

Town & Parish Council Newsletter

Newsletter No: 17 July 2014



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

Contents:

New affordable housing development partner	1
Communities Urged To Take Lead In Emergencies	2
Local Government Transparency Code 2014	3
Whatfield Scoops Babergh's Village Of The Year Prize	3
Mendham Scoops Mid Suffolk's Village of the Year prize!	4
Tenants And Leaseholders Sought For Housing Board Vacancy	5
Summer Interns offer free internet lessons	7

New affordable housing development partner

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have appointed a new development partner in a bid to kickstart their affordable housing programme across their districts.

Havebury Housing Partnership, based in Bury St Edmunds, was successful in its bid after a formal tender and selection process.

It was already one of four existing housing associations the councils used to provide new affordable housing in Babergh and Mid Suffolk and was the most cost effective and efficient way to deliver the first phase of these new council housing developments.

The contract, which was awarded in May, will be for an initial four years.

Both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are committed to developing new council housing in response to recent government initiatives designed to encourage this.

The Councils' recently-adopted Strategic Plan is a blueprint of how development of the two districts will be delivered from 2014-2019. This includes shaping, influencing and providing the right mix and supply of housing.

Councillor Tony Bavington, Babergh District Council's Lead Member for Housing said: "In recent years, both Babergh and Mid Suffolk's development programme has been affected by the economic climate.

"Now the Government has made more money available so that we can start to support a vibrant, affordable housing development programme on council-owned land and other sites across our district.

"This appointment not only illustrates both Babergh and Mid Suffolk's commitment to a growth agenda across both districts but is in direct alignment with our corporate priorities."

And Councillor Marilyn Curran, Mid Suffolk District Council's Portfolio Holder for Housing, said: "There is a continuing high demand in both districts for affordable housing. Local people are still unable to live in the villages and areas they grew up in as they are being priced out of the market.

Town & Parish Council Newsletter

“The appointment of our new development partner means that we can start looking at all options to try and ensure the lifeblood of our communities can continue. We are excited to have Havebury on board as our new partner in this.”

Scott Bailey, Head of Development at Havebury Housing Partnership said “We are delighted to be working with Mid Suffolk & Babergh to deliver much needed affordable homes in the region. We have over twelve years’ experience in delivering high quality homes for those in housing need and acting as development partner is very much in line with Havebury’s own commitment to creating new homes.”

Communities Urged To Take Lead In Emergencies

Communities in the northern part of Mid Suffolk are being urged to take the lead in drafting an emergency plan for their area.

Residents in the following areas are being invited to take part in an emergency plan workshop so that Community Emergency Plans (CEPs) can be drafted and adopted: Rickinghall, Redgrave, Botesdale, Hinderclay, Wortham & Burgate, Palgrave, Stuston, Mellis, Thornham Magna, Thornham Parva, Gislingham, Yaxley, Eye, Braiseworth, Denham, Laxfield, Stradbroke, Syleham, Wingfield, Weybread, Mendham, Metfield & Fressingfield.

The workshop, which is being run by Suffolk’s Joint Emergency Planning Unit, was held on July 30th in Earsham.

The aims of this workshop is to provide town and parish councils and community groups with an understanding of the Community Resilience Programme and ensure that they have the tools, contacts and information that they will need to commence writing a community emergency plan.

There will also be a chance to ‘buddy up’ with other communities that are writing their Community Emergency Plans, which cover events such as: severe weather, flooding and power failures.

It will also provide communities with templates and other information available to assist in writing a plan. A program of further training and workshops to help volunteers gain the skills they need is ongoing.

Mid Suffolk has held similar workshops earlier this year and as a result 14 parishes within the district have completed CEPs, four parishes are nearing completion and a further nine have just started the process.

Councillor Derrick Haley, Leader of Mid Suffolk District Council and Portfolio Holder for Emergency Planning, said: “Having a community plan that everyone has been involved with and understands which role they have to play in cases of an emergency is imperative if we are to act efficiently and effectively should the worst happen.

“We have all seen images of communities across the UK that have suffered severe flooding or other weather-related situations. Our parishes and communities need to be ready in case any of these terrible events ever happen to us.

”Having an adopted CEP is one step along the way to making sure we could cope in an emergency.”

Town & Parish Council Newsletter

And Sue Herne, the Emergency Planning Officer leading Community Emergency Planning in Babergh & Mid Suffolk, added: "Having an adopted plan for each community is vitally important.

"One of the reasons for engaging with parishes along this geographical area, is that we do not have Community Plans for responding to Emergencies, that we are aware of, across the Northern part of the District.

"The catchment area does extend beyond those Parishes which directly adjoin the River Waveney.

"As a result of this, we are working in partnership with other local authorities that we share a boundary with in a bid to bring together all the parishes in the Upper Waveney Catchment area, including those from South Norfolk & Waveney District Council's, so that we can try and rectify the gaps in our emergency plans."

The CEP does not have to be written by members of the Parish Council, it can be drafted by members of a community or a mixture but the Parish Council need to be in agreement to having a plan and support the group by assisting with local communications about the plan's development.

The Parish Council also needs to support the community when they are recruiting volunteers and coordinators and to enable them to activate the plan should the need arise, and be prepared to adopt the completed plan.

Local Government Transparency Code 2014

The government is keen on higher public participation within local government and has set out to do this by introducing the Local Government Transparency Code 2014.

The code has been designed to increase democratic accountability through the publishing of data about the council's activities. This transparency is aimed at helping local people to contribute to local decision making and help shape public services.

The code will apply to both Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils but is also applicable to town and Parish councils that have a gross annual income or expenditure (whichever is the higher) exceeding £200,000.

Councils that meet this requirement must publish the mandatory part of the code and decide whether they wish to also provide the recommended information as well.

The full transparency code can be found at the website below:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/308185/Local_Government_Transparency_Code_2014_Final.pdf

FAQ about the Transparency code can be found at the website below:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/308186/Local_Government_Transparency_Code_2014_Frequently_Asked_Questions_Final.pdf

Whatfield Scoops Babergh's Village Of The Year Prize

Whatfield residents can be very proud of the village they live in - after scooping the top spot in Babergh's Village of the Year competition 2014.

Town & Parish Council Newsletter

Entrants to Babergh District Council's competition, which had to have up to 500 residents on the electoral roll to be eligible, were told the results recently with Whatfield narrowly beating previous winners Tatingstone in to second place.

The winner of this round receives the Cosford Trophy, framed certificate and £500 towards a community project.

District finalists are then entered into the semi-final round, with three villages then reaching the final stage with the overall winner receiving £1,000, a plaque, a certificate and becoming Suffolk Village of the Year.

Councillor Jennie Jenkins, Chairman of Babergh's Strategy Committee, said: "Whatfield thoroughly deserves the district accolade. It is a small but immensely vibrant village.

"Whatfield impressed on the feeling of community spirit and the way the school is integrated with the village, the building of a new play area and the depth of knowledge and interest of the conservation areas.

"Now it's fingers crossed for the county round."

Jo Beever, Babergh and Mid Suffolk's Community Grants Officer, said: "Babergh is delighted to announce Whatfield's success in this round of the competition

"It was a close contest and left the judges with a hard decision but this village very much impressed the judges with the feeling of everyone in the community being involved here."

Babergh's judging panel was made up of four district councillors who marked villages on their community spirit, general appearance, how well its parish council is run and the special activities happening in the village.

Whatfield now goes forward to the next round of the Suffolk Village of the Year competition, which is being judged later this month.

Mendham Scoops Mid Suffolk's Village of the Year prize!

The village of Mendham has been crowned the winner in Mid Suffolk's Village of the Year competition - and will now go on to represent the district in the county rounds!

Entrants to Mid Suffolk's competition had to have up to 500 residents on the electoral roll to be eligible.

District finalists are then entered into the semi-final round, with three villages then reaching the final stage with the overall winner receiving £1,000, a plaque, a certificate and becoming Suffolk Village of the Year.

Councillor Derrick Haley, Leader of Mid Suffolk District Council, said: "I think that Mendham will make an excellent representation for Mid Suffolk in the next round of the competition in July and we are behind them all of the way!

"Mendham has a really good sense of community and that is what shone through to the judges."

Over the last few years, Mendham has raised funds to provide a purpose built village hall and multi-use games area (MUGA).

Town & Parish Council Newsletter

This, no mean feat for a village with an electoral role of 358, impressed the judges.

The judges also noted that: "everyone seemed to have a role to play, the village is well kept and the car park weed- free".

"Community pride and care in all aspects of the village is very evident whether it be the churches, village hall, the playing field as well as volunteers for speed watch."

Jo Beever, Babergh and Mid Suffolk's Community Grants Officer, said: "We are delighted that Mendham was announced the Mid Suffolk round winner."

Mid Suffolk's judging panel was made up of 3 district councillors who marked villages on their community spirit, general appearance, how well its parish council is run and the special activities happening in the village.

Mendham now goes forward to the next round of the Suffolk Village of the Year competition, which is being judged later this month.

Tenants And Leaseholders Sought For Housing Board Vacancy

A vacancy has opened up for a tenant representative on the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils' Housing Board.

This individual will have the opportunity to influence the housing service, through policy and business plan reviews, as well as being consulted on key decisions about rents and expenditure.

Tenants and Leaseholders who live in Stowmarket, Stowupland, Needham Market, Creeting St Peter and Badley (known as the Mid Suffolk Central area) are being urged to step forward for election to the Housing Board.

Candidates need to be able to attend a monthly Board meeting and read papers before the meeting. Training and support to help them fulfil their role will be available.

Anyone interested needs to complete an application and write a short manifesto of 500 words or less, which should include three pledges on how they will represent tenants at the Board. The deadline for submitting applications is 12 noon on 25 July.

Help is available for anyone wishing to write a manifesto, just contact the Communities Officer – Tenant Involvement.

If more than one candidate comes forward, manifestos will be posted out to tenants in the central area on 13 August along with a voting paper. Each tenant can vote for a candidate up until 4 September and the results will then be announced on the 5 September. There needs to be an overall majority of votes to be elected.

Martin King, Head of Housing for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, said: "We are looking for good communicators, who are committed to helping tenants and want to have a say on how housing policies will impact on them.

"There is no need to have been involved in committees before as we provide training to all successful candidates.

"With more than 7,000 tenants and a £29 million budget between both councils, all members of the Housing Board have a crucial role to play in deciding how these homes are managed."

Town & Parish Council Newsletter

Anyone interested in becoming a tenant member should contact the Communities Officer – Tenant Involvement on (01449) 724781 or email: victoria.smy@midsuffolk.gov.uk

All tenant representatives on the Board will be eligible to stand for re-election in May 2015.

Summer interns offer free internet lessons

A group of summer Interns from Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils are holding free workshops to help people who have trouble using computer technology.

The Beginners' Internet and Technology Skills workshops, each lasting two hours, will be held at Suffolk One Sixth Form College on August 11th from 10am and 1pm. Student volunteers from the sixth form college will also be joining the interns to help on the day.

The idea for these workshops came from Babergh and Mid Suffolk's four summer interns, who are spending 13 weeks with the councils to gain experience of what it is like working in a district council. Their internship comes under Suffolk County Council's Raising The Bar initiative, which aims to raise education attainment levels within Suffolk.

Robert Carmichael, Management Support Intern at Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, said: "We came up with the community project of a computer and internet workshop for beginners from our work within both councils. We had become aware that there is a skills gap between those that can use the internet and those that can't. After seeing this we wanted to do something to help so we created this workshop.

"With the world becoming ever more digitalised this session will help those people who are keen to learn but are currently struggling to get online for one reason or another. We can take up to 30 people at each workshop and it would be fantastic if we can fill these places and help even more people enjoy the benefits the internet can bring."

The free workshops are open to anyone and will include:

- Setting up email an address

- Skype- video and instant messaging

- Internet Searches- understanding what to look for and how to look for it.

And any other general queries that attendees wish to discuss about technology that they have encountered or own.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk are committed to helping to provide stronger communities and part of their strategic priorities are based around enabling people to develop skills and assets which help themselves and their communities.

If you, or someone you know, would like to attend either of the sessions, which are being at 10am and 1pm on August 11th, or have any questions, then please contact Annabel Larter, Environmental Health Intern, on: 01449 724709, email Annabel.Larter@midsuffolk.gov.uk or Emma Seymour, Communities Intern, on 01449 724926.

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:

Town & Parish Council Newsletter

www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/workingtogether/keypartnersarea

or:

www.babergh.gov.uk/babergh/KeyPartnersArea

Newsletter Ideas

What do you want to see covered in the next newsletters?

We try hard to bring you as wide a selection of information as possible but there may be some areas you are keen to know more about. Let us know by emailing emma.morton@babbergh.gov.uk