**District Councillor Parish Council Report**

April 2022

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| Budget & Buses | On the 24th of February the District Council agreed the budget for 2022/2023, this budget agreed a zero% increase in council tax for the district portion of the Bill, this was entirely predictable as the council had not managed to spend almost 1/3 of its circa £9,000,000.00 budget last year and in fact has had significant underspends for the last 8 years.  Our Group submitted an amendment to the budget which the conservative administration agreed to take forward, the amendment agreed that the district council will fund two electric minibuses to help tackle the shortfall in bus provision witnessed over the last decade or so.  These Buses are highly likely to be operated by existing Community Bus operators. And will help reconnect some communities that have had services drastically reduced in recent years. |
| Peer Review (s) | Back in November, The District Council had a Peer review into our planning service, a number of parishes and members of the public have expressed concerns regarding the experience of the current system being, challenging and at times a waste of their time, this situation needs to be improved. The review investigated how we might improve our practises, The report has now been published and the findings will be implemented, and recommended changes will now be worked on, to improve our service.  This month another Peer review has been conducted into our Communities service. |
| Mid Suffolk re-affirms its support for Neighbourhood Plans | Given the recent issues surrounding the Neighbourhood planning process and administration. our group proposed a motion that called on Mid Suffolk to re-affirm their support for the communities that are working on or who have made neighbourhood plans. Surprisingly most of the Conservative Councillors did not back this motion, but it was approved by the council due to the amount of administration councillors not attending. Mid Suffolk recently has had another member of staff join to help with moving these local plans forward. |
| Judicial Review | A judge has quashed planning consent for 210 homes in the village of Thurston following a two-day hearing at the High Court. [Thurston Parish Council had lodged a judicial review](https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/housing/thurston-parish-council-housing-legal-challenge-7078134) against Mid Suffolk District Council's planning permission for the Bloor Homes estate off Beyton Road.  The parish council alleged district council committee members were wrongly advised on the weight to be given to the Neighbourhood Plan, which did not allocate the site for development.  It also believed the committee was wrongly advised on planning balance and that the decision prejudices the Local Plan process, which has not yet been completed, and indeed has stalled.  The judge has ordered that the planning permission for the Bloor Homes scheme be quashed and sent back to Mid Suffolk District Council to be re-determined. This is yet another case of Neighbourhood plans being given too little weight by MSDC when assessing planning applications  This should mean that Mid Suffolk take more account of Neighbourhood Plans in future, although MSDC could appeal this decision with the High Court. Although Mid Suffolk are considering taking this decision to the High Court. This would be MSDC using public money to legally argue against a community owned plan. |

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