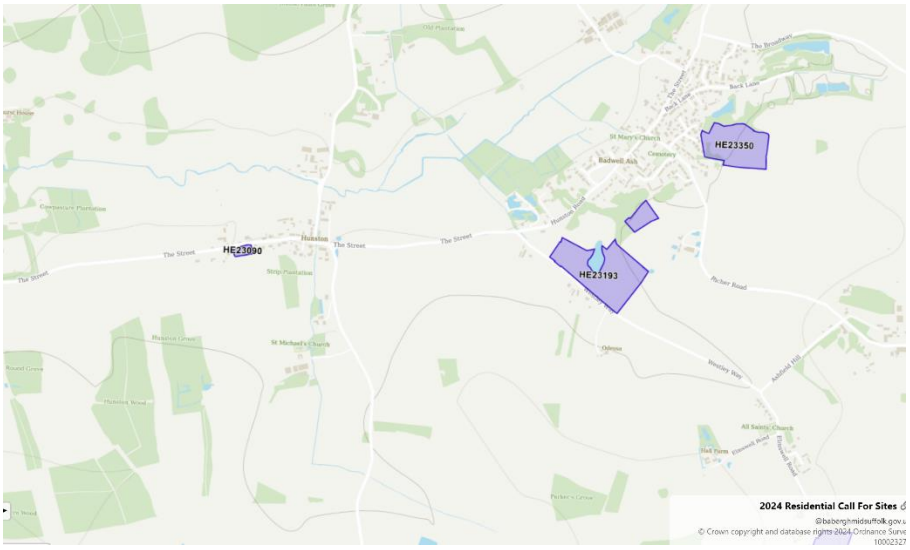
District Councillor Report: Hunston Parish Meeting

October 2024

TAXATION	
Mid Suffolk District Council Council Tax	Mid Suffolk District Council raised council tax by 2% increase to ensure financial stability for day-to-day services in the wake of shrinking government grants. For every £ on your Council Tax bill only 9p goes to Mid Suffolk. Note: The County Council increased Council Tax by 4.99%.
Council Tax increases for Empty Homes and Second Homes	To incentivise bringing more homes back into use, MSDC has increased the amount of Council Tax payable on long-term empty homes and second homes.

PLANNING	
Call for sites	There is a mistaken belief that Mid Suffolk Council has all the decision making power when it comes to planning policy. Local voices are not always represented strongly enough in the planning process. In order to rectify this Mid Suffolk has been working on a Local Plan which gives more control over development in the District. The Council has invited site submissions to be put forward for residential land use for consideration for future development. This is known as the 'Call for Sites' process. It is important to note, the Call for Sites exercise will not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for development and the submission of a site through the Call for Sites process does not give them any planning status. Please see submissions in the Hunston area – one site in Hunston itself. 
Local listed building consent	There is a plan to adopt a local listed building consent order and local development order. If approved this will potentially enable owners of listed buildings to apply specific energy efficiency measures to their homes without onerous planning requirements.
Supplemetary Planning Documents	MSDC has prepared three draft Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) relating to Biodiversity and Trees; Housing; and Intensive Livestock and Poultry for consultation. These can not be mandatory documents but are guidance for developers.

REFUSE COLLECTION / RECYCLING	
Extended recycling	Mid Suffolk has been lagging behind on recycling for too long. We are not in the top 200 councils for recycling. The new improved bin service will empty food waste bins and a recycling bin from households every week. Recycling will be improved massively leaving only a small amount of residual waste which will be collected every three weeks. This change is driven by the previous government's legislation and built upon by the MSDC to push us into the top of the national recycling league table. So, there will be: • Food waste – weekly • Recycling paper and card – every 3 weeks • Recycling other materials including glass – every 3 weeks Refuse collection – every 3 weeks

HOUSING	
New Council Houses	Mid Suffolk added 86 new Council homes in 2023 bringing the total housing stock to 3,373 homes. The new properties include several built on repurposed council land. The former Stowmarket Middle School (4 homes and 38 planned) and Needham Market Middle School (17 homes) sites were bought from Suffolk County Council when the schools closed, with the brownfield sites then earmarked for social housing. The councils have also secured a number of new homes through Section 106 contributions to provide a certain amount of affordable housing as part of each development .(Badwell Ash (5), Cedars Park Stowmarket (27), Laxfield (17) and Bramford (16))
Retrofit of Council Houses	Mid Suffolk has secured a grant of £800k and will add over £1m of its own money for a retrofit programme for Council houses covering insulation, ventilation, solar panels and double glazing.
Suffolk authorities join forces to urge government to save council homes	All the Suffolk District Councils have joined forces with more than 100 others in England to call for the new government to save council homes. The coalition's warning that unless more is done soon, most council landlords will struggle to maintain their existing homes adequately or meet the huge new demands to improve them, let alone build new homes for social rent.
Homelessness Strategy	The council wants to aspire to go beyond the minimum required provision, and hope to provide a bespoke person-centred and proactive service. MSDC is investigating extending its temporary accommodation provision.

OTHER	
Gateway 14 Business Park	Gateway 14 is a business park on the edge of Stowmarket owned by Mid Suffolk Council and is part of Freeport East. It will create several thousand jobs. We have been trying to focus the development on Green jobs and in August work started on a distribution and assembly base for Bauder (Green roofing company). Another company in the sustainable building sector, Assan Panels, who specialise in environment building panels are also locating to Gateway 14. We have also secured over £16m to develop a skills and innovation centre for the district focusing on high tech companies and development of Green skills.
New sports facilities in Stowmarket	Work has started on the Stowmarket Sports Health and Leisure Project covering new and updated sports facilities. This includes a 3G pitch, special athletics track, multi-games area (MUGA), improving existing pitches and other facilities.
Bus service	Temporary bus service The temporary service up to Dec 27th has been beset by service failures and lateness. Bus service after Dec 27th We now need to get Suffolk County Council on board to support the service longer term.

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