

Earl Stonham District Report Jan 2024

Empty homes and Council Tax	To incentivise bringing more homes back into use, MSDC is proposing to increase the amount of Council Tax payable on long-term empty homes. Currently these attract a levy of 50% on the Council Tax payable. The new policy will be levies of 100% for empty homes being left for one (to five) year, 200% for five (to ten) years and 300% for ten years or more. Exceptions will apply – such as property under probate or properties undergoing major repairs. If approved, this will be from April 2024. Additionally, it is proposed that second homes attract a 100% levy. If approved, this will be from April 2025 as a year's notice has to be given. There had been the opportunity to increase some of these from 2019 but the previous Administration did not take these up.
Greenhouse gas emissions	MSDC has published its Greenhouse Gas Emissions report for 2022/23 which shows a reduction in emissions against 2018/19 when the Council declared a climate emergency and committed to be carbon neutral by 2030. The leisure centres are the biggest cause of emissions. As the first reductions made are the “low-hanging fruit”, there will be a lot more work to continue this downward trend.
Flood Forum	There will be a public meeting to discuss the recent flooding - Debenham Community Centre Fri 26th January 1-3pm & 5-7pm. The forum will be presented by the Environment Agency and have specialists attending along with representatives from County and District Councils to form a panel for Q&A's.
Stowmarket sports facilities improvements	MSDC Cabinet is proposing approval of the full business case of the Stowmarket Sports Health and Leisure Project to allow the first stage, covering new and updated sports facilities, to go ahead. This includes a 3G pitch, special athletics track, multi-games area (MUGA), improving existing pitches and other facilities. If Council approves this, it is hoped work can start in 2024.
Home insulation	The <i>Cosy Homes</i> initiative launched with a £2 million fund and we are encouraging householders to apply. Eligible households can apply for free energy efficiency measures in their own homes, including if privately rented. Full details to be available via www.midsuffolk.gov.uk This initiative is in addition to a programme of retrofit for the Council's own housing stock. Also, particularly vulnerable households can continue to access help via the wider Suffolk scheme, www.warmhomessuffolk.org
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Locality Award	Your application for locality funding for clearing the ditch on the green will be a good use of the fund, and I will forward it to the locality officer.
	Mid Suffolk added 86 new Council homes in 2023 bringing the total housing stock to 3,373 homes. The councils have also secured a number of new homes through Section 106 contributions to provide a certain amount of affordable housing as part of each development .(Badwell Ash (5), Cedars Park Stowmarket (27), Laxfield (17) and Bramford (16))
Call for Sites	Following the adoption of the Joint Local Plan Part 1 Mid Suffolk Council is progressing with the production of the Joint Local Plan Part 2. The Council is inviting site submissions to be put forward for residential land use for consideration for future development. This is known as the 'Call for Sites' process. It is important to note, the Call for Sites exercise will not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for development and the submission of a site through the Call for Sites process does not give them any planning status.