

## District Councillor Report March 2026

On February the 26<sup>th</sup> the MSDC meeting took place. Most of the time was taken up with different matters related to future finances. The next MSDC will be on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March and in April there'll be none because of the Elections on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May.

- The Leader, Andrew Mellen, announced that the preparations for the County Council elections in May are well on track. It's worth mentioning that elections are organized by the District Councils, not by the County Councils. There will be new rules on the safety for litter pickers along roads, particularly in the light of a fatal accident on one of the A roads. The DC has firmly expressed a demand to halt the progress of the Norwich to Tilbury pylons scheme and to reassess the plans. This needs to include underground and off shore alternatives.
- On one matter there was debate, on one aspect concerning the General Fund Budget and Medium Term Financial Position. The forecast for 26/27 amounts to a surplus of £3.38 million. Our reserves in April this year will amount to over £50million. In April 2023 the reserves were at £21,6 million. A lot of well warranted spending is planned to take place but even so the reserves are predicted to be £21,17 million by March 2031. In the budget the Cabinet proposes to increase taxation by the maximum 2,99%. Cllr Whitehead(Independent), put forward an amendment proposing to freeze the District Council tax for 26/27. I seconded that amendment. With ample reserves and a healthy surplus I simply found any tax increase incomprehensible and indefensible. This not least in the context of pressures on the cost of living and increases in County Council tax (4,99%), Police and Crime Commissioner (5,2%) and Parish/Town Councils(6,4%). Besides we have from the government frozen thresholds for taxation and untenable costs regarding repayment of student debt, to mention but a couple. During the debate it emerged that one reason for the increase would be a fear of the government taking a jaundiced view of Councils not increasing the tax, potentially resulting in decreased government funding. Also a discernible fear of what the future might hold. Pointing out that the proposed freeze was for one year only didn't help and the proposed increase went through with a substantial majority as did the entire budget. Apart from this I found the budget well thought through.
- The Housing Revenue Account for 26/27 and 30 year Business Plan was the next item. There was very little debate on this matter, the presently predicted deficit turns out to be somewhat reduced and for 30/31 a modest surplus is forecast.
- The Joint Capital Investment and Treasury strategy was presented, nothing controversial emerged. One interesting phrase in the papers reads 'basis that the Councils will be going concerns until **at least** March 2028'.
- Today, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March, there was a briefing for opposition Councillors. Not anything much to put into this report. The Rural Transport Grant pilot scheme will come to an end in August, this will be evaluated and future plans will be defined as well. The CIL expenditure program for March was presented, 3 items, two for playgrounds and one for finishing the work on a number of scout huts. For instance, a play area in Wetherden was awarded £20 000. Robert talked about 'Neighbourhood Development Planning support'. My understanding was that if more land could be made available some money could be given to Parishes to help out. Anyone wanting to find out more may find it useful to contact Robert Hobbs. At the Meeting in Stradbroke I will update about the New Street Close carpark.

Yours Sincerely,

Anders Linder