

District Councillor Report – March 2021

<p>Neighbourhood Plan landmark ruling</p>	<p>Over the last few years, Mid Suffolk’s Planning Officers have seemed to treat made Neighbourhood plans with varying degrees of seriousness. Some Plans were quoted in decision making while others seem to be almost ignored. I serve on a planning committee at Mid Suffolk and have constantly fought to get these plans front and centre in the decision making process, because if communities take the time and care to make these plans at least we should make sure they are effective in the decision making process.</p> <p>Back in November 2020, we had a planning application in Fressingfield, were the officers recommended approval, despite the proposal being outside the allocations policy enshrined in the recently made Neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>The officers argued that the NPPF “tilted balance” be invoked and that he harms were outweighed by the benefits in this case, I argued that a made Neighbourhood plan meant that we had a up to date development plan for this village so we should refuse as it was not in line with the locally agreed policies in this plan.</p> <p>The committee agreed to seek legal advice, and I am delighted to report the advice came down on the side of the made Neighbourhood plan, linked to the 5 year land supply position meant the tilted balance would not be invoked, therefore the Neighbourhood plan was the primary document for decision making in this settlement.</p> <p>And this week, the planning committee unanimously refused the planning application citing the Neighbourhood plan as the primary reason.</p> <p>I do hope this landmark decision will mean Mid Suffolk will now fully recognize the status these plans deserve.</p>
<p>District Budgets</p>	<p>The District Council like all councils has now set its budget. The situation for Mid Suffolk is once again totally different to the County Budgets cost pressures. Yet again Mid Suffolk is projecting another increased underspend, the forecast surplus in 2021/2022 is over £3,000,000.00 with a current surplus of £848,000.00. we are forecasting over the next three years a cumulative surplus of £9,016,000.00. The Council has agreed to commit to over £4000,000.00 of extra spending in the next year, these areas of spending are yet to be determined. There was a long debate at the budget setting meeting, most of the debate hinged around why Mid Suffolk are increasing Council Tax while they have such large underspends and reserves.</p>
<p>Brown Bins</p>	<p>The brown bin collections will now be back in action next week, service users will be given a discount for the weeks when the bins were not collected. I thank residents for being patient during the service downtime.</p>