



Facing the Future

June 2011

Welcome to our joint newsletter aimed at keeping all the town and parish councils, across both Babergh and Mid Suffolk, informed about our plans to meet the financial and other challenges facing us.

What's been happening?

Since our last newsletter in early May we have received the result of the local poll and Charlie Adan has taken up her post as joint chief executive for both district councils.

Local Poll result

Local electors across the two district councils had four weeks to decide whether the two existing councils should merge to form one new single authority. The poll closed on June 6 and the results were announced the following day.

Across the two districts, 49.7% of the 64,069 residents who voted by post, phone, internet and text message voted 'yes' to the two existing district councils being replaced by one new authority; 50.3% of residents voted 'no'.

The breakdown was 39.1% of Babergh residents voted 'yes' whilst 60.9% voted 'no' and in Mid Suffolk, 59.9% residents voted 'yes' whilst 40.1% voted 'no'.

Because the majority voted no, we will not be requesting a review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

However, as you know from previous newsletters, we will continue to integrate across the two councils – as well as transforming the ways in which we deliver our services. In order to meet our financial challenges we have tough targets for savings from integration that we need to deliver immediately and it is important that the hard work to do so continues.

We will keep you updated on the progress of these issues – as well as seeking your opinions and ideas as to how we can better progress both integration and transformation.

If you have any comments or questions you can email:
workingtogether@midsuffolk.gov.uk or workingtogether@babergh.gov.uk

New Chief Executive

Charlie Adan, the new joint Chief Executive took up her post on May 23.

Over the coming months Charlie will be meeting with stakeholders across the county and looks forward to building good long-term relationships with town and parish councils as she has done in other areas during her local government career.

This experience includes advising town and parish councils in rural counties including Lincolnshire and Herefordshire on governance issues, directly delivering training to town and parish councillors and working with colleagues on the Association of Local Councils.

Working with our communities

(a) The Financial challenge

Now we know the local poll result, both councils are re-assessing what this means in terms of finding around £8m in joint savings and/or additional income over the next three years.

The process of considering the various options has started and our aim over the next few months will be to achieve the following.

- **Well informed** stakeholders who are **Knowledgeable** about what our financial challenges mean for them
- That everyone, including Town and Parish Councils, is:
 - **Empowered** to seek out the views of their communities/members/groups to become
 - **Involved** in the formal consultation process and then
 - **Engaged** in the final budget proposals and possibly some aspects of their delivery

We want to explain the challenges and tough choices we face in as clear a language as possible and empower residents, groups and others to get properly involved and engaged to address key questions. In terms of timing, this is set out below:

- June – July: getting the key messages out – including the key questions and call to action for councillors/groups/communities – including town & parish councils to prepare their ideas for the consultation
- August: consultation with key stakeholders around key questions/choices and to get the views of as many communities, groups and individuals both directly and via Members using as many formal and informal communications channels as possible
- September: consultation with town and parish councils about their views.
- October – February 2012: budget proposals considered/comments received/outcomes explained

We aim to send out specific details of the key questions as soon as possible, hopefully over the next two to three weeks. We also think it would be helpful to have the annual meetings with town & parish councils slightly earlier this year than in previous years, so we can provide more timely feedback on people's views.

We are thinking, therefore, that these should take place in September/October instead of November, as that is too late to assess Budget implications for 2012/13 - both for parish & town councils and Babergh.

(b) Locality arrangements

Following the result of the local poll we now know that the number of councillors will not be reduced to the level that would have been the case if the majority vote was yes.

Although councillor numbers remain the same across the two districts, we are still focussed on achieving greater community engagement to ensure that our communities play an important role in shaping our services. This links in with the above proposals on engaging with our communities on the financial challenges that we are facing.

Access to services will be a key issue. Our aim is to offer integrated services which are accessible to all communities across the two district councils and in the most cost effective manner. We will be working with our local communities to identify those services that are seen as critical at a community level (eg planning and housing) to ensure we meet their needs.

We are totally committed to offering integrated services which are accessible to all communities within the larger geographical area in the most cost-effective way.

We plan to work with our district councillors to develop their role and it is important that we engage all of our communities in this. We need to help communities to help themselves and by the end of the year we hope to have provided every district councillor with the training they need to guide their communities to make this possible.

What next?

Over the past couple of weeks, senior managers across both authorities have refocused their attention on the integration and transformation of services following the poll result and the decision not to progress with formal merger.

The councils' integration programme plan will be updated to focus on integration activities in order to achieve our goals of improving our efficiency and effectiveness and making the necessary future savings. As this work progresses we will keep you updated through these regular newsletters.

What do you think?

We value the comments of our town and parish council colleagues on how we plan to meet the financial and other challenges facing us.

If your council has any comments about our plans then please email us – and we will reply as quickly as possible.

For Babergh workingtogether@babergh.gov.uk
For Mid Suffolk workingtogether@midsuffolk.gov.uk

Keeping you informed

Our councils have set aside a section on both our websites where town and parish councils as well as other key stakeholders can access information of particular relevance to them, including these newsletters.

These can be found at either:

www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/workingtogether/keypartnersarea

or:

www.babergh.gov.uk/babergh/KeyPartnersArea