

District Council Report

Neighbourhood Plan funding

Last month's announcement that all funding and support for the development of neighbourhood plans would cease immediately came as a shock to the council. The announcement came from the government following the spending review. While the ending of support was considered a possibility it was assumed that if it happened, it would be a staggered withdrawal. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

Babergh District Council voted unanimously at the recent Council meeting to write to Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner – Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and James Cartlidge.

The letter is to state their concerns over Government plans to modernise planning committees as part of their current Planning and Infrastructure Bill. Proposals within the bill include a national scheme of delegation for planning decisions, designed to reduce the role of planning committees by restricting the type and numbers of applications heard by committees in future.

This is to remove perceived obstacles to development and housebuilding, increasing the number of decisions being made by officers than committees – despite only a fraction of planning applications being heard by committee.

Social Housing improvements

The councils housing team have turned the tide for tenants, transforming the service they provide and promising further improvements, with the launch of their new 'repairs pledges.'

The teams have worked tirelessly to address the issues which led the councils having to self-refer to the Social Housing Regulator in 2023. Now, tenant satisfaction is on the rise, with a corresponding drop in complaints, currently putting Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils above last year's average performance figures for local authority landlords nationwide.

The councils have carried out a comprehensive review and transformation of its building services: restructuring its repairs and maintenance service, asset, and compliance service, and reviewing its processes, policies and how they engage with tenants, including the introduction of a new Complaint Task Force and resident liaison officers.

Having been satisfied by the changes made and embedded in the service, the Regulator lifted the Regulatory Notice that had been imposed on the councils.

Leadership Change at Council

Back in 2023 when the coalition administration was put together it was agreed that the leadership of the council would be rotated. At the recent AGM Independent Councillor John Ward took up the reign for the coming year.

As well as on housing, over the last two years the council has worked closely with communities to address new government housebuilding requirements, established a new nature reserve at Sproughton, worked to improve the energy efficiency of listed buildings, and have looked to simplify funding for community groups.

However, ensuring the financial stability of the council remains a top priority.

Tree For Life

Once again, the councils 'tree for life' scheme is open to parents who have welcomed, or are due to welcome, a child into their families this year.

The initiative, which runs every year, gives parents the opportunity to mark their child's arrival by planting a fruit tree, which can then grow alongside them.

There is also the chance for families, who have sadly lost a child to apply for a memory tree as part of the scheme.

Since its inception, the councils have given out well over two thousand trees.

Local Government Survey

Suffolk's five district and borough councils are launching a county-wide survey, open until 25th July, asking people for their views on the future of vital local government services. This will allow residents, businesses and community groups to have their say on what they want to see from Local Government. The survey is available here-

[Project: Have Your Say on the Future of Local Government...](#)

Summer Community Events

This year, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are again partnering with Abbeycroft to deliver free Community Fun Days at four locations across the districts.

Families that attend one of the events can look forward to a wide range of activities, from bouncy castles and axe throwing to arts and crafts, and dancing. There will be numerous information stalls from local organisations and charities, providing access to valuable resources, support and information.

The events are scheduled to take place between 10am and 2pm at:

- Sudbury, Belle Vue Park – Monday, 21 July
- Thurston, New Green – Thursday, 24 July
- Hadleigh Pool and Leisure Centre – Friday, 25 July
- Stowmarket, Recreation Ground – Monday, 28 July