

A record of progress A promise of more

**Our plan to make Mid Suffolk an even better
place to live, work and enjoy**

Conservative Manifesto for the Mid Suffolk District Council elections,
4 May 2023



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A personal message from the Conservative Group Leader

Dear Resident,

Over the last four years your Conservative administration at Mid Suffolk District Council has been working hard to deliver on your priorities.

We have supported our communities through the Covid-19 pandemic, kept Council tax as low as possible, and invested more money in our services.

We have taken innovative action to deal with the climate emergency, drive economic growth, and address the need for housing in our district.

However, there is so much more still to do. This manifesto sets out our ambitious plan for the next four years.

We will deliver our enterprising Gateway 14 development in full, invest millions of pounds to enhance sport, leisure and wellbeing facilities in Stowmarket, promote walking and cycling routes across the district, and plant hundreds of new trees and hedgerows to protect our beautiful countryside.

All of this is only possible with a strong Conservative administration at Mid Suffolk. Help us build on our proud record of achievement and deliver for you for the next four years.

I hope we can count on your support in May.

Yours sincerely,

Suzie Morley



Cllr Suzie Morley,
Conservative Group Leader

Cllr Suzie Morley

Leader of Mid Suffolk District Council

Leader of the Mid Suffolk Conservative Group

Delivering our pledges to you



Mid Suffolk Conservatives have a strong record of delivering high-quality public services, keeping Council Tax low, and investing in your priorities – here is what we've done, and what we will do.

What we've achieved together...

1 Frozen Council Tax

Mid Suffolk Conservatives have frozen your Council Tax for two years in a row, helping you keep more of your own money.

2 Cut our emissions

We became the first rural council in the UK to switch from diesel to hydrotreated vegetable oil to fuel its our bin lorries - delivering a reduction of 89% CO₂ per kilometre.

3 Planted new trees and hedgerows

Nearly 300 trees planted as part of the Queen's Green Canopy and as part of our biodiversity action plan, plus 1,100m of hedgerow.

4 Invested in new facilities

Our administration has invested £2.2m in Stowmarket leisure centre and built the Duck and Teapot Café in Needham Market.

5 Supported our communities

We launched our first Wellbeing Strategy, set up dementia cafes, offered free school meals, and supported the rural coffee caravan.

6 Promoted walking and cycling

Mid Suffolk published its first Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, identifying 80 schemes or routes to improve access, safety, and comfort.

And what we'll do

1 Spend your money carefully

We will keep Council Tax as low as possible and ensure our services are efficient, well-run, and continue to represent good value-for-money.

2 Meet local housing needs

We will support the most vulnerable in society by ensuring that everyone in need of social housing can access it.

3 Protect and enhance our environment

We will work to improve river quality, reduce carbon emissions, enhance biodiversity, and plant new trees and hedgerows.

4 Plan sensibly for the future

We will bring an end to speculative development by introducing a new Local Plan and help deliver the right homes in the right places.

5 Develop our local economy

We will boost our local high streets, continue to invest in skills and innovation, and develop Gateway 14 to its fullest extent.

6 Promote strong and healthy communities

We will develop vibrant and sustainable communities by tackling loneliness and isolation, promoting sport and leisure opportunities, and encouraging walking and cycling.

Finance & Investments

Our key commitments:

1. Continue with our present commitment to keep any council tax increases as close to zero as remains sustainable, having frozen our council tax precept in our last two budgets.
2. Ensure that lean and efficient ways of working remain imbedded in our culture to ensure that everything we do and every service we provide represents good value-for-money for our residents and local taxpayers.
3. Always approach our financial stewardship responsibilities from a clear perspective that it is your money that we have been entrusted to manage.
4. Continue to grow and develop, wherever possible, dependable long-term income streams from our diverse investments and reinvest the returns from those investments into our local communities.
5. Use our Reserves and robust financial position to deliver a programme of ambitious capital projects over the next four years.
6. Continue our partnerships with Babergh District Council and Suffolk County Council to keep our running costs as low as possible.

We are proud of our financial stewardship at Mid Suffolk. We spend carefully day-to-day, ensuring good value-for-money, but we have also invested boldly, both locally in Gateway 14 in Stowmarket and further afield.

We have created multi-million pound robust long-term income streams to offset reduced central government funding and used these to fund ambitious programmes.

It has enabled us to freeze our council tax in our last two annual budgets and we kept increases in earlier years at minimal levels.

We have achieved this whilst delivering annual surpluses, building strong and healthy reserves and becoming one of the most financially secure councils in the country.

Housing



Everyone should have a suitable home and residents are able to live as healthily, safely and independently as possible within sustainable communities.

Better communication channels with our tenants, with greater understanding on both sides with an effective resolution of complaints.

Our services provide positive and planned interventions so that all those in need can have the opportunity to have a roof over their heads - a safe, clean, decent place to call home.

Adding to our housing stock – your local Conservatives will continue to build and acquire new council houses. These have significance beyond the number of houses provided. They represent the security of a family home with all the benefits that brings - not only to the



families who live in them but in what those families contribute to their local communities.

Empowering Residents – your local Conservatives will implement better communication channels with our tenants, with greater understanding on both sides with an effective resolution of complaints. Mid Suffolk Conservatives will ensure that residents live in communities that meet their needs; everyone has a suitable home that allows them to live healthily, safely and independently, and will develop strong relationships with residents, developers and other relevant groups.

Our key commitments:

1. Ensure the housing market functions effectively, and provides sustainable homes of different sizes, types and tenures in high-quality environments
2. Make the best use of private-sector land and private-sector accommodation
3. Support improvements to energy efficiency
4. Be effective social landlords for our own housing stock
5. Maintain our efforts to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping

Fighting Homelessness – your local Conservatives will ensure that our services provide positive and planned interventions so that all those in need can have the opportunity to have a roof over their heads - a safe, clean, decent place to call home.

Environment & Biodiversity

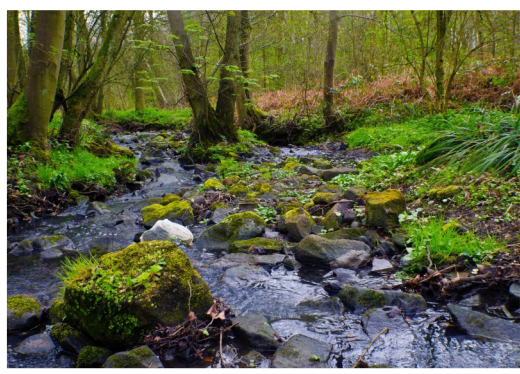


Your local Conservatives are committed to delivering on climate change. After declaring a climate emergency in July 2019, we made a commitment to aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.

We have slashed greenhouse gasses in our waste removal and leisure centres and depots. We have planted hundreds of trees and believe this is also a key driver of wellbeing in the district. We have also been key in organising river quality stakeholder meetings and helping businesses adapt.

Tree survey – your local Conservatives commissioned a survey of the tree species that exist and the potential sites for more planting. It identifies carbon storage of 723,000 tonnes with an annual sequestration of 29,000 tonnes. It puts a value to the benefit which also includes the prevention of runoff and pollution, at over £33m for the district.

Green leisure – your local Conservatives are now halfway through installing well over £1m of green energy measures in our leisure centres. 500 solar panels – generating 195kW – and an air source heat pump have been installed at Stowmarket Leisure Centre, and 105 solar panels – generating 40.6kW – are being installed at Stradbroke Leisure Centre. We have also completed a £1.4m solar car port scheme in Stowmarket, with bays to charge



electric and hybrid cars.

River quality – your local Conservatives have pushed for policy changes to help improve water quality in our rivers. We have already organised a stakeholder event, thought to be the largest group of representatives ever assembled, to discuss solutions to Suffolk's poor river water quality.

Delivering green spaces – your local Conservatives have reviewed the district's green spaces, aimed at making best use of the natural environment to improve residents' wellbeing and tackle climate change. We are developing a wildlife network map to help identify and create important wildlife corridors, and tree and hedge planting areas. We are planting wildflower meadow verges, strengthening biodiversity protections, and setting out the districts' expectations for design, landscaping and open space elements of new developments.

Our key commitments:

1. Continue to develop sensible, affordable and deliverable plans to further reduce our emissions
2. Lead the way on improving water quality in Suffolk's rivers
3. Supply our buildings and leisure centres with electric vehicle charging ports
4. Get the right trees planted in the right place
5. Help businesses source green energy
6. Implement our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plan
7. Plant new wildflower meadows
8. Look at true value for money in environmental investments

Council emissions – after assessing the emissions we create in serving the district, your local Conservatives has made powering our waste freighters 90% less damaging to the environment. We also have reduced staff travel and brought most informal meetings online. We pushed EV charging points to be built and have delivered dozens of charging points across the district. We will also make Gateway 14 one of, if not, the most sustainable business park of its kind.

Planning



As Conservatives we are passionate about helping local people get on to the housing ladder and enabling people to live in vibrant, active communities. We have already delivered high-quality, affordable housing across our district whilst being pro-active in securing the necessary infrastructure to support these. But we know that home ownership is still beyond the means of many, and so there is much still to be done.

Protecting our natural and built environment – The rural nature of our district is at the heart of Mid Suffolk. We will ensure that we protect and enhance our natural and built environment – from ancient woodland to heritage assets – to ensure they are enjoyed by generations to come. The historic character of Mid Suffolk will be retained through the application of good design principles and sensitive development.

Supporting a dynamic local economy – Building new homes also provides new, skilled job opportunities for people in Mid Suffolk, helping us to stimulate our



local economy after the Covid-19 pandemic. Focusing new development in our key service centres will also help to revitalise and reinvigorate local business and our high streets.

New homes, fit for the future – We will work with developers to ensure that new homes are future-proofed against climate change by: reducing carbon emissions, diversifying energy provision, using sustainable construction and design methods, improving ground water quality and waste infrastructure, and promoting sustainable modes of transport.

Affordable homes for the next generation – House prices in Mid Suffolk are approximately 9 times above average earnings in the district, meaning the dream of home ownership is unaffordable for many. We are committed to building new, affordable housing that suits the needs of local residents and their families to give people the best possible chance in life.

Our key commitments:

1. **Protect our district against speculative development and help to deliver the right homes in the right places**
2. **Secure sustainable infrastructure to enable our communities to be healthy, active, and self-sufficient**
3. **Develop new planning policies to protect wildlife, biodiversity, and access to open green spaces**
4. **Promote walking and cycling schemes to better link new developments to sustainable travel opportunities**
5. **Enhance our valuable natural and built environment and ensure that new development is sympathetic to the needs of local communities**

Supporting people of all ages – New homes are not just about young people and families. We want to ensure that we have a broad and diverse range of housing available in Mid Suffolk, allowing older residents to downsize when they need to or modify houses to ensure they can live independently in their own home for longer.

Local Economy



Your local Conservatives have been pro-active and imaginative in supporting our local businesses through the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond. We have placed significant focus on skills and innovation to ensure our local economy is vibrant, dynamic, and adaptable in ever-changing markets. Gateway 14 and Freeport East have been championed by this Conservative administration and are already at the heart of East Anglia's economic recovery.

High-speed broadband – we will work with Suffolk County Council and a range of private sector partners to explore ways to bring high-speed but affordable gigabit broadband to residents and business across Mid Suffolk.

Gateway 14 – we will deliver thousands of new, high-quality jobs at our Gateway 14 development whilst maximising and promoting local carbon opportunities to secure clean growth for the future. To support this,



we will continue to promote and develop supply chain networks within our energy business across Mid Suffolk.

Innovation and skills – we will seek to bring innovation to our core sectors through better intelligence and data, more partnership working with the University of Suffolk and Innovate to Elevate, and through a new Skills and Innovation Centre at the centre of the new Freeport East.

Our key commitments:

1. Further develop Gateway 14 at Stowmarket as one of the region's most attractive locations for inward investment, helping to boost job opportunities across Mid Suffolk
2. Promote green energy and net zero projects through Freeport East to ensure clean growth is at the heart of our economic recovery
3. Build a new Skills and Innovation Centre at Gateway 14 to help businesses collaborate, share learning, and develop new ways of working
4. Develop a state-of-the-art health, education and leisure facilities in the heart of Stowmarket, including a 3G pitch, a new sports pavilion, and a dedicated 'Wellbeing Hub'
5. Expand our 'Virtual High Street' and 'Innovate to Elevate' projects across the district to support local businesses, enhance digital skills and innovation, and create new opportunities for local start-ups

State-of-the-art facilities – we will develop new health, education and leisure facilities in the heart of Stowmarket – including a new 3G pitch, a new sports pavilion, a new 'Wellbeing Hub' – along with the expansion of Stowmarket High School to enhance the opportunities available to local residents.

Strong & Healthy Communities



Your local Conservatives have placed our communities at the heart of everything we do. We work with a fantastic range of partners to deliver sport, leisure, and cultural opportunities in the district.

Culture and heritage – we will continue to support our local culture and heritage assets, building on the work we have already done to renovate the Regal Theatre in Stowmarket, develop a new café at Needham Lakes, and expand the reach of the Food Museum to ensure that tourism remains a key part of our local communities.

Our communities – we will support social prescribing, free school meals, holiday activities, outreach wellbeing programmes and dementia cafes to ensure that everyone has the best possible chance to live happy, healthy, and rewarding lives.

Sport & leisure – we will continue to support our leisure centres in



Stowmarket and Stradbroke—and that of Debenham – so that all our residents have access to high-quality and well-equipped facilities within the district.

Cycling and walking – we have created its own Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan, which will develop networks of cycling and walking routes. We will use this to help future proof development as well as driving change in the district to get people active and help the environment.

Our key commitments:

1. Work with our health partners to deliver social prescribing and health-related programmes, such as free school meals and swimming lessons during half term, outreach well-being programmes and dementia cafes
2. Support families with isolation and mental health issues
3. Continue to support the Rural Coffee Caravan
4. Support our cultural assets like the Regal, the Food Museum and the John Peel Centre in Stowmarket
5. Provide funding to support sport and leisure facilities in Stowmarket, Stradbroke and Debenham
6. Continue to provide support to victims of domestic abuse
7. Provide funding to our local parishes for local community initiatives