

District Councillors' Report for Bacton Parish Council – December 2020

Covid 19	Mid Suffolk is administering payments of grants to businesses forced to close or suffering a significant loss of income during the current lockdown period. The current assessment of additional costs is £800k and income reduction currently stands at £1.3 million. Support from Central Government has so far totaled £2.2million. When shortfall in collection of council tax and business rates is also taken into account, the overall shortfall due to Covid 19 is £81k.
2019/2020 general fund expenditure	The predicted underspend on the revenue account is £848k, due largely to unfilled staff vacancies and delays in programmed projects. The capital account is also underspent due to delays in commencing projects and making programmed investments.
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	Covid 19 has impacted on the HRA; there has been an additional expenditure of £46k in PPE and a forecast £792k loss of rental income. The Government has not yet announced any financial support for HRAs so the deficit will need to be met from reserves. Overall, the HRA revenue account is predicted to be in surplus for 2020/21 due to delays in carrying out capital projects. The HRA capital account is predicted to be underspent by £12.5 million due largely to Covid 19 delaying a start of construction of council house new build projects.
2020/2021 Budget	The budget setting process is under way; this will be a more difficult exercise than usual due to the uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. MSDC has suffered a loss of income and extra costs. Also, more and more residents are unable to make payments of council tax and council rents.
Investment in commercial properties	MSDC has made further investments in properties in Luton and Epsom for £10.5 million and plans to spend a further £15 million making a total of £50 million, all paid for on long-term loans. These investments are managed by CIFCO. The property portfolio continues to decrease in value; two of the properties have been without tenants and some 30% of rental income is unpaid or delayed. Nevertheless, the Leader of MSDC is quoted as saying, 'Through these careful investments, CIFCO will continue to bring in much-needed income to support our district's recovery post-Covid'.
Red Gables Garden Project	Red Gables have asked for baby trees which can be dug up from our gardens, planted in pots and delivered to them in Ipswich Street, Stowmarket and left by their greenhouse. They will be grown on and supplied to village planting projects around Mid Suffolk
Infrastructure Funding Statement	A report on the major infrastructure projects for Mid Suffolk was presented to Cabinet in November. It will be published on the MSDC website on 11 December. Projects for future funding, partly through Community Infrastructure Levy, include a new bridge and lifts at Stowmarket Rail Station; increase in capacity at Bacton and Mendlesham surgeries and in Stowmarket; phase 2 of the Stowupland High School Masterplan; a new primary school in Stowupland or an increase in the size of the existing school; a new pre-school in Stowupland; a new base for Stowmarket Safer Neighbourhood Team; increased library provision in Stowupland and Haughley; and improved community facilities at Stowupland High School.

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