

Town & Parish Council Newsletter

Newsletter No: 22 March 2015



Welcome to our joint newsletter. Our aim is to keep you informed about relevant council business across Babergh and Mid Suffolk and other information useful to your towns and parishes.

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Elections on Thursday 7 May 2015

Electors will be heading to polling stations on Thursday 7 May 2015 to vote in the elections for the UK Parliament and District Council. There will also be Parish Council elections if contested. This means that there are more candidates nominated than the number of seats available on the council and residents in the parish will be able to vote for their preferred candidate or candidates.

If you are interested in standing as a candidate you must meet certain criteria. You will also need to complete a nomination paper which is signed by two electors from the parish. Nomination papers are available from the Electoral Services Team or from your parish clerk. The completed nominations must be delivered by hand to the council offices, during normal office hours, from Monday 23 March 2015 and no later than 4pm on Thursday 9 April.

We will be sending out poll cards in early April which will give you information about the elections taking place and how you have chosen to cast your vote (for example in person or by post). If you are not on the register you will not receive a poll card and you will not be able to vote.

The deadline for registering to vote at this election is Monday 20 April 2015 – you can register online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote. The deadline for applying for a postal vote is 5pm on Tuesday 21 April 2015.

For more information visit:

<http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/council-business/elections-and-voting/> or
<http://www.babergh.gov.uk/council-business/elections-and-voting>

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Town and parish liaison meetings

Dates have now been set for the next Town and Parish Liaison meetings: 9 June for Mid Suffolk and 11 June for Babergh both at 10.00am and 6.30pm. We are looking for input from parishes for a couple of subjects for discussion, please talk this through with your fellow parish councillors and let me know your chosen subject for inclusion. We are still planning on including an item aimed at new councillors on the agenda. Please send your ideas to Josephine.beever@babergh.gov.uk

2015 Village of the Year competition

This year's event has recently been launched, if you have between 501 and 3000 on your electoral role there's a chance for you to win cash prizes to spend in your village. Details will have been distributed already to parish councils and I'd like to get your organisations and groups involved in making your entry.

Last year's winner, Whatfield, in Barbergh, put forward a splendid case and Mendham in Mid Suffolk, the runners up, gave them a very good run for their money. This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the activities that we all know exist in our community and encouraging one of those groups to lead on this would give them the opportunity to shine further.

For more information, please email: Josephine.beever@babergh.gov.uk.

Housing Land Supply for Mid Suffolk

Mid Suffolk has recently reviewed its position on the availability of land for housing development over the next 5 years (as at end of January 2015). Under national planning policy the Council is required to demonstrate a sufficient supply of land that is available, suitable and deliverable for housing development over the next 5 years. The findings were that under these tests, the Council's land supply is not adequate for the next 5 years. Whilst a good overall supply of land has been identified, either in Local Plan documents (such as the adopted Stowmarket Area Action Plan) or granted planning permission (and waiting development on site), the issue is that not enough of this is considered to be deliverable within the next 5 years, for a variety of possible reasons.

This means that under the national planning policy framework (introduced in early 2012, see link below) the Council's current Local Plan policies for housing supply cannot be considered up-to-date and will be afforded limited weight in determining planning applications for new housing. Not all planning applications would automatically have to be approved though, since the presumption in favour of sustainable development means that proposals still have to represent *sustainable* development.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

The Council recognises that the delivery of new homes for the district is a key priority. This strategic objective is explained and developed within the Council's agreed Joint Strategic Plan for the period from 2014 – 2019. This can be viewed via the link provided below.

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www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/UploadsMSDC/Strategic-Plan-2014.pdf

In response, the Council is embarking on a number of planned actions to rectify this position. In the short term, planning officers plan to pursue a more pro-active encouragement of early planning applications for sites which appear to be viable and sustainable with reasonable offer of developer funded measures for local benefits such as affordable homes provision and which can be delivered early. The settlement hierarchy for the District set out in the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy document will be relevant to identifying those settlements that might accommodate sustainable development. Whilst 5 years housing land supply is in issue new sites which are beyond established settlement boundaries may need to be considered. Also relevant to this approach may be the work done around the recent “Call for sites” and earlier sites put forward to the Council as available for development and inclusion within its strategic housing land availability assessment – see link below to access this information. The pro-active encouragement of sites and developments is likely to need active and clear dialogue with relevant parish councils including those already starting Neighbourhood Plan preparation.

<http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/call-for-sites-and-strategic-housing-land-availability-assessment-2014/>

In the longer term, Mid Suffolk District Council is also progressing work on its new Joint Local Plan document together with Babergh District Council. The current under-supply of housing land for the next 5 years places some urgency on the progress of this new Joint Local Plan. An article on the new Local Plan is provided below and it is hoped that this provides all the information you need to get involved with that process.

New Joint Local Plan (JLP) for Mid Suffolk and Babergh

As many will be aware, Mid Suffolk already has substantial up-to-date Local Plan coverage in the form of its adopted ‘Core Strategy’ (originally produced in 2008 and updated in late 2012) and the Stowmarket Area Action Plan (adopted in 2013). These can be accessed here:

<http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/core-strategy-dpd/>

<http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/stowmarket-area-action-plan/>

For a rural district like Mid Suffolk, with 60% of its population living in rural areas, there is now a need to revisit an important part of the current Core Strategy approach. In recognition of this, an agreement was reached that the district needs to find a suitable new planning framework that allows more flexibility and scope for new developments to sustain existing villages and rural communities.

Whilst there is a need to extend the current Local Plan time horizon for Mid Suffolk to 2031, it is also necessary to review and update its old Local Plan policies from 1998. This would provide a complete new set of policies against which to determine most kinds of planning applications and to steer developers that aspire to develop (or change the use) of land. In addition, there are some important, large key sites (such as Eye airfield) that need to benefit

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from a formal adopted Local Plan position in order to provide the required level of certainty and confidence to promote further investment including provision of new jobs, local prosperity and much needed new homes.

The new Joint Local Plan is currently at a very early pre-drafting stage and to help draw up and inform a new Plan, a current Issues & Options consultation exercise is underway. More information and the consultation documents can be accessed here:

<http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/new-babergh-and-mid-suffolk-joint-local-plan-document/>

For a full explanation of the planned approach the relevant Executive committee report (approved in January 2015) can be accessed via these links:

<http://apps.midsuffolk.gov.uk/CMISWebPublic/Binary.ashx?Document=13751>

<http://apps.midsuffolk.gov.uk/CMISWebPublic/Binary.ashx?Document=13758>

<http://apps.midsuffolk.gov.uk/CMISWebPublic/Binary.ashx?Document=13752>

The consultation exercise timescale to respond has been extended

For parish councils, the timescale to respond to this consultation exercise has been extended until 5pm on Tuesday 31 March 2015.

If you would like to comment, we would request that these are made in writing to the Council and clearly marked up that they are referring to the Joint Local Plan consultation documents. You are strongly recommended to use the prescribed comment form on the Council's website, which can be found using this link:

<http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/new-babergh-and-mid-suffolk-joint-local-plan-document/>

The return postal address or email address for completed forms can be found on page 1 of the form.

Mid Suffolk District Council looks forward to receiving any responses that parish and town councils may wish to make within the above timeframe. A series of local consultation events was run to publicise and explain the new Joint Local Plan although these have now concluded.

Please note that this article is closely related to the article above titled Housing Land Supply for Mid Suffolk which deals with the supply of new housing land for Mid Suffolk over the next 5 years.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter

With the increased use of social media in our everyday lives, we are looking to build our social community. With this in mind, we would like to invite our readers who use social platforms to "Like" us on Facebook and "Follow" us on Twitter.

Both Babergh and Mid Suffolk have Facebook and Twitter accounts. Whenever possible, we try to share useful and interesting information about our local communities, our organisation and our partners. For instance, we share committee meeting papers, news releases, promote countywide campaigns such as "Village of the Year" and "Green Suffolk" and at the moment,

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we are heavily promoting the Electoral Commission's campaign to encourage people to register to vote prior to the General Election.

All of this information is useful and could be shared by you to your friends and local community too.

We're politically neutral, we never send spam and we'll never ask for any personal information. You simply just need to click the "Like" or "Follow" button on our pages.

To find out more, please click on the links below:

Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/midsuffolkdistrictcouncil>

<http://www.facebook.com/BaberghDistrict>

Twitter

<http://twitter.com/BaberghDistrict> or @BaberghDistrict

<http://twitter.com/MidSuffolk> or @MidSuffolk

Babergh is also trialling a new social platform called www.streetlife.com, a British social network for local communities. If you already use Streetlife, please search for Babergh District Council.

World class cycling returns to Suffolk

You will have probably seen in the local press recently that Suffolk is to host two major cycling events during the summer. On 17/18 June, the Friends Life Women's Tour will race through Suffolk and on 12 September, the Friends Life Men's Tour will race through the county.

There will be more information to follow in a separate letter nearer the time but we wanted to pre-warn you about the likelihood of rolling road closures, potential crowds and to encourage you to make use of the opportunity to come together as a community to celebrate the races. It will also be a fantastic chance for local businesses to embrace the commercial opportunities.

Friends Life Women's Tour: Wednesday 17 and Thursday 18 June

Stage 1 of The Tour will be leaving Bury St Edmunds on Wednesday 17 June travelling through Mid Suffolk villages including: Gedding, Felsham, Rattlesden, Stowmarket, Stowupland, Stonham, Forward Green, Pettaugh, Crowfield, and Hemingstone before the riders leave Mid Suffolk via Henley into Ipswich and Suffolk Coastal, finishing in Aldeburgh.

Stage 2 on 18 June, starts and ends in Essex but will also travel through or near to East Bergholt, Hadleigh, Boxford and Sudbury.

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Friends Life Men's Tour: Saturday 12 September

Stage 7 will start in Fakenham and race through Norfolk before crossing into Suffolk. The route will take in Stowmarket, Needham Market, Hadleigh and East Bergholt before racing under the Orwell Bridge and into Ipswich town centre for the finish.

In the past, these races have been a fantastic event for spectators to see some of the world's top cyclists racing through our beautiful villages, towns and countryside. Please start to spread the word!

For further information please visit:

<http://www.womenstour.co.uk>

<http://www.tourofbritain.co.uk>

Local Government Transparency Code

Late last year, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils complied with the Government's legal obligations to release previously unpublished corporate information online.

This information, released under the Local Government Transparency Code, is available for residents in a bid to make local authorities more accountable to its citizens.

In December 2014, the Government issued the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities with an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000 e.g. parish councils, internal drainage boards, charter trustees and port health authorities.

If you are not aware of the transparency requirements described in this Code, please refer to the following link:

<http://salc.onesuffolk.net/assets/LAIS/LAIS1372-Transparency-Code-for-Smaller-Authorities-SALC.pdf>

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Community Infrastructure Levy consultations have now been completed and we would like to thank you all for your interest and feedback in response to the CIL engagement work.

Last week, in their Full Council meetings, both Babergh and Mid Suffolk approved a recommendation that their draft charging schedule and supporting documents should be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination.

There will be further engagement sessions with towns and parishes in the coming months. Dates will be advised nearer the time.

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Important News: Update on the implementation of Universal Credit – the new name for government financial support

Universal Credit is a new type of financial support for people of working age who are looking for work or on a low income. It is being introduced across the country gradually between April 2013 and 2017.

It's a simpler, single monthly payment for people in or out of work, which merges together some of the benefits and tax credits that they might be receiving currently.

It will replace:

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

In mid-February, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' areas were announced as locations for the tranche 3 roll-out of Universal Credit between September and November 2015.

The initial roll-out of Universal Credit will only involve new claims from single unemployed claimants who would normally have claimed Jobseekers Allowance (JSA). These claimants can have housing costs but only if they live in rented accommodation and satisfy a number of other criteria tests.

Discussions have taken place with housing colleagues on how to prepare our residents for work and to claim Universal Credit which include helping to get a bank account, ensure they can set up automated bill payments, and assist with monthly budgeting skills.

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has commenced working with our local landlords with regards supporting their tenants on Universal Credit. There will be an opportunity for Social Landlords to opt-in as a trusted partner which will allow them to recommend an alternative payment arrangement for their resident.

For further information and quick guides for claimants on budgeting help and support, as well as information for social landlords and partners, please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/universal-credit>

Newsletter ideas

What topics would you like to see covered in future editions of the Town and Parish Council newsletter? Please let us know by emailing stuart.atkinson@midsuffolk.gov.uk.