

District councillor's report, February 2013

1. Next year's budget

It is proposed that, despite further reductions in Government funding, Mid Suffolk will be able to freeze Council Tax again next year. In addition, it plans to use additional money set aside from the New Homes Bonus to support growth, economic generation and its strategic priorities. Part of this involves proposals to create a £200,000 community fund for town and parish councils.

At the same time, however, Mid Suffolk has had to find yet further savings (of £1.3m) and reduce costs again next year. This is on top of savings of nearly £4m that have been made over the last four years.

Unfortunately, the financial challenges are set to continue, with further big reductions in Government funding announced for the next two years at least. Despite being on target to deliver at least £2m of annual savings from integrating staffing structures and service delivery with Babergh District Council by 2015/16, even more savings will be needed.

It is very disappointing that rural district councils have, once again, fared badly in bearing the brunt of Government funding cuts, with Mid Suffolk suffering a further 6% funding reduction in 2013/14 and an indication that there will be a further cut of nearly 13% in 2014/15.

This will result in a total cut of 44% over 4 years - equivalent to a loss of income of around £2m a year - and we are strongly urging the Government to reconsider the amount of money rural councils like Mid Suffolk receive compared to urban areas

2013/14 will, therefore, be very much a transitional year with the Budget being realigned and resources reallocated during the year to meet Mid Suffolk's strategic plans and priorities going forward.

2. Voluntary litter pickers' event, Needham Market, March 14

As a thank you to our growing band of litter pick volunteers representatives are being invited for tea and cake between 2 and 4pm in the Dove Room at MSDC offices in Needham Market. Our volunteers come from all parts of the district and might be part of a litter picking group or an individual who looks after "their patch" on a regular basis.

In conjunction with their community work Asda Stowmarket, who have a group that litter picks for us, have kindly agreed to supply us with some cakes for the event and we are in the process of asking other local companies for sponsorship.

Cllr Barker has agreed to fund the purchase of some vouchers for us to present by way of a name from the hat raffle and it may be that we have some other prizes that can be awarded on the day (both Arco, who supply workwear, and The Helping Hand Company, who supply litter pick equipment have indicated that they will be able to assist us).

In an attempt to further increase our volunteer bank we will be offering some vouchers to the existing volunteer who manages to obtain the highest number of new recruits. The event will also give us the ideal opportunity to talk to people, who get involved at a local level, to find out their needs and aspirations for the future.

Volunteers, groups and town and parish clerks will be contacted over the next few weeks to spread the word however if there are groups or individuals who are not registered with the District Council and who would like to attend please let Sarah Carter know.

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