

District Councillor Report: Elmswell Parish Council

March 2022

Budget 2022/23	Mid Suffolk Council discussed the budget 2022/23 at the Council meeting held on 24 th February. Council tax is to remain at the same rate so annual Mid Suffolk proportion of the council tax bill for a Band D property be £171.59. Sheltered housing charges and garage rents also remain frozen at 2021/22 levels. The Administration agreed on the Opposition proposal to fund two electric bus services to enable residents to get to and from Stowmarket in a sustainable manner. The funding for this project will be from the Growth and Efficiency fund.
Housing Revenue Account	Mid Suffolk District Council tenants face a proposed increase of 4.1% to their rents, to cover inflationary pressures and allow investment in improving the quality of council homes. This means average weekly social rent would increase by £3.45 from £84.42 to £87.84. For affordable housing, weekly rents would increase by £4.99 from £121.34 to £126.33.
Thurston By-election	Following the departure of Cllr Wendy Turner there was a by-election for a new district councillor for the Thurston Ward. Green party candidate Austin Davies gained more than double the number of votes for the Conservative candidate and was duly elected. MSDC remains balanced with 17 members in each of the two groups.
Endeavour House office accommodation	Babergh and Mid Suffolk are reducing their office space in Endeavour House. Following COVID there is now more hybrid working and less space is needed so the space will be reconfigured at a cost of about £250,000 but should provide longer term net savings in the region of £675,000 over the next 5 years. This decision was made by Cabinets of both Councils. The Babergh decision was called in by their Scrutiny committee, but the original decision was withheld and the project will now proceed, and the new configuration should be in place in Autumn 2022.
Digital skills programme	Babergh and Mid Suffolk are providing virtual workshops for business owners to improve their digital skills, as part of the COVID recovery programme. The workshops are run by MENTA and are free of charge.
New affordable council homes	MSDC received the keys to 9 new affordable homes in Botesdale in February. These new homes are part of the current investment programme which included 68 new homes in the pipeline for this year in Needham Market, Haughley and Woolpit.
Thurston Judicial Review	Thurston Parish Council lodged a judicial review into the granting of planning permission for 210 new homes off Beyton Road, Thurston. The allegation that MSDC planning committee members had been wrongly advised on the weight to be given to the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan was upheld by the High Court.

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