

## District Councillor Report February 2026

The latest MSDC meeting took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February. There were three main items, as per below.

- Firstly the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan was presented, explained and some debate ensued although there weren't any contentious issues here. The Council is obliged to maintain a 30 year plan. There is a legal duty to ensure that the HRA remains solvent. The Business plan was passed without any problems. The next few years will present with difficulties concerning keeping the finances on an even keel. There is a feature called 'rent convergence'. This allows for additional rental increases in social housing that are presently below 'formula rent'. To continue receiving this money clearly would help out improving the financial environment of Council Housing for years to come. This will presumably continue but we won't know until the end of January as was assumed at the MSDC meeting. As I'm writing this (4/2/26) I haven't been able to find out what has happened so far, may be nothing at all. Before we have our Parish Council Meetings I will have made further enquiries. Without that money the long-term viability of the business plan will be in doubt.
- Secondly, there was a motion presented by Councillor Daniel Pratt asking for the Council to write to the Government urging for stronger regulation re sewage sludge spreading on arable fields. Defra is presently working on a review but in the meantime farmers ought to be alerted to the dangers of spreading this matter on their fields. Stronger regulations aimed at ending the present practices of chemical producers to mix their effluent sludge with the sewage sludge emanating from water companies. An amendment was accepted highlighting the need for issuing advice to producers on how to handle their problematic sludge without resorting to paying water companies. This motion was passed unanimously.
- Another motion was tabled by Councillor Whitehead asking for the Council to undertake investigations regarding the feasibility for future revenues from the Gateway 14 to be used specifically for those living in what is still Mid Suffolk even after the planned restructuring into Unitaries. The Council was not asked to make any actual decision on the matter. After a good debate ( good in the sense of absence of any acrimony) the motion was rejected. I recall there were 7 votes in favour.
- The Leader, Andrew Mellen, announced that a decision re one or three Unitaries is still expected to be made public in March. Also, given that a Judicial Review is underway, the Council continues with the normal preparations for Local Elections in May. The outcome of the review by the High Court is expected to be known 19-20/2.
- On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February there was an online presentation on Council Spending including the downsizing of the 'Government Revenue Support Grant', the RSG. Roughly 3,3% income reduction per year. There is also a 'Transition protection Grant'. This will totally cease after 28/29. For that financial year there will be £3,6 million less available to spend. Spending cuts and tax hikes are clearly on the cards. The tax base will increase somewhat but that mitigation likely won't ease a lot of the pain. Generally speaking rural areas are worst hit and it seems Suffolk in particular. The funding for spending in 28/29 will amount 76% of the 24/25 level. Funding per head in rural areas will amount to 40% less per head than in urban areas. A graph on display gave a visually stunning insight. Before these figures emerged there was a consultation with District Councils, instead of the standard 12 weeks we were only given the period over Christmas and New Year,

comprising 17 working days. So what's new under the sun one might think. The methodology has been shrouded in mist and it is far from clear how the government has calculated all the figures in the documents. The fact that rural areas are more costly when delivering services simply because much longer distances has not been taken into account. There is indeed a lot more to say about this but I will finish here.

Best Wishes,

Yours Sincerely, Anders Linder