

# Parish Report – January 2025

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## Happy New Year

### Devolution

Mid Suffolk is looking at proposals in detail of any devolution plans. This should be an opportunity for meaningful public sector reform in order to make a real difference to the quality of life of our residents, not just a redrawing of council boundaries. However, the detail is important to ensure that local communities are not disadvantaged.

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### National Planning Policy Framework Announcement

Mid Suffolk is committed to good quality, affordable homes in vibrant communities. More than 1000 new homes were delivered in the district in the last financial year, 291 affordable. The joint Local Plan adopted in 2023 sets out the need for 535 homes a year.

Time to consider the National announcements and how this will impact local communities is needed and we urge a collaborative approach to planning in conjunction with the housebuilding industry, social housing companies', councils and communities.

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### **Three projects in Mid Suffolk are set to receive a share of £691k from Mid Suffolk District Council, with money collected from developers set to fund new sports facilities, the expansion of a college and keep long-awaited rail improvements on track.**

£500k for sports and wellbeing facilities in Stowmarket and more than £188k of funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to expand Thurston Community College.

A further £6k will go to Network Rail to progress the steps of the Thurston rail improvements and level crossing project.

The sports and wellbeing award, which has received wholehearted support from Stowmarket Town Council, will fund a 6-lane 100 metre sprint section as well a separate mini-athletics track (200m oval) plus an allowance for future floodlighting for a second rugby pitch at Chilton Fields.

CIL payments are legally required from developers of residential sites across the district and are then redistributed by Mid Suffolk District Council to help local facilities keep pace with housing growth.

Bids made for CIL funding are regularly reviewed by the Council and earmarked for projects which help local infrastructure keep pace with developments happening in the districts.

This is the thirteenth round of CIL funding which has been available through the council since May 2018 and to date, has allocated £13.5 million to Infrastructure projects across Mid Suffolk.

Here is the full list of awards:

### **Stowmarket Health Education and Leisure Facilities – £497,272.72**

This project will reduce the pressure on existing leisure, sport and recreation facilities that has resulted from development and growth in population, in and around Stowmarket in recent years. These new facilities will provide participation opportunities at all levels, from grassroots to elite levels of sport, for all age groups

### **Thurston Community College - £188,548.81**

The number of homes within this catchment area is set to increase significantly in the near future (both from existing approved growth and planned growth (through the Joint Local Plan), placing greater pressure on the College facilities and the need to increase pupil places for education provision. By securing additional land and bringing it into school use now, it will enable the school to expand in the future and meet the demand for additional pupil places.

### **Thurston Rail Improvements, next phase of Level Crossing project - £6,000**

This CIL Bid follows the completion of the Thurston Rail Station Improvements Feasibility Study in April 2024 and would allow Network Rail to progress necessary work at pre ES3 stage to develop a cost and programme for the ES3 phase which is about single option selection and endorsement of a suitable crossing at this Station.

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## **Council Tax freeze**

Mid Suffolk District Council proposes to freeze its element of council tax for the upcoming financial year – helping residents to navigate the cost-of-living crisis while continuing investment in priority areas to improve quality of life in the district.

A report going before Cabinet on Friday, 13 December shows the net cost of providing the council's services to communities and residents is expected to rise by £1.69m to £15.9m in 2025/26 – an increase of about 12%.

Despite this, the council is not proposing an increase in council tax, meaning that the annual Mid Suffolk proportion of the council tax bill for a Band D property would remain at £175.03.

That works out at £3.36 a week to cover all district council services, including waste collection, licensing, planning, public realm and supporting the local economy, culture and communities.

Less than 10% of each household's council tax bill goes to the district council, with the remainder going to Suffolk County Council, the Police & Crime Commissioner and town or parish councils.

Mid Suffolk's budget report notes an increase in the revenue budget of £950,000 in 2025/26, funded from earmarked reserves, to allow for the implementation of the Mid Suffolk Plan, which sets out the council's commitment to making the district thrive, not just economically, but culturally, socially and environmentally.

Also in next year's draft budget, a capital programme of £40.6m has been proposed for a pipeline of projects across the district.

This includes further progression of the council's Skills and Innovation Centre at Gateway 14, which has just received planning permission.

Approved by Cabinet on 13 December, the proposed budget will go before Mid Suffolk's full council on 27 February, subject to further consideration at Overview and Scrutiny on 19 December and at the next Cabinet meeting on 11 February.

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