

# District Councillor Report for Bramford April 2024

## Audit committee fraud report

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of March I stood in on an Audit and Standards meeting. The main business was the annual report on corruption. There was much of the standard money laundering issues and how things are reported, but there was also a dismissal for unprofessional conduct and private use of Council equipment and a review of operational working practices. Also a man pretended to be terminally ill in an attempt to trick the council into providing a larger four-bedroom home, but his deception was uncovered when officers became suspicious of a forged doctor's letter and an alleged misappropriation of a CIL grant to a charity, that was cleared.

## Devolution

We had a short debate on devolution in March, there is a difference of opinions on whether the devolution deal is a good one or not. It is SCC led and will mean £500m coming in over 30 years, it includes a £9.4m adult education budget, 2x £250,000 a year transport plan and £5.8m for brown field sites. I feel this would be a good thing for the county and this would be the first stage of many. Manchester is on its 7th deal. Mid Suffolk will send comments to SCC and hope to collaborate more if required over the coming months.

## Community Infrastructure Levy Expenditure Framework Review

The CIL framework has now completed its 6<sup>th</sup> review. I sat on the working group where we did six sessions in 2 weeks each one was the best part of an evening. We looked at what works and what needs to be changed here is the summary.

1. **Use of District CIL for Sports Clubs, Tennis, and Cricket Clubs:**
  - District CIL can be used for pavilions and extensions.
  - Community User Agreement required before CIL Bid determination.
  - Limitations: Maximum £100,000 or 75% of eligible project costs.
  - Not appropriate for Golf facilities due to profit motive.
2. **Use of District CIL for Community Shops and Cafes:**
  - Can be used for extension/alteration/improvement of publicly owned buildings.
  - Non-profit organizations need to submit a business case.
  - Investment details and financial accounts required.
  - No for-profit elements allowed in affected space.
3. **Community Pubs:**
  - Not eligible for District CIL due to being classified differently from infrastructure.
4. **Car Park Proposals:**
  - Statements required regarding EV charging points and cycle provision.
5. **Church Funding:**
  - Churches can apply for CIL with compelling evidence of community involvement.
  - Repairs and maintenance not eligible for funding.
6. **Review Process:**

- Review of completed projects for community benefits.
  - Collaboration to resolve identified problems.
7. **Library Improvements/Extensions:**
    - Funding possible through CIL Bids, subject to housing growth evidence.
    - Design costs wrapped up in final funding application.
    - New library provision sought through s106 funding.
  8. **CIL Bid Offers and Claims:**
    - Improved communication with bidders.
    - Review of eligible and non-eligible costs.
  9. **District Council Infrastructure Projects:**
    - Funding possible up to 100% for District Council projects.
  10. **Early Years Settings:**
    - S106 contributions sought for new buildings.
    - District CIL can support extensions of existing schools.
    - Not for privately run ventures.
  11. **Thresholds and Funding for Infrastructure Bids:**
    - Retention of current thresholds: Maximum £100,000 and 75% of eligible costs.
  12. **Continued Funding for Walking/Cycling and Footpaths:**
    - Pilot period extended with 100% District CIL funding.
    - Review of progress and outcomes.
  13. **Encouraging Spending of CIL Monies:**
    - Proactive approaches towards expenditure.
    - Focus on capital project workplans and Neighbourhood CIL spending.
  14. **Agreement to Keep CIL Expenditure Framework Under Review:**
    - Review suggested during Bid round 14 (Oct24) for adoption before Bid round 15 (May 25).

I will stay a member of the panel for ongoing work.

## **Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024**

This was also adopted in March and continues the fantastic work that the council are doing already for the people we know about. Early intervention is the key, helping people hang on to their houses or rapidly rehoming people as soon as possible. We have early intervention officers and a triage team to identify people at risk early on. The private rented sector is crucial to achieving, this especially Central Suffolk Lettings. Rough sleeping in the district is relatively low and hopefully a large part is because of the work done by the council.

The new strategy supports better links with the different teams, CSL and the Citizens Advice.

Protocols formalising early intervention with probation, prisons, hospitals, adult care services and young people's services.

Early Intervention Hubs for face-to-face meetings.

Domestic abuse housing alliance accreditation and a fast track referral system amongst other improvements.

## **Fisons**

I have been told that the viability assessment should be done by July, I do not expect it to be done this soon but hope to be surprised. It apparently will cost £50,000 and covers everything that would be questioned by a buyer and a lot of planning issues that could potentially put a buyer off, there is still some will to buy the site but I will know more when the work has been done.

## **Stowmarket By-election**

A councillor for Mid Suffolk has resigned so residents in the Stowmarket Chilton ward will be able to vote for a new councillor as well as a Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May.

Kind regards

Cllr James Caston