

# District Councillor Report: Elmswell Parish Council

January 2020

Locality grants	The deadline for applications for locality grand funding is now the end of January. Councillors need to process the applications in February.
Needham Lake visitor centre	Plans for a £600,000 visitor centre/cafe at Needham Lake have been approved. Planning permission was granted on 11 <sup>th</sup> December and 127 Trading company are the preferred tenants. Works should begin in spring 2020, and this will be a welcome addition to East Anglia's most visited free attraction.
Council tax fraud	MSDC Cabinet agreed a new initiative to issue new fines for Council Tax fraud on 6 <sup>th</sup> January. Alongside the penalties, councillors adopted a new protocol produced by Citizens Advice and Local Government Association for the collection of council tax arrears.
CIL expenditure	On 6 <sup>th</sup> January MSDC Cabinet agreed an application for CIL Funding for a new Sixth Form Centre at Stowupland High School outside of the normal bid cycle. An original bid for approx £1.2M was submitted during bid round 1, but this fell far short of the actual costs and at that time there was no planning permission. Following the grant of planning permission in October the bid was validated and has now been revised to approx £2.5M. Other bids which were received in Bid round 4 (October 2019) will be considered at the March Cabinet meeting.
Budget 2020/21	Members received a briefing on the draft budget for 2020/21. This draft budget was considered by Cabinet on 13 January and is on the agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 January; it is expected to be approved at full Council meeting on 27 February. New Homes Bonus for 2020/21 will be £1.612M, an increase of £232k over 2019/20 but is likely to reduce (possibly by 50%) in 2021/22. Baseline business rates will increase by 2%. Government propose a full business rates revaluation in 2021; a fundamental review of business rates is also likely. The net revenue budget is proposed to be £10M and the Capital Programme £12M, the latter includes a proposed further investment of £8.7M in commercial properties. It is proposed that there will be a Council Tax increase of 1.66%, this equates for a Band D property to £2.76 pa, 5p per week.
Housing Revenue Account	After four years of government-enforced reductions, the council is also proposing putting up council house rents by 2.7% - 1% above Consumer Prices Index. This will result in an average increase of £2.19 per week increase for tenants. Sheltered housing tenants also face an increase of £2 a week on their bills plus a 62p a week increase to their utility bills.
Neighbourhood Plans	Two more neighbourhood plans – Eye and Fressingfield, were adopted at the Cabinet meeting on 13 <sup>th</sup> January.
Planning applications	Planning application 19/03924 was discussed by MSDC development control committee on 8 <sup>th</sup> January. The application was deferred for more detailed highways information to be gathered. A planning referrals committee meeting has been arranged on 29 <sup>th</sup> January. The agenda has yet to be finalised, but it is likely to include a number of applications along the A14 corridor including Elmswell.

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