

# DISTRICT COUNCILLORS'

## REPORT TO THE 2022 ANNUAL PARISH MEETINGS IN THE CLAYDON & BARHAM WARD

---

The 2022 parish annual meetings give us the opportunity to look back on the District Council year 2021/22 and set out briefly our thoughts on some matters, both district-wide and more locally.

### **Planning matters**

This year has fortunately been a much quieter year for new large planning applications in our ward following the hearing and approval (in whole or part) of the three large applications in Barham, Claydon and Whitton during 2020/21. We understand that Taylor Wimpey have now bought the land north of Barham Church Lane which has outline approval for 269 houses and that they will shortly be submitting detailed plans following community consultation on layout and design. The Ely Road, Claydon site for 70 homes has been sold on to a housing association who will be submitting plans for social housing on that site. During 2021/22 building commenced on the large Bellway site at Whitton and we have supported a number of very proactive local residents with their ongoing dialogue with the building contractors as construction work on site commenced.

There have, of course, been many smaller planning applications in the ward during 2021/22. Through our regular attendance and observation at parish council meetings, we are able to understand the thoughts and concerns of the relevant parish council and affected local residents on these many applications. We are always happy to meet up with any residents to hear their specific concerns to enable us to articulate their objections and worries during our discussions with the relevant planning officers. Where appropriate, within the planning constitution guidelines, we can 'call in' applications for them to be heard by a planning committee rather than have them being decided under officer delegated powers.

The completion of the Five-Year Land Supply Position Statement for 2021 shows from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2021 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2026, the district is anticipated to have a supply of 5,139 units. The Local Housing Need figure for Mid Suffolk is calculated at 513 dwellings per year plus a 5% buffer, giving a requirement of 2,693 units. There is therefore now a deemed 'surplus' of 2,446 units and a calculated 9.54 year land supply figure. This means we are now very much ahead of where we need to be in delivering perceived district housing need and it now provides much more scope to fight large new unwanted, speculative applications.

### **Gateway 14 and Freeport East**

The new 2.45 million square ft Gateway 14 business park was approved during 2021/22 and following the sign off of the various planning conditions, a ground cutting celebration event was held on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2022. We anticipate that there will be a stream of announcements of new tenants over the coming year given the site's 'Freeport' designation. As well as offices and warehouse logistic facilities, the site will include a Tech Hub 'Innovation Centre' making Mid Suffolk a destination for technology and innovation. The site's value and attractiveness to tenants have been enhanced since coming within the new 'Freeport East' designation.

## **Finance**

The council continues to run a surplus even though more money is being spent on improving the lives of residents than ever before. The completed CIFCO investment fund which is a diverse portfolio of commercial buildings across the country, taken together with our other investments, now delivers an annual income equivalent to two-thirds of our total council tax precept. This is one of the reasons why Mid Suffolk has managed to freeze council tax for the coming year while most other district and borough councils have raised theirs. Our reserves remain healthy and we consistently deliver in-year financial outcomes ahead of budget. In February 2022, the budget for the new year 2022/23 was approved by a unanimous vote at Full Council which in recent times is an unprecedented outcome.

## **Environment**

We have a strategic objective to minimise carbon emissions and make net-zero adaptations within the district. Our waste freighters now run on hydrotreated vegetable oil which reduces emissions and is far more sustainable in the supply chain. We are currently adapting our leisure centres. At Stowmarket, the leisure centre is being fitted with 500 solar panels generating 195kw and also an air source heat pump and all our centres are now on a green energy tariff.

## **Localities Grants**

Every Mid Suffolk councillor is allocated a Localities Grants pot of £7,350 each year, so for the Claydon & Barham Ward with its two councillors we had a total of £14,700. We pooled our grants and each application we have received has been supported on a 50/50 basis. In Ashbocking, we've funded a road speed indicator, in Claydon and Barham (which we tend to regard as a single conjoined village) we have part funded the new Kirby Rise play area and contributed towards the refurbishment of the play equipment on the Recreation Ground as well as some outdoor seating for the St Peters 60 Plus Club. In Coddendam we funded a new large fridge for the community shop as well as assisting the Coddendam Community Response Group with their ongoing expenses and website development. At Gosbeck, we've funded a bottle cooler at the village hall and at Hemingstone we've funded outdoor benches at 'The Hut'. Finally, we funded a new playhouse for the Henley Pre-School. During the year we allocated some of our funding to the new Picnic Site Charity in Barham but that funding is being carried forward into 2022/23 as we await the granting of a satisfactory long-term site lease to the charity. A similar level of locality grant funding (£14,700) has been budgeted for 2022/23 so please do approach us over the coming year if you are in need of some funding for local community projects. Its first come, first served.

## **YOUR MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILLORS in the Claydon & Barham Ward are:-**

John Whitehead : 01473 833279 or [john.whitehead@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:john.whitehead@midsuffolk.gov.uk)

Tim Passmore : 07947942539 or [timothy.passmore@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:timothy.passmore@midsuffolk.gov.uk)

The Claydon & Barham Ward covers the parishes of Akenham, Ashbocking, Barham, Claydon, Coddendam, Gosbeck, Hemingstone, Henley, Whitton