

District Councillor Report for Bramford March 2022

The Budget

The General Fund Budget 2022/2023 and Four-Year Outlook was approved unanimously Full Council on the 24th of February. Council tax charged by Mid Suffolk will be frozen, with the ambition to continue freezing in the next years. It includes an addition to run 2 electric buses to hopefully bridge any gaps in service. There is a lot of debate in the council over then routes and strategy this service should take.

.

The HRA Account

The administration approved a 4.1% increase in council house rent. This is to deal with a difficulty in funding the HRA account, it must be ring fenced and cannot be subsidised. Much debate has been generated by this issue and the rules that apply to it. The opposition stated a loop hole that may mean that the council can plant flowers on the properties, but obviously this does not help residents that are struggling although there is benefit. The council rents are still very low compared with private rents, but unfortunately a large percentage of tenants still rely on the discounts and in many cases have the rent paid for them.

Food Banks

A report from Citizens Advice states that Mid Suffolk's food banks have reported a doubling of demand since before the pandemic. The customers referred were mainly single people there has been an increase in families, 43% of the total were disabled or had a long term health issue. Also most reasons were problems with benefit claims and debt. Mid Suffolk will continue to assist the food banks with more provision being added and also fund the CAB around half it's cost of service. There will only be more problems as this seems to be a nationwide issue and energy prices are behind a lot of it post Covid. We will continue to try to ease food poverty with the many schemes and education projects we are involved in.

Fitzgerald Road

As you are all well aware the reserved matters gets to committee on Wednesday, I hope to be get to the meeting on Monday in good time to discuss the design with you. I have a Full Council meeting that evening, but should be along as soon as I am out of there.

James Caston District Councillor for Bramford