

District councillor's report, May 2013

1. New protocol for use of planning officer delegations

Mid Suffolk District Council has approved a new scheme of delegation with regard to planning officer decisions. This is because of the cost in terms of both time and money whereby certain applications have been brought before committee, only for the committee to come to the same conclusion as the planning officer in the first place. In other words, no real purpose is served by the matters being referred to committee, and overall planning performance of the planning department is made less efficient.

While the precise details have yet to be elaborated, the broad intention is to restrict the power of District Councillors to ask for applications to be referred to committee in accordance with the Planning Code of Practice or such protocol or procedure adopted by the Council. In other words, that the request is made on the basis of substantive planning grounds, rather than a broad objection.

This will not affect the existing exceptions, i.e. where applications take place on Council-owned land, where the Council is the applicant, or a Member or Officer has a personal interest in the application; or where the application is classified as major, e.g. a residential development of 15+ dwellings, industrial buildings with gross floor space of >3750 sq m, a renewable energy development.

2. Management team

A single senior management team has now been created across Mid Suffolk and Babergh, leading to a 50% reduction in management posts, and thus significant savings. We are now in the final stages of creating a single officer team to serve our two separate, sovereign Councils. The changes were completed following a 90-day consultation with staff.

The creation of a single officer team, will ensure that both MSDC (and Babergh) are in a stronger position to deal with the ongoing budget challenges we face, and to transform the way we work to deliver the targeted outcomes.

3. Waste & recycling

We hope to raise the number of subscribers to the garden waste service from the current 8900 to over 10,000.

The Suffolk Waste Partnership's textile collection scheme continues to do well, with 141 tonnes collected across the two Districts in the first 6-month period. This is out of a countywide total of 475 tonnes over the same period, which has been diverted from landfill. The Partnership is now turning its attention to recycling of plastic, of which only 50% is currently recycled in Suffolk, leading to over £800,000 in annual landfill charges to the county's tax payers. Their new campaign, via leaflet to all households in the county, will seek to remove the confusion about what plastic items can be recycled and where.

The Crispin family, which took over the Brome waste recycling plant last autumn, has been so successful that they were awarded the Greenest Newcomer award at the

recent Suffolk Creating the Greenest County Awards. They are achieving an 88% recycling rate, compared with 48% when they took over.

4. Mendlesham Biomass planning application

The public consultation is being carried out on the further environmental information provided by the applicant, and it is envisaged that it will be brought before the committee at the end of May or beginning of June, preceded by a site visit.

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