

# District Councillor Report: Elmswell Parish Council

March 2020

General Fund Budget 2020/21	The budget was discussed and agreed at the full Council meeting on 27 <sup>th</sup> Feb. The administration proposed a 1.66% increase in Council Tax (5p per week on a Band D property). The Government funding proposals for district councils were announced at the beginning of February, and MSDC are expecting to receive just over £4M made up of base funding, new homes bonus and rural services delivery grant. Total net expenditure of the Council is in the region of £10M so a further £6M odd is needed via Council Tax. The Council still has over £9M in reserves, some of which is to be used in specific projects, including another round of Member Locality Budgets and £500k for projects suggested by the Climate Change Task Group and an art trail in Stowmarket.
Housing Revenue Account 2020/21	Housing Revenue Account is separate to the General Fund. The Government are now allowing rents to increase by CPI +1% so this is what is proposed. This equates to a rent increase of 2.7% (average £2.19 a week). The Debt Cap has now been removed so Councils are now able to borrow funds for Housing without worrying about breaching the cap. MSDC have gone into partnership with Icen Homes to deliver a number of affordable housing development over the next few years. There is a commitment to retain RTB receipts and to increase borrowing moderately to fund such developments.
Opposition groups' alternative proposals.	The Green group and Lib Dem group have been working together on an alternative budget since November. Some of the ideas put forward were incorporated into the administration's budget, but we still didn't feel enough was being done to future proof Mid Suffolk. We proposed that MSDC should build some zero-carbon homes, and promote more EV charging points in our towns, encourage more residents to spend time in Stowmarket and increase resources for additional highways expertise in planning. This proposal fell.
Gateway 14	MSDC agreed to go enter a development management agreement with Jaynic Properties Limited to promote and develop the Gateway 14 site. The site currently has outline planning consent for B1, B2 and B8 uses. It is hoped that by entering into this working partnership the site can be promoted and developed in the near future. Part of the site was designated a Food Enterprise Zone, and hopes to benefit from low carbon heat and energy solutions.
Needham Market station improvements	Needham Market station is to benefit from a grant of £380,000 to improve accessibility to the Ipswich bound platform. The application was the result of a coordinated partnership approach between Greater Anglia, Suffolk County Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and the Needham Market Group.
Planning	BMSDC Development Management team won a silver award in the Best Use of Digital and Technology category at the annual iESE – Public Sector Transformation Awards 2020. This award recognises the innovative use of digital tools and technology in order to improve services for residents. The planning application process has been streamlined for residents and we have become one of the top performing authorities for timely planning decisions. Public searches for planning information leapt from 600K in 2017 to 1.3m in 2018, with the introduction of electronic case management.
Locality Awards	Helen and I have now spent our locality grants across both villages. There will be another round of locality grants in next year's budget. The following was awarded to Elmswell groups: Elmswild Flowers £500 Companions £1200 Friends of St Johns Church £600 Elmswell Library Friends £682 Wesley Project £4023

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