

District councillor's report, May 2014

1. EU Leader bid

A first stage application to DEFRA, to promote the Essex and Suffolk wool towns as economic hubs supporting the rural economy, has been successful. The wool towns "brand" evokes a sense of place around a significant heritage asset which links them and provides a magnet for attracting visitors. We will now receive £20,000 in funding to develop the concept, which will involve considerable community involvement, and we have a maximum 5 months to complete the task. The Leader programme will be worth some £2m in project funding, for an area covering most of Mid Suffolk and Babergh, as well as parts of St Edmundsbury and North Essex.

2. Mill Lane, Stowmarket

The developer has rebranded the site "Gateway 14". The Council has adopted the development brief as supplementary planning guidance. Officers and the developer are working with the LEP to draw in Growing Places funding to support early infrastructure investment to prepare the site for development. This is one of our best placed employment sites and will place us in a strong position for achieving our employment targets.

3. Superfast broadband

25,000 households now have access to superfast broadband in Mid Suffolk, and it is now expected that the whole District will have such access by mid-2015, i.e. six months earlier than previously envisaged.

4. Loan scheme for local businesses

The Council has been running a loan scheme in conjunction with the Needham branch of Barclays for over 10 years, which has helped a wide range of companies from builders to food producers to expand and grow.

We subsidise part of the interest payments for the first two years of the loan, and thereby help local businesses secure necessary funding. Over the last two years the scheme has helped 16 businesses access funding of £490,000.

5. Green Deal Communities Funding

The Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, of which MSDC is a member, has been awarded £5.7m by the Dept of Energy & Climate Change "Green Deal Local Authority Fund", which is designed to help local authorities, together with their underlying communities, to deliver the Green Deal to residents and support up to 2000 households to improve their energy efficiency, as well as helping local businesses to achieve Green Deal accreditation.

The award is significantly higher than the initial amount bid for, as it includes £2m for some targeted work with the private rental sector across Suffolk. Suffolk is only one of 4 applications nationally to receive this extra award.

The Suffolk scheme has been branded “Suffolk Energy Action” and information will be distributed to all households with Council Tax bills, followed by an ongoing publicity campaign.

The funding is exclusively to support work under the Green Deal framework, i.e. work by authorised Green Deal assessors, providers and installers. Funding is also available to support work where the owner/occupant makes a financial contribution to the costs of installation, which could be met by taking out Green Deal finance and paying in instalments via the electricity bill.

6. Mendlesham Biomass planning application

The Inspector has now decided that a public hearing is the more appropriate forum for the appeal, rather than merely written representations.

Charles Tilbury
01449 767857

cmw_tilbury@btinternet.com
07710 376555