Report from your District Councillor Feb-March 2024

* The MSDC meeting in February was heavily concentrated on budgetary matters.

It was proposed and decided to increase the Council tax by 2% for the year24/25 and planned increases of 2,99% for the following three years. That is something that isn’t ‘written in stone’ at this stage but that is the plan.

We were presented with figures from the relevant officers highlighting an estimated budget surplus for 24/25 of 5,2 million pounds. Re the following years the lowest surplus would be 2,4 million pounds. These figures are to be found on page 67 of the budget report, table 9.

For a band D dwelling it mean £94.86 in additional tax for the coming year.

Needless to say there was a lot of debate on this topic.

I voted against this increase. The estimated surplus margins are solid, certainly for this coming year. I believe that taxes should be raised when necessary and in this scenario it isn’t. On top of this there is a ‘cost of living’ crisis so burdens ought not to be increased.

* The HRA, the Housing Revenue Account was also duly debated and decided upon. This is an income and expenditure stream that cannot be amended by transfers from the ‘general Fund’. It was proposed that council housing rents go up by 7,7%. Utility charges for sheltered housing to increase by 44%. This more than the increases in prices. During the debate it was proposed that a 2 year phasing in period for these charges should be applied. It was pointed out universal credit would pay for a part of these increases. T he suggestions as per above were carried. I voted against these increases.
* The previously proposed increases in taxation for empty homed and for second homes were briefly debated and carried. I voted in favour of these. In the District there are about 520 empty dwellings.
* Four substitutes for the Planning Committee were agreed. These are Colin Lay, David Penny, Anders Linder and Adrienne Marriott.
* There will be a cross party CIL expenditure framework review, the 6th review. The outcome of this is expected to be put to MSCD in March next year.
* Briefing sessions for Parishes on CIL can be arranged, one possibility is for several Parishes to jointly attend a session of this kind. Jo Moyes is very capable person to liaise with. If there is an interest you are also welcome to get in touch with me about ideas on this. I would be happy to talk to Jo.
* At the last Stradbroke Parish Council meeting I was asked about who to contact about any questions concerning flood risk assessment as previously reported from the MSCD of January. Fiona Duhamel could be asked, however she is soon to leave the organisation, Di Robinson is the new Director for Communities and Economy, she may be a better alternative as she isn’t about to leave.

Best Wishes, Anders Linder