

## Mid Suffolk District Councillor's Report – Occold Parish Council, January 2024

<b>Carbon emissions reductions</b>	Mid Suffolk District Council (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 do to continue this downward trend.
<b>Fees &amp; charges for 2024/25</b>	For the annual review of fees or charges, MSDC has to consider factors such as inflation and the hours involved. The Council cannot charge for some statutory services and national Government sets others. Discretionary charges - such as vehicle licensing and litter bin emptying can be set locally - and for these MSDC aims to cover costs.
<b>Flood recovery grants</b>	<p>Further storms have brought yet more flooding, during the wettest winter in c130 years.</p> <p>Mid Suffolk District Council has been allocating the government's £500 one-off grants to homes that flooded during Storm Babet. Suffolk County Council is now working on allocating the grant of up to £5,000 to help households build in greater flood resilience. For more information on this: <a href="https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/property-flood-resilience-grant">https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/property-flood-resilience-grant</a></p>
<b>Tackling flooding in Occold</b>	<p>There is likely to be a need for long-term, ongoing efforts to reduce flood risks in and around the village. As part of this:</p> <p>a) I've shared a note on the flooding experienced during Storm Babet with our County Councillor and SCC Highways Community Engineer (copy attached). This is intended as a brief, non-technical record of the problems we experienced in the village.</p> <p>b) A community engineer visited before Christmas; I showed him the key problem areas, including the area by the school/village hall. A follow-up meeting is due soon.</p> <p>c) The village 'flood working group' met for the first time in December. We discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- starting work to map privately owned ditches and drains around the village – with a view to working together to make sure key 'pinch points' are kept clear</li> <li>- the need for advice on larger works that might help reduce future flood risk</li> <li>- plans to purchase equipment to assist in the event of future flooding</li> <li>- plans for an emergency flood plan for the village</li> </ul>
<b>Reporting blocked drains / flooded roads</b>	A reminder that flooding on public roads and blocked road drains can be reported to Suffolk County Council by any resident, here: <a href="https://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/">https://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/</a>
<b>Cost of living crisis: Winter support</b>	<p>MSDC has helped to deliver a number of activities over the winter aimed at supporting residents through the cost of living crisis. This included social activities for families in receipt of free school meals over the holidays, plus funding for 'warm rooms' (intended to tackle both social isolation and provide warm spaces for people to meet).</p> <p>MSDC is also investing £2m via its <i>Cosy Homes</i> scheme, to help more residents take energy saving measures that will reduce carbon emissions and help keep heating bills down. To apply: <a href="https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/mid-suffolk-cosy-homes">https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/mid-suffolk-cosy-homes</a></p> <p>This is in addition to a programme to retrofit the Council's own housing stock. Also, particularly vulnerable households can continue to access help via the wider Suffolk scheme, <a href="http://www.warmhomessuffolk.org">www.warmhomessuffolk.org</a></p>
<b>Planning: Adoption of Joint Local Plan Part 1</b>	Part 2 of the new Joint Local Plan (JLP) – which sets out a planning framework over the period to 2037 – is scheduled to be approved by end-2026. The timetable can be found here: <a href="https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/joint-local-plan">https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/joint-local-plan</a>
<b>Call for land to support nature recovery</b>	MSDC are now working with The Woodland Trust on ways to increase tree cover in the District. The Council is already actively planting more trees on land it owns, and is now reaching out to landowners who may have areas that could be planted or improved for nature. Of particular interest is land of low agricultural value, and land that could link existing natural habitats. If interested, please let me know.