MSDC part of the council tax bill is about 8% with the rest to Suffolk County Council and the Police.

The council also approved changes to the second home and empty home council tax charges. There are more than 680 empty properties in Mid Suffolk, which councillors are keen to see used to meet growing housing need.

The councils already impose a council tax premium on the owners of properties that are empty and unfurnished for two years or longer, but under new legislation, the councils would be able to target empty properties after just one year from April 2024 – and impose a levy on second home owners from April 2025.

At meetings this week, both councils agreed a new joint policy that will see the owners of properties left empty for a year or more paying double, with a premium of up to 100% from April 2024; properties empty for five years or more seeing their council tax bills treble with a premium of up to 200%; and owners of properties left empty for 10 years facing quadrupled bills, with a premium of up to 300%.

Owners of 542 second homes in Mid Suffolk will see their council tax bill double from April 2025. The definition of a second home for council tax purposes would be a property which there is 'no one resident' but that is 'substantially furnished'. There will be exceptions, in line with Government policy, expected to include properties being actively marketed for sale or rent for a limited period,

houses going through probate, caravan pitches or houseboat moorings (I can't think of many houseboats in the area)

Mid Suffolk District Council has launched a new rural transport grants scheme to help provide passenger transport routes across the district, connecting local communities and reducing emissions, by providing viable alternatives to solo car journeys.

MSDC have approved a grant to New Green Community Trust for new doors at Thurston's New Green Centre - £10,000.00

Mid Suffolk District Council meeting in March had a presentation and discussion on the proposed devolution bill with a new role of 'Mayor of Suffolk'. It is currently unclear how this new position would work and whether it would bring new funds to our county or just redirect existing moneys.

Community Infrastructure Levy was reviewed and approved for the coming year (Cllr Bradbury was appointed to the committee) as was the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. Our council continues to focus our services and network with other agencies to minimise the number of cases.

Gateway 14 –

The building of the 'Range' warehouse was completed by the end of 2023.

The Range has confirmed the creation of over 1,600 new jobs by early 2024. This is a major distribution hub. They envisage 3 shifts running 24/7. They will be running electric buses between Stowmarket station and Gateway 14 (considering visiting surrounding villages as well). We are exploring options for extending the route to the surrounding villages.

A second company will move onto the site with their own dedicated building.

CIFCO

During 2023 the 21 commercial real estate properties were revalued at £82 million down 12% from £94 million. MSDC originally invested £100 million. 2024 valuation has a further reduction in value to £80 million. A capital expenditure plan was created during the year. It has been agreed that MSDC, in the next 3/4 years, will not be making any further funds available. Rental income remains strong, however, higher interest rates are like to reduce the net income to £1 million. Established a plan to upgrade the Energy Performance Certificate to at least a C rating by 2027.

Planning

DC/19/02090 Given the 10 years plus already approved housing supply MSDC decided not to give permission for these 210 houses in Thurston. Gladman took this case to a public appeal. The hearing was held on the 4th July in Elmwell (no venue was available locally). MSDC lost the appeal DC/19/02090 (Gladman) for 210 homes to the North of Ixworth Road, Thurston, however, this developer will fund active traffic lights at the Bunbury Arms crossing, install two 'Tiger' crossing points on Norton Road by the Thurston Community College and an area for skate park/pods.

MSDC lost the appeal DC/19/02090 (Gladman) for 210 homes to the North of Ixworth Road, Thurston, however, the council took legal action to overturn this decision. This case was heard in January 2024 and the outcome is pending.

MSDC lost the appeal (APP/W3520/W/23/3316136 - DC/22/0194) on 9 self builds off Ixworth Road, Norton, however, this developer will have to install a crossing point on Ixworth Road before first occupation.

Linden Homes Phase 3 application increased the number of homes granted under outline planning of 200 to a total of 261. Both Cllrs and Thurston Parish Council's objected to this application,

however, it was passed by the planning committee. These homes will have heat pumps and provision for solar panels.

The Planning Inspectorate have finished the inspection of the BMSDC Joint Local Plan part 1 and reported that it is sound, so it now needs to be formally adopted by Full Council. Planning policy officers are now able to focus on Part 2 of the plan which will include the housing allocations. All the documentation is available on the website <http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/jointlocalplan>

Supported the application for a new telco mast in Tostock (Ticehurst area).

- Joint Local Validation List Consultation - Monday 22 January 2024 to Monday 4 March 2024
Since our Local Validation List (LVL) was amended last year, our new Joint Local Plan (JLP) has been adopted and the LVL has undergone further revisions as a consequence. These revisions are such that formal six week consultation will be required, giving interested parties an opportunity to make any comments prior to the Joint LVL being adopted.

Please follow the link below for further information and to make comments on the latest Joint Local Validation List Consultation.

Target date has been re-set as the 8th May for applications DC/23/02429 and DC/23/02430.

Wellbeing for younger and older residents

MSDC have supported an initiative with schools across the district to improve the well-being of young people. Thurston Community College, Stowmarket High School and Stowupland High School now have Youth Link workers to help pupils access community activities. This work will also spread to the feeder primary schools. MSDC is also supporting Silver Sunday Campaigns to help tackle loneliness for older residents. Events are being held in Eye, Stowmarket and Needham Market to bring young people into care homes for sing-alongs, games and fun.

CIL applications

Supported Norton Village Halls application for £100K towards its redevelopment. Cllr Bradbury and Cllr Davies continue to support the expansion project for Thurston Library. Details of the £100 k for the rail crossing feasibility study follows

Network Rail.

Work has been carried out with SCC highways, Anglia rail, footfall work and investigation of the old tunnel and station building. The feasibility study should have been completed by 31st October 2023. It is still not available. Focus is now need on building a funding case to the Department of Transport. Thurston Parish Council's view on level of District CIL (which was supported by Cllr Bradbury and Davies) to be committed has been passed to the MSDC Cabinet.

20's Plenty

Cllr Bradbury attended a 20s Plenty seminar. Plenty of useful information is now available that will allow villages to request lower speed limits – for example, speed surveys should not be required these days as SCC has access to the “connected vehicle data” which shows the speeds for all roads in a parish also any new residential developments could be requested to have a 20mph limit applied as a condition of planning.

Flooding.

The worst flooding in the villages (that we're aware of) was the road between Beyton & Thurston but If any properties have experienced flooding damage, grants are available from MSDC to assist. Apparently, this is the wettest February on record, so some locations are suffering from flooding despite not being affected previously.

Gatehouse/Citizen's Advice Bureau

Worked with Gatehouse/CAB and Thurston Parish Council to set up a system of the provision of food parcels for those that are eligible. Please encourage families in need to contact either Gatehouse in Bury St Edmunds or CAB in Stowmarket.

A14

Supporting the Tostock campaign to have the village speed limit further along Church Road

Thurston Community College meeting

During a meeting with the College head, it was exciting to learn that Suffolk County Council have now acquired the additional land that is needed for both additional parking and new playing field area and the expansion/new school build.

By the end of 2023 TCC gave community access to the fitness suite. In addition, various clubs can use the sports hall (pickleball) and the main hall.

Autumn Tree/hedge planting

Can you please consult with your communities on potential areas for tree/hedge planting and then contact us with the details. MSDC supplied plants for the boundary hedge to the new Thurston cemetery. Cllrs helped plant these specimens.

Thurston

BMSDC Chief Executive Officer was escorted by Cllr Bradbury on a tour of the village which involved visiting to the various developments, the railway station with its Barrow crossing.

Arranged for a meeting to be held at the Parish Offices with the strategic Planning Officers. The objective being to have a clear agreement that any future developments meets the needs of our community.

Locality grants

We have now been able to support Norton village hall. All funds have been allocated before this financial year end. This link gives the detail for both Cllr Bradbury and Cllr Davies.

Applications from the 'Pickle ball club and the Thurston Parish Council to support the Local Bus project. Both David and Austin approved two applications of support from the Thurston Scouts for new recreational equipment.

We have agreed to support Beyton Environmental Group in their sowing of a wildflower mix on the pond spoil area of the village green.

We have agreed to support Thurston Primary School as their request for Pickleball equipment.

We have now been able to support Tostock village hall and the knitting/crochet club and Stowlangtoft variable speed signs and its village newsletter.

<https://www.babergh.gov.uk/documents/d/mid-suffolk/msdc-locality-awards-27-march-2024>

David Bradbury & Austin Davies

Mid Suffolk District Councillors

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