

Green and Liberal Democrat Group Amendment to Draft Budget 2021/22

Mid Suffolk District Council – 18th February 2021

The group proposes this amendment to the 2021/22 General Fund budget.

Proposed by Councillor John Field

Seconded by Councillor Rowland Warboys

The amendment has five distinct elements, A to E, which focus on specific priorities that reflect the needs and demands of our communities as they recover from the pandemic, and experience at first hand the ever-more pressing climate and biodiversity crises. The revenue items can be covered by the expected surplus in the current year, and the capital sums are eligible for Public Works Loan Board borrowing.

Our amendment will contribute significantly towards the Council's goal of achieving zero net carbon by 2030.

We believe that the Council should be investing locally, in jobs, homes, and developments, for local people, which will build resilient communities and bring better long term financial and social dividends. A key part of our proposals is support for, and improvement to, plans for Gateway 14.

Elements:

A.

We propose a series of measures to meet our community's needs with regard to planning and development:

Planning approvals incorporate the making of legal agreements (106 agreements) and the application of conditions. These are intended to ensure that infrastructure and facilities are delivered to match council and resident needs and ambitions. It is essential that developers comply with these requirements and that should be enforced by a well-resourced team. If this cannot act effectively and in a timely manner the system fails. We remain convinced that 2 Staff at a cost of £50k each plus Legal Cost allowance of £60k could be supported by the existing management structure.

In particular, viability claims should be examined and where these prove to be over cautious with regard to profitability then further social contributions should be required of the developer.

In order to re-establish our communities' confidence in the Council's planning committees, we propose an external programme of training and ongoing advice for Councillors on those committees.

In order to support community led planning applications we would like to be able to offer free pre-application advice.

Young people should be encouraged to participate in local decision making and a youth parliament or council is proposed to provide a forum for young people to shape and develop their ideas.

With regards to the Gateway 14 project.

The Mill Lane (Gateway 14) Development Brief March 10th 2014 stated (numbered paragraphs)

5.1.1The environment will create and encourage the market conditions to make Stowmarket Business and Enterprise Park into one of the premier business locations in the region and an important community resource.

In the first part of achieving this, we propose a community liaison group to be set up to develop and secure community benefits.

Finally, in response to the ongoing health and, for many, financial uncertainties we would make available yearly grants for the next two years to the Citizens Advice Bureau and Community Food Banks.

		Indicative	
	2021-22	2022-23	Source of funding:
Meeting the Community's Needs:			
Additional planning enforcement – 2 extra officers @£47keach plus £60k legal	154	154	GF revenue
Training and advice for planning committees	10	10	GF revenue
Additional funding for CAB - extra £50k grant ongoing per year	50	50	GF revenue
Support for Food Banks - £50k one-off grant	50	50	GF revenue
Youth Parliament – 3 sessions a year [2]	5	5	GF revenue
Free pre-application advice for community needs - check	10	10	GF revenue
Gateway 14 – 5.1.1 reference to community resource: set up and work with community liaison group to develop and secure community benefits. [6]	25	200	GF capital and CF
Sub total £,000		200	Capital
Sub total £,000	304	279	Revenue

B.

We propose a Supplementary Planning Document to seek affordable retail development in order to help economic recovery. Like business incubators, retail incubators nurture new and small business owners, helping them to survive and grow during the critical start-up period.

		Indicative	
	2021-22	2022-23	Source of funding:
Economy and Employment:			
2 x Retail incubators - 2 years project - [1]	56	36	GF revenue
Innovation centre expansion	20		Capital
Sub total £,000	20		Capital
Sub total £,000	56	36	Revenue

C.

To ensure progress is made at pace to ensure everyone has healthy, secure and warm housing we propose enhancing the support of the programme of retrofitting private homes.

		Indicative	
	2021-22	2022-23	Source of funding:
Housing			
Retro-fit private sector housing especially private rental – 1 officer	40	40	GF revenue
Sub total £,000	40	40	Revenue

D.

While the Joint Local Plan is moving through the Examination stage, the need for a Supplementary Planning document for Biodiversity enhancement has been recognised, and for Active Travel, (in conjunction with the County Council). Specifically, an additional tree officer to facilitate pro-active management of trees on council owned land. An additional tree officer is needed to protect more valued and ancient trees with Tree Preservation Orders, and to ensure that approved planting schemes are carried out and maintained as developments are implemented.

With regard to Gateway 14 we propose that a start is made on advance landscaping to meet the council's objective 4.5.3 (*Mill Lane (Gateway 14) Development Brief March 10th 2014*)..... *In addition, the development proposals will include significant enhancement of the potential for bio-diversity through the planting of structural landscaping It is the intention that the site incorporates the concept of green infrastructure including a network of high quality green and blue spaces and other environmental features.*

We propose that a program of structural landscaping is initiated in to mask the site whilst developing and provide mature and attractive landscaping on occupation.

Environment:			
Additional Tree officer [5] – to facilitate pro-active maintenance of trees on council owned land	47	47	GF revenue
Gateway 14 - biodiversity and green spaces – advance landscaping	100		GF capital
Sub total £,000	100		Capital
Sub total £,000	47	47	Revenue

E.

In response to the government's Energy white paper of Dec 14th 2020: **Powering out net zero future**. We are proposing four measures that would coordinate activities in different sectors to develop a council wide strategy towards Energy Production(sourcing), Storage and Usage.

We propose working with partners such as Innovation Labs to develop a digital infrastructure for the energy system. Managing data is essential to the efficient integration of low-carbon technologies, such as solar panels, heat pumps and batteries. We regard this as an opportunity to stimulate an innovative and high-quality approach. By harnessing local energy producers and energy grids, integrating and balancing power demands we would create an attractive, financial and physical, environment for investors.

5.2.2 (Mill Lane (Gateway 14) Development Brief March 10th 2014)..... It is anticipated that buildings will incorporate technology to generate green energy.....

In order to help meet the Council’s objectives we propose to commit £30,000 this year to develop a response to the Government’s White paper and a Local Strategy for Energy Production, Storage and Usage It should also explore the feasibility of developing a facility at Gateway 14 that realises the objectives of a local strategy for Energy Production and Storage, in particular the development of an energy storage facility battery and/or hydrogen power.

As part of the need to develop a strategy for energy production, storage and usage we propose working with our partner Innovation Labs to develop expertise in managing a digital infrastructure for local energy systems.

We also propose additional funding to cover the installation of electric charging points as standard in new developments and in public parking places to facilitate the adoption

		Indicative	
	2021-22	2022-23	Source of funding:
Energy Production, Storage and Usage			
Additional staffing to accelerate EPSU program	50	50	GF revenue
Gateway 14 and housing - Energy strategy feasibility study H ₂ Power – Gov’t grant to part cover [3]	30		GF revenue
Innovation Centre commission: Digital Infrastrusture to manage EPSU - Model	20		GF revenue
Public electric vehicle charging – invest for future income [4]	30		GF capital
Sub total £,000	30		Capital
Sub total £,000	100	50	Revenue

TOTALS £000	150	200	Capital
	547	452	Revenue

Additional notes:

[1] Retail incubator@ £10k rent pa + £10k to fit out + £8k pa 1 day a week of officer time. (Stowmarket, Eye, Needham – choose two)

[2] Hire of hall for the day + travel for 50 delegates+ guest speaker

[3] May lead to significant capital investment for return

[4] Electric vehicle charging points

(Stowmarket 3 more car parks, + visitor attractions - Museum, Chilton Fields, Alder Carr Farm)

[5] Trees work to tackle both climate and biodiversity crises.

[6] Aim: a community building for local clubs and organisations, baby and toddler provision, community café etc). Organisations using the building would be financially independent. This would also be an asset with regards to the onsite businesses.