

Mid Suffolk District Councillors' Report – January 2022

Outcomes Framework

At a Cabinet Meeting at the beginning of January, the Council's Outcomes Framework was agreed. This will ensure we spend our money on the agreed outcomes for our residents and customers. Parish councillors and residents may find it interesting to see these six strategic priorities set out for clarity.

- All our residents and other customers are able to access high quality services and support.
- Families lead active, healthy, safe and independent lives; with children having the best start in life and adults managing their own health and wellbeing.
- We enjoy, value, enhance and protect our environment.
- Our places are known for strong growth in innovation and creativity; for being highly connected and sustainable with the best skilled workforce across the East
- All our communities are attractive, successful and connected places for people to live and work.
- All our residents live in affordable and high-quality homes that enable them to build settled, safe and healthy lives.

All these are high level strategic outcomes and at this Cabinet meeting we have now established a number of intermediate outcomes below every one of these, each having clearly measurable parameters. This report is not the place to go into all of these but all the detail are clearly set out in our Cabinet papers available on our website.

Further Substantial Funding for the Strategic Priorities coming from Reserves

As part of the budget setting for 2021/22 Members agreed to establish, or set aside four 'pots' of money, each of £1million, for investment in the economy, housing, wellbeing and communities to utilise, in part, the high level of Reserves accumulated at the Council. Over the summer, cross-party working groups were established to determine recommendations to Cabinet for that expenditure. Some of these are one-off projects and some are of the nature of 'pilot-schemes' designed to test and trial new initiatives. If these pilots are successful then they will most likely be adopted for the longer term in our base budgets. In total 51 initiatives have been developed, ranging from four-figure to six-figure spends over the next two years.

Budget 2022/23

Draft budgets for the new financial year 2022/23 have now been published. They have been through the Overview & Scrutiny Committee stage in early January and now go forward for further discussion in Cabinet in early February before being put before Full Council for a recorded vote at the end of February. The local government settlement from central government is only announced just before Christmas and there was a surprise of an additional £971,000 beyond the anticipated funding, including higher New Homes Bonus. We also now have significant income coming in from our CIFCO investments and other investment funds and these have proved to be very robust even during this Covid pandemic. The draft budget papers indicate that the Council will freeze its precept per Band D dwelling at the same level as 2021/22. This still leaves the Council in a position where its income exceeds its expenditure enabling transfers to augment reserves.

In our ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account which covers our council housing stock, the proposal will be, in line with government guidelines, to increase the council house rents by CPI + 1%. There are ambitious plans to enhance and retrofit our dwellings as part of our Climate Net Zero aspirations with an aim that all houses will be rated EPC level 'C' or better.

Tim Passmore & John Whitehead

(our contact details are on parish noticeboards and on the MSDC's website)