

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT SEPTEMBER 2023

Pride in Your Place

Small grants are available to all Parish and Town Councils to improve the appearance, cleanliness and environments of our communities. Eligible projects include arranging community litter picks, sign or graffiti cleaning and the maintenance of public green spaces. Apply online at www.midsuffolk.gov.uk.

Staff at the council will be undertaking clean-up work that is more difficult for communities to do themselves.

Recruitment Fairs

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council have launched a new partnership with Jobcentre Plus to bolster the local economy. A series of recruitment fairs alternating between the districts will run until April 2025 to help local businesses to connect with appropriate candidates in their area. These free-to-enter events are funded by the government's Shared Prosperity Fund and the first event takes place at The Mix in Stowmarket on Wednesday 20th September from 10.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. To register for this and subsequent fairs go to <https://heartofsuffolk.co.uk> and search "recruitment fairs".

MSDC Council Meeting

At July's Council meeting at the Blackbourne Centre in Elmswell, Council Leader Andy Mellon spoke about the Council's plans for the short term. These include making homes more energy efficient, working to improve rural transport and a more active plan for Stowmarket.

Solar Farms

I attended the Public Inquiry into the Appeal on the Enso application – land to the east of the Channel, Burstall on 15th August following which the appeal was upheld by the inspector. It was a very uneven event as the developer had brought their barrister and panel of experts whilst myself, Samantha Main, a Babergh councillor and affected local residents could not bring such a recognised level of expertise. I expect that Parish Council members have seen the inspector's report. If not I can email it to you. I gave a report to the enquiry along the lines of what I would have said at the previous Planning Committee Meeting had the item not been taken off the agenda. The inspector was convinced that the "conversion of arable farmland to grassland for a period of 40 years, with sheep grazing the land" would result in improved soil quality. Also the "wider farmed landscape would prevail" in the face of this development,

It seems that the “free-go” planning application for this development is to be considered at the next Planning Committee meeting on 13th September. Myself and James Caston are invited to speak.

At the local Government Association Conference in Bournemouth, Cllr Mellon suggested that the Government should provide a clear national balance between delivering renewable energy, food production and protecting our landscape.

National Grid Pylons

National Grid launched its latest public consultation on plans for a new high voltage power line across East Anglia. There will be another opportunity to comment on the proposals next year before the planning application is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in 2024. Copies of all maps and documents produced for both 2022 and 2023 non-statutory consultation can still be found on National Grid’s projected website. I attended the consultation, at Copdock and have been given a large-scale map of the proposed route of the pylons. At the Council meeting a motion was passed objecting to the proposed overland line and favouring offshore installations.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The Council is set to review the current Carbon Reduction Management Plan with a cross-party group of councillors

Review of Local Elections

The Audit and Standards Committee (of which I am a member) is to produce an action plan to resolve issues arising out of reviews of the local election process. Another review will be carried out by the Association of Electoral Administrators.

Locality Awards

This year’s locality awards are open for applications. Any group or organisation can apply for awards of £250 or more. Please contact me for an application form.

CIL Bids

Regarding the bid for CIL funding M23-02 for the Somersham Play Area, a recommendation will go to Cabinet for approval of £62,776.17 from the Ringfenced Infrastructure Fund. Other funding sources are from Somersham Parish Council Neighbourhood CIL, District Councillor Locality Monies and an MSDC Grant.

Adrienne Marriott
Blakenham District Councillor

18/09/23