

Public Document Pack



MSDC COUNCIL	
DATE:	THURSDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2021 5.30 PM
VENUE:	VIRTUAL MEETING

For consideration at the meeting on Thursday, 18 FEBRUARY 2021, the following additional or updated papers that were unavailable when the Agenda was printed.

SUPPLEMENT PAPERS

Page(s)

7 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES 3 - 6

The Chairman of the Council, Chairs of Committees and Sub-Committees and Portfolio Holders to answer any questions on any matters in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affect the District of which due notice has been given in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.

For more information about this meeting, including access arrangements and facilities for people with disabilities, please contact the Committee Officer, Committee Services on: 01473 296472 or Email: Committees@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 7

MSDC COUNCIL – 18th FEBRUARY 2021

Item 7 - Questions from Councillors

Question 1 from Councillor Andrew Stringer to Councillor Fleming, Cabinet Member for the Environment

Given the justified public outcry of this Council cutting down three of the walnut trees planted by my former Head Teacher Mike Arbon in Walnut Tree Walk in Stowmarket, and the Council subsequently stating, incorrectly, that this was because Suffolk County Council Highways demanded their removal within 21 days, when will the Council offer an apology and admit it was wrong?

Response

I/ the District Council already have made a public statement in the EADT which makes it clear that the Council regrets the loss of the trees. I too personally regret the loss of 3 walnut trees which were cut down on Walnut Tree Walk following miscommunications and what appears to have been errors of judgement on site, the details of which have been publicly reported. Mistakes happen, as all of us know and this was one of them. Important lessons have been learned and measures are being put in place to avoid any similar error. As Cabinet Member for environment including public realm I am sorry that this happened and realise that the trees were planted by a former headmaster of the middle school, the council intends to make amends by ensuring that healthy and well located replacement trees are planted as soon feasible as part of the agreed planning conditions.

Question 2 from Councillor Sarah Mansel to Councillor David Burn, Cabinet Member for Planning

The Healthy Homes Act calls for a set of Healthy Homes Principles to be made law and as such part of national planning policy. Since advising officers of this initiative in January we have not heard anything more. Will this Council support the Healthy Homes Act?

Response

The homes we live in have a major impact on our health and wellbeing, and this Council is committed to delivering healthy new homes through our emerging Joint Local Plan.

The Town and County Planning Association's important campaign, to introduce new legislation in the form of a Healthy Homes Act, includes laudable aims and objectives which we are already seeking to implement, insofar as is possible under current national policy.

It is not yet certain how the Government may seek to implement and standardise the principles proposed by the Town and County Planning Association, so we do not know what the design and cost impacts would be on development in our area. But I

welcome the Town and County Planning Association's efforts and this Council will continue to push for healthy new homes.

I will ask officers to monitor the progress of this campaign, and any subsequent Bill through parliament, in order that we can respond to changes at the national level and identify best practice for implementing the Joint Local Plan.

Question 3 from Councillor Penny Otton to Councillor Suzie Morley, Leader of the Council

This council agreed to establish a youth council as part of the Green Liberal Democrats amendment in 2020.

This current year, as a result of the pandemic, has been extremely difficult for young people, physically and mentally. This youth council could help to establish just what the most important issues are for them and start to put in place some of those issues identified.

What has the council done to implement this commitment ?

Response

As part of the 2020/21 budget setting, the Green and Liberal Democratic Group presented 10 key proposals to the Administration. It was agreed that some of these proposals would be progressed when the Council approved the budget. The Administration places a great deal of importance in engaging all citizens in democracy, including young people, however it was felt that a youth council wasn't the only option to achieve this. Therefore, officers have been working on research and a scoping document for a wider project on democratic engagement. This work has been delayed during the covid-19 pandemic as staff have been redeployed to priority response tasks, but will recommence in May 2021.

I can assure you that I personally, and this Administration, place the utmost importance on the wellbeing of all our citizen – you can see this from our vision and strategic priorities. We know from national statistics that this pandemic has had a particular effect on the mental health and wellbeing of younger people and we continue to work with our partners across the system to provide support for them.

Question 4 from Councillor John Matthissen to Councillor David Burn, Cabinet Member for Planning

What information do you have to give confidence that our housing delivery and build pipeline will continue to justify a 5- year housing land supply?

Response

Mid Suffolk District Council currently has a housing land supply of 7.67 years as shown in the Housing Land Supply Position Statement (October 2020). The Council also passed the Government's annual Housing Delivery Test with a result of 103% for the 2020 Test, published in January 2021. We also maintain an up-to-date Housing Delivery Test Action Plan, which has been through Overview and Scrutiny.

The Joint Local Plan identifies a supply of development from April 2018 up to March 2037 and minimum housing requirement figures for those areas producing a Neighbourhood Plan. In order to maintain a consistent and favourable supply and delivery of development throughout the Plan period, the policies aim to identify and create flexibility for sufficient housing development, and a buffer of approximately 20% in the supply of new land has been identified.

I do carry concern around our land supply though and it is important that the Council continues to grant planning permissions that enable us to maintain and ‘top up’ supply.

Question 5 from Councillor Daniel Pratt to Councillor Jessica Fleming, Cabinet Member for the Environment

How are other local authorities separating Tetrapak from other recycle and why are we not doing the same at the MRF?

Response

We stopped taking cartons/tetrapaks when the current Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) contract began in May 2019. This contract does not include managing cartons/tetrapaks.

Some other local authorities are still accepting ‘cartons/tetrapaks’ through a mix of kerbside collections, HWRC’s and bring sites, however kerbside collections are being widely phased out.

If you go on the Tetra Pak UK company web page and ask where to recycle their product, you will be directed to a site in your area – in our case this is Stowmarket. You are not directed to your recycling bin! According to best information most local authorities in England are taking this approach and not collecting at kerbside. Essex still accepts cartons/tetrapaks but this is a function of its waste contract obligations and infrastructure age, the cartons are considered to be ‘contaminants’. Most new waste recycling contracts exclude cartons/tetrapaks, and it is now illegal to include carton residues in recycled paper/ card for export.

Although Suffolk’s LAs collect them, it is not cost effective and Suffolk Councils pay to have them removed and shipped by ACE UK (a related organisation to Tetra Pak UK) to Warrington. There they are broken down and separated into fibre which can be incorporated into paper products and a plastic/ aluminium mix which is more problematic in terms of its reuse.

This is in contrast to other recyclable materials for which there is a positive market value and an income stream back to the Council.

In addition to cartons/tetrapaks, coffee pods pose a similar dilemma as they too are a composite material and although technically ‘recyclable’, are in effect a contaminant and are best disposed in the black bin or taken to a HWRC where there are special containers.

Question 6 from Councillor Daniel Pratt to Councillor Jessica Fleming, Cabinet Member for the Environment

Will you raise this issue with the Suffolk Waste Partnership and jointly investigate how other local authorities (and waste partnerships) are sorting Tetrapak material from other recycle?

Response

Yes, I am in discussion with the SWP about this problem. As I have said, cartons/tetrapaks are not welcome in any recyclable materials stream as they need special treatment. Other local authorities are seeking to avoid mixing them.

Overall, the Suffolk Waste Partnership and other local authority bodies nationally have raised the problem posed by composite materials such as this to Central Government which is in turn in discussion with the packaging container industry to seek ways to improve the capacity to recycle their products while retaining their usefulness.

Supplementary Question: During the interim could MSDC provide more bring-bank locations to enable our residents to recycle Tetrapak in their own locality.

Response

The Suffolk Waste Partnership did investigate whether it would be possible to introduce carton banks at other public locations (such as alongside bottle banks at Supermarkets and Village Halls).

There is currently only one provider of these banks in the UK (to the best of our knowledge) and unfortunately this option proved to be prohibitively expensive as a standalone service where the quantities being collected (in individual banks) are likely to be relatively small. It already is an added cost to transport the current quantity of tetrapaks from HWRCs to the single UK recycling facility.

We therefore concluded that this approach would not have provided value for money for Suffolk taxpayers.