

District Councillor Report: Walsham Le Willows

October 2024

Crisis in Council Housing	<p>Mid Suffolk District Councils has renewed their call for urgent government action to end the financial crisis that is currently facing council housing.</p> <p>The Council resolved to write to Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner and local Members of Parliament to reiterate the need for immediate changes to the broken financial model that dictates England's council housing system.</p> <p>Across the country, many councils are facing significant financial problems due to years of erratic national policy changes. In 2012, councils had to take out a loan to buy their own properties, creating a significant amount of debt to be self-financed through rental income. At the time, rents provided councils with enough money to start repaying the debt and continue investing. However, the Government later restricted rent rises – a welcome measure for tenants, but there was no additional income for housing authorities to maintain investment.</p>
New affordable housing at former Stowmarket Middle School site	<p>Next month 24 families will pick up the keys to their new town centre homes, following the transformation of the former Stowmarket Middle School site into affordable rent council housing.</p> <p>Working in partnership with developers Pentaco Construction, the council has now created 38 high quality affordable homes at the town centre site, offering a mix of affordable rent, social rent and shared ownership homes at below market value to meet a wide range of needs.</p>
Stowmarket regeneration	<p>Further initiatives to regenerate the town centre include a £400,000 grant to improve the appearance of properties and a study to identify the need for hotels in the area. Funding has also been earmarked to improve connectivity to the town, while £50,000 will be available to support smaller projects.</p> <p>The investment follows the £1.5million which was committed to enhancing the mid Suffolk town centre in July. This funding will be used to bring under-utilised properties, such as empty shops, back into use.</p>
Reactive Public Realm Service	<p>Reactive Public Realm Service Public Realm are planning to create a small "Respond, Enforce and Clean Team" (called REACT) to provide additional cleansing and grounds maintenance capacity to respond to non-scheduled demand led tasks throughout the district outside of Stowmarket.</p> <p>(Stowmarket has a Rangers service carrying out the equivalent work which is part funded by MSDC.)</p>
Freeport East investment	<p>Over £980,000 is to be provided to businesses and education organisations in the East of England, courtesy of Freeport East's two new funds. Both funds offer vital support to small and growing businesses and will play a pivotal role in strengthening opportunities for new innovations and green jobs, particularly in high-potential sectors such as clean energy</p>
Bus service	<p>The temporary bus service has been very unreliable.</p>

	<p>A revised timetable was agreed from Sept 30th which no longer goes via Beyton 6th form or Thurston.</p> <p>No progress on service offering after Dec 27th. Suffolk County Council are currently not planning to pro-actively support the route and are that saying Simonds would need to bid for additional funding in competition with other operators.</p> <p>I have asked all contacts from survey to email SCC and copy Cllr Jessica Flemming.</p>
Footpath improvement from Wattisfield Road to Sport Club	<p>Final sign off has now been agreed and details of the work required should be signed off on Friday October 18th.</p>

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