

MSDC COUNCIL – 21 SEPTEMBER 2023

ITEM 5 – LEADER’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

I hope all councillors managed to enjoy a break over the summer.

1. Former Councillor Poppy Robinson

I would like to mark the passing of former district Councillor Poppy Robinson, who was a member of this council from 2003 to 2015. She represented the Stowmarket Central ward and was a member of planning committee. Poppy passed away since our last council meeting, and I am sure all members will join me in sending our condolences to her family and friends.

2. Pride in Your Place

Work has been continuing on our administration’s initial plans, and we were delighted last month to launch a new initiative, Pride in Your Place.

This has given every town and village in the district the opportunity to apply for funding for projects which improve the appearance and cleanliness of their community. This can be for initiatives like litter picking, sign cleaning, graffiti removal, and the maintenance/enhancement of open public spaces and more.

I would like to remind all councillors that this fund remains open and can I ask you to encourage your towns and parishes to get involved.

3. Support for businesses

In the last month, we have announced two initiatives to support small and new businesses, which are the lifeblood of our communities.

Mid Suffolk Council has teamed up with MENTA to offer start-up businesses free expert support and guidance. The council was given funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to deliver this scheme, and the programme is open to those in Mid Suffolk who are thinking of starting a business, are in the process of starting a business or have recently started their business venture.

Meanwhile, businesses in Mid Suffolk can also potentially benefit from a new round of funding thanks to the Rural England Prosperity Fund. Small businesses and community organisations across the districts will have access to three grants under the fund: the Rural Business Growth Fund, the Rural Culture & Creativity Fund and the Rural Communities Fund.

Eligible projects include net-zero developments, agriculture and farm diversification, visitor economy business expansion as well as SME investment and diversification or investment in community facilities in our rural areas.

Small businesses are so important to our district, and I would encourage them to visit our website to check eligibility and explore details of these grants.

4. Wellbeing funding

Mid Suffolk has recently responded to a Suffolk Mind survey which identified Stowmarket and surrounding areas as an 'emotional and physical needs hotspot', by awarding £50,000 to local projects supporting residents' wellbeing.

We launched the IP14 Wellbeing Fund and have now allocated £50,000 in funding through Suffolk County Council's Public Mental Health programme to ten local projects. This will allow them to do more important work in this area and support more people. We will continue to work with partners to address wellbeing issues in our district, so people can lead active and healthy lives.

5. Representing Mid Suffolk

As leader I represent the district on various regional and national bodies. In the last few weeks I have attended meetings of the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA), the District Councils' Network where I sit on the executive board, the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) where I am a director representing Suffolk's district councils, and next week I will be attending the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders' group.

6. Dave Busby

Finally, many of you will have seen the news that Babergh Council leader Dave Busby is taking a temporary step back while he receives treatment for cancer. I'm sure all members will join with me in wishing him a speedy recovery and we hope to see him back soon.