

District councillor's report, January 2014

1. Stowmarket Mill Lane

The draft development brief for the Stowmarket Business & Enterprise Park at Mill Lane was approved at December's Executive Committee. The land at Mill Lane is a key employment site with a mixture of B1 (offices and light industrial), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (warehousing & distribution). It will then be published for consultation.

2. Stowmarket Station Quarter

A new proposal to develop this area has now come forward, which includes detailed plans for town houses overlooking the river, together with outline plans for flats and a hotel. Details of the proposal can be found on www.prenticeroad.com, and display boards can be viewed in the town council's offices As part of the consultation process.

3. Waste services

Several service improvements are nearing completion after a long lead-in time, including an improvement to the current telephone system which will enable the public to have a better experience when they contact the waste services team. The current system is being upgraded to provide better access facilities to the public to enable them to receive a current message at point of contact, e.g. if there are delays due to bad weather, etc. There will also be a call back facility so that residents can request a call back if all lines are busy.

4. Cashless carparking at MSDC carparks in Stowmarket

The service, called RingGo, has been rolled out in nine council run car parks (in Stowmarket, Sudbury and Hadleigh) for an 18-month trial period as an alternative way for customers to pay for their parking.

As well as being more convenient in terms of not needing to have the right coins, the service also offers the option to receive a reminder text message when the owner's parking is about to expire and allows them to extend their parking stay on the go. As a result, there is a reduced risk of running over time and receiving an Excess Charge Notice. If visitors have been held up or need longer for shopping, they can simply top up their parking by phone. Simple instructions on how to use the RingGo service are displayed on the ticket machines where the service is available. To start using it, customers either have to call 020 3046 0060, visit www.myRingGo.co.uk or download the RingGo app to their mobile phone (or other relevant mobile device).

Users of the RingGo service do not need to display a ticket for the duration of their stay as the car park wardens can check who has paid using RingGo via

their own mobile devices. Customers who prefer to pay with coins can still continue to use the on-site ticket machines.

5. Pre-application site meetings

The practice at MSDC from mid 2005 onward was to strongly encourage pre-application site meetings with stakeholders. However, this has never been obligatory upon an applicant (nor could it have been), but has always been a matter of co-operation and negotiation in appropriate cases. Our expectation was that the applicant would invite neighbour stakeholders to such meetings while the Council would seek to invite Parish Councils where it was considered that they would be significantly engaged in the project. The aim was to address potential areas of conflict early on, but where a fair degree of consensus was expected officers would not press for a meeting.

Over time, however, and particularly since 2008, there has been a decline in this practice for various reasons, primarily due to disinclination on the part of applicants to engage in this way (perhaps due to the cost where agents were involved) and volume of pre-app / overall workload.

With the joint Business Case for planning now agreed it is expected that we will develop a new cost effective joint model for pre-application advice. This work will take place over the early part of 2014 and it is likely that a new joint practice will emerge. Given the time cost issues of such dialogue it is envisaged that we will need to reflect on the manner in which we engage with parishes and stakeholders throughout the process with much greater expectation of self service.

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