

**Report to Cotton Parish Council
March 17 2019**

Budget Proposals

Mid Suffolk has set out its draft budget for 2019/2020.

The Ruling Conservative group agreed to borrow a further £25,000,000.00 to invest in commercial property via an arms-length company, this will bring the borrowing to over £50,000,000.00 that equates to over £650.00 of debt for every resident.

This year saw yet another underspend on our budget, this year it is circa £1900,000.00, £1000,000.00 of this money is proposed to go into a reserve, to mitigate against any unforeseen circumstances arising from our investments. This budget also agreed a 2% council tax rise. It does beg the question, if a 2% council tax rise raises circa £120,000 for MSDC, why is this needed if 158 times that amount was unspent last year?

Our group tabled an amendment to this budget, it called for the commercial investments outside of Mid Suffolk to be reinvested in delivering local housing, as well as moving front line staff to Stowmarket, and having planning committee meetings in the parish affected. The ruling group unanimously voted against this amendment.

PCSO's

Mid Suffolk has agreed to fund two Police Community Support Officers, these officers can be requested to attend only in the Mid Suffolk area, District Councillors can fill in a form to request an officer attend to an issue, this is not a substitute for ringing 101 or 999 for immediate action. This is aimed at plugging some of the gaps that have become obvious due to level of Police resources and the Policing priorities.

New Local Plan

Mid Suffolk has set up a panel of councillors to oversee the delivery of the emerging Local Plan, The first meeting basically went over the reasons for the current delays. The main reason has been the amount of responses to the consultations. One of the other reasons is the gearing of the various policy areas that need to align. I have voiced my concern at these constant delays given that Wickham Skeith put forward their submission for this plan over 18 months ago.

District Boundary Change

Due to the recent changes in ward patterns, Mendlesham ward no longer contains Cotton, it then follows that after the Local elections in May, I will no longer be your District Councillor. I will remain your County Councillor at least until the elections in 2021, but the Boundary commission are reviewing the county boundaries currently so who knows!. I would like to thank Cotton for all the support and help over the last 16 years, you are a very rare and special community.

Andrew Stringer
Mid Suffolk District Councillor – Mendlesham Ward