

District Cllr Report Battsiford and Ringshall Ward

Barking, Battsiford, Great Bricett, Offton, Ringshall, Willisham

October 2020

Annual Council meeting

The annual meeting was held virtually on 24th September. Barry Humpheys was elected as Chairman and Paul Ekpenyong as Vice Chair. The Committees and Chairs were all agreed, with the Chairman using his casting vote to elect all the chairs and vice chairs from the Conservative and Independent Group.

Government consultations on planning

Changes to the current planning system is about changes to planning policy and regulation including how the housing numbers for each local government area are calculated (which would be upwards for Mid Suffolk). It also recommends changing the threshold of homes built (from 10 to 40) on a development before which affordable homes must be built. The Council's response to this consultation was discussed at the September Council meeting, following which the response has been amended by the Corporate Director in consultation with the portfolio holder for planning and the opposition spokesperson for planning, and has now been submitted.

Planning for the future is a White Paper that proposes major reforms to the planning system. These include reducing the timeframe in which a Local Plans must be created to a maximum of 30 months; and dividing land into zones for development, renewal (brownfield) and protect (green belt, national parks etc) then automatically granting outline planning permissions within the development and renewal zones. Planning Committees at a district council would therefore only consider design and not the principle of development. The White Paper also considers greater digitalisation, a different system for developer levies and a fast-track system for "beautiful buildings". The consultation closes on 29th October and the Mid Suffolk response to this will be discussed by a cross-party working group of members before being submitted.

Homelessness

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils have been awarded a grant of £100,000 to help cover the cost of temporary accommodation for homeless people over the winter. In Mid Suffolk there are few (possibly only 2) people sleeping rough but pre-Covid many others had been sofa-surfing or staying with elderly relatives. In order to protect vulnerable people, some of these people became homeless and have been accommodated in hotels. This will need to continue for some months at least.

Gateway 14

A new timetable was agreed detailing the next steps for the Joint Local Plan. It is now likely to be published in the autumn, followed by a six-week consultation period. The plan is not likely to be adopted before late 2021 or early 2022 leaving the Councils vulnerable to speculative development in the meantime.

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