



March 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.

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**Budgets for 2014/15 Approved**

**Babergh**

The key highlights of the Babergh budget are:

- No increase in the Babergh part of local Council Tax bills
- A transitional discretionary housing support fund set up to help those tenants most affected by a 7.5% increase in Council house rents

- A transformation fund set up with funding from the New Homes Bonus to support new ways of working that will in turn result in longer term savings, new income streams and/or better community outcomes

Council Leader, Cllr. Jennie Jenkins explained that “this is a budget that balances short term issues with longer-term imperatives. It acknowledges that we must have the wherewithal to properly fund future important outcomes such as more housing sustainable jobs to meet local needs”.

“I’m sure that Council Taxpayers will welcome another freeze in their bills and I hope all residents will see how our transformation fund reflects our new approach to budgeting whereby our resources are better targeted upon doing the things most needed by our communities. We aim to achieve more with less”.

### **Mid Suffolk**

The key highlights of the Mid Suffolk budget are:

- A below inflation increase (5p a week for a Band D property) in the Mid Suffolk part of local Council Tax bills
- A transitional discretionary housing support fund set up to help those tenants most affected by the average 5% increase in Council house rents
- A transformation fund set up with funding from the New Homes Bonus to support new ways of working that will in turn result in longer term savings, new income streams and/or better community outcomes

Council Leader and Finance & Resources Portfolio Holder, Cllr. Derrick Haley explained that “this is about prudently raising a small additional amount of revenue each year to spend on initiatives that will make a significant positive impact upon our communities.

“This approach complements our ‘invest-to-prosper’ strategy of carefully focussing our resources whilst general funding from the government is progressively reduced.

Cllr. Haley continued “I know in the past, that some Mid Suffolk councillors proposed a similar increase and I’m pleased that they and others recognised this was a sensible strategic measure”.

The extra revenue raised will be used to enhance the Council’s efforts to work with its various communities in boosting economic growth and sustainable employment opportunities.

Cllr Haley continued “The transformation fund is an exciting development reflecting our new approach to budgeting whereby our resources are better targeted upon doing the things most needed by our communities”.

## **Proposal to Fit Solar Panels to Council Houses**

You may have already read about this proposal in some recent media stories, but what may not have been clear is that at this stage, no decision on this scheme has yet been made by either council. However, the business case for the scheme is scheduled for a decision by Mid Suffolk Executive Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> April and by Babergh Strategy Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> April. (It has already been included in the capital programmes approved by Full Councils)

The aim of the programme is to generate income to maintain council services and to save both energy and the environment by generating electricity from the sun rather than using fossil fuels. However, it will only be possible to fit solar panels to a limited number of homes due to several technical constraints including:

- the direction your home faces, which determines how much sunlight it gets throughout the day (the closer this is to south the better);
- the pitch of the roof;
- any excessive shading from trees or buildings; and
- the capacity of the local electricity grid to receive all of the power generated from all the properties fitted with solar panels in the area

We have already identified those homes which might be suitable; however, if the scheme goes ahead, a company will need to carry out surveys on our behalf to check each property individually. If a home is suitable, we will write to the occupier giving them more information and would hope to start a programme of installation in May-June.

The benefit to residents of solar panels is their annual electricity bills could reduce by an average of £150 per year, depending upon usage of electricity.

## **Funding for home energy efficiency improvements**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have partnered with the Suffolk County Council and all the other district and borough Councils in Suffolk to offer a new council backed service called Suffolk Energy Action. It provides funding and advice for the installation of energy efficiency improvements, like a replacement boiler, cavity wall, solid wall and loft insulation or even solar panels.

Suffolk Energy Action (SEA) is designed to help all Suffolk residents save money on their energy bills and encourage the reduction of carbon emissions through energy efficiency improvements. It will provide assessments on the energy performance of homes, identify potential improvements, and provide options and advice for grant funding.

Many householders living in homes without mains gas and/or in properties without cavity walls may qualify for extra financial assistance via the Suffolk Energy Action scheme. For example, early takers can qualify for a Green Deal Cash-back worth over £4,000 in the case of solid wall insulation.

To find out what options are available visit Suffolk Energy Action website [www.suffolkenergyaction.org](http://www.suffolkenergyaction.org)) or call freephone 0800 840 9090 (or from a mobile: 0208 633 9760).

### **End of CSD Contract, Ways to Pay**

As you may already know, from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 Mid Suffolk and Babergh will be combining their finance teams into a shared service. Billing and settlements to suppliers for both Councils will be managed by this team. For the majority of people, the way they deal with either council will not change, however we have contacted and advised those few individuals who will be affected.

The majority of residents throughout the districts use Direct Debit which is the easiest and most convenient way to pay with various collection dates available. A Direct Debit can be set up via our websites, protected by the Direct Debit guarantee and at least two weeks' notice of any changes to the scheduled payments will be given

Payment can also be via our Website (24 hours per day) – address below, where customers can pay using a Debit or Credit card (a charge applies for Credit cards).

Those wishing to use the Automated Telephone Payment Number **0845 372 4122 (24 hours a day/ 7 days a week)** can use a credit or debit card (a charge may apply for credit card payments). Customers will need to have their bill (with the payment reference number) and card details ready when making the call.

Other payment methods include On-Line Banking (CHAPS and BACS); Standing Orders; Cheques or Postal Order.

Both Councils have changed their bank to Lloyds Bank. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 our new bank details for **Mid Suffolk** payments are:

Lloyds Bank PLC  
Sort Code: 30-99-85  
Account number: 00716577 for Council Tax and Business Rates  
Account number: 00708698 for Council Housing Rent

Our new bank details for **Babergh** payments are:

Lloyds Bank PLC  
Sort Code: 30-98-31  
Account number: 01217231 for Council Tax and Business Rates  
Account number: 01217347 for Council Housing Rent

### **Please include the account number from the bill.**

For standing order payments customers should contact their bank and provide them with the above details.

For further information on how to pay for any bills and services from Mid Suffolk or Babergh, please visit the websites [www.midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk) or [www.babergh.gov.uk](http://www.babergh.gov.uk) or call: **01473 825798** or ask at the Customer Support desks in Needham Market or in the Hadleigh Office.

### **Parish Liaison Meetings**

Parish Liaison meetings have now been held in both Districts in November 2013 and all Parish Councils were invited. The meetings were welcomed in both Districts as a positive way to exchange information and as a way of building and maintaining better relationships between Parish and District Councils.

The Localism item presented by Tom Barker and Jonathan Free provoked the most positive feedback and has instilled enthusiasm in several Parish Councils, although it wasn't one of the main presentation topics. Planning was also subject of discussion, both in regard to the actual development management process and also the introduction of Neighbourhood Plans. As a result of this, Corporate Managers for Development Management have been asked to provide training for Parish Councillors in the near future. For more information on this please contact Christine Thurlow, [christine.thurlow@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:christine.thurlow@babergh.gov.uk).

Feedback showed enthusiasm for more regular meetings so we will be returning to holding sessions twice a year. The next meetings will take place in Babergh on 3<sup>rd</sup> June and in Mid Suffolk on 5<sup>th</sup> June and then there will be further meetings in November 2014. Other feedback indicated that Parishes would prefer more time for discussion, so we will ensure that officers presenting items take this into consideration.

We will be working with our elected members to encourage you to attend these meetings, and also to submit ideas for presentations and topics for discussion. We hope this will help the meetings to feel more relevant and worthwhile for you to attend.

### **Village of the Year**

The 2014 Village of the Year event was launched recently. This year villages with 500 or fewer people on their electoral role qualify to enter. There is a prize for the overall Suffolk winner of £1,000 plus several other smaller prizes. Last year Great Barton won the event – it would be great if this year a Babergh or Mid Suffolk village won. All those villages who qualify should have already received an information leaflet and entry form. For further details for either district please contact [Josephine.beever@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:Josephine.beever@babergh.gov.uk).

### **The Women's Tour 2014**

The first ever international women's only Tour will take place entirely in the East of England and will start on Wednesday 7 May and ends on Sunday 11 May 2014, with two of the five stages coming through Suffolk.

The Women's Tour has been awarded top status by professional cycling's governing body, the UCI, meaning it will bring the top female riders and teams in the world to compete for the title.

Already confirmed to ride is Marianne Vos, the reigning World and Olympic Road Race Champion. Marianne is widely acknowledged as the greatest ever female cyclist, having won world titles on the road, track and in cyclo-cross, not to mention Olympic Gold in the first two.

Leading the way for Great Britain, Olympic stars Laura Trott, Joanne Rowsell and Dani King will also be competing in the Women's Tour; together they took gold in the team pursuit at the London 2012 Olympic Games, not to mention Lizzie Armitstead who took silver in the women's road race.

So where you can you see the race as it visits Suffolk?

On Friday 9 May, the third stage of the race will get underway in Felixstowe, moving on through Brightwell, Little Bealings, Kesgrave and around Ipswich, before passing out through Holbrook and Freston, crossing the border into Manningtree and finishing in Clacton-on-Sea.

Then on Sunday 11 May, the fifth and final stage will once more visit Suffolk. The 108km stage will set off from Harwich, crossing into Suffolk and racing through East Bergholt and the picturesque villages of Constable Country and the stunning landscape of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The race will continue through Babergh District, visiting the market towns of Hadleigh, Sudbury, Long Melford and Lavenham, finally weaving through Mid Suffolk, visiting Great Finborough and Little Welnetham, before arriving in St. Edmundsbury for the finish line on Angel Hill, Bury St. Edmunds.

Whilst the race itself will be a thrilling display of competitive, world class road racing there will also be a range of cycling related activities suitable for all abilities. Why not rally round in your local community to co-ordinate activities, perhaps designing supporting flags or banners to cheer on the World and Olympic champions. At the stage finish in Bury St. Edmunds, there will be specialist trade stands, clubs and interactive activities to keep everyone busy and entertained right up until the professionals' race onto the cobbled streets of the town.

If you'd like to get involved, why not consider taking part in the Women on Wheels ladies-only charity ride in aid of St. Nicholas Hospice. There is a choice of routes, both starting on Charter Square, Bury St. Edmunds on the morning of Sunday 11 May and taking in the surrounding countryside cycle paths, before finishing in the Abbey Gardens ahead of the arrival of the professionals. To find out more, or to register, visit [www.suffolksport.com/wow](http://www.suffolksport.com/wow)

For further information and up to date news, please visit:

[www.womenstour.co.uk](http://www.womenstour.co.uk)

Useful Links:

<http://youtu.be/JRc79kVeVWY>

[www.visitsuffolk.com](http://www.visitsuffolk.com)

[www.adnams.co.uk](http://www.adnams.co.uk)

[@thewomenstour](http://www.facebook.com/thewomenstour)

## **Consultation on the new joint draft Local Validation**

As part of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils integration and transformation to a single shared planning service we are reviewing a number of our key planning documents to harmonise, as far as we can, practice and procedures across both districts.

One of the key documents we want to harmonise at this stage is our Local Validation List (LVL). This is a list of documents that will normally be required to accompany various types of planning applications. It has been designed to be equal to the scale and complexity of the application in question, with all the requirements for information based on what the Local Planning Authority will need to consider when reviewing a submitted application.

We believe that the list is an important tool in providing successful pre-application advice and a smooth passage through the application process. However, we want to be sure that Parish and Town Councils are confident we're securing the right information so that everyone understands what is proposed in future applications and can see relevant background information.

The two Councils are keen to design a planning service where the consideration of planning applications is transparent and accessible. We are also in the process of reviewing our pre application service to ensure it is accessible, quick and of a high quality. We aim to provide a pre-application service that ensures negotiation and discussion takes place before an application is submitted and includes the community where appropriate.

We will shortly be beginning an eight week consultation on the new joint draft Local Validation List. The consultation will run from 24 March 2014 to 12 May 2014 and it is hoped that the feedback obtained during this period will help us to produce a document that is as effective and user friendly as possible. We are interested in your views on our draft and welcome your contribution.

The Local Validation List PDF can be viewed or downloaded on the following web pages:

<http://www.babergh.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning/transformation/>

<http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning/transformation/>

If you have any questions about the LVL or the consultation process, please don't hesitate to contact us at one of the following email addresses:

[planningtransformation@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:planningtransformation@babergh.gov.uk)

[planningtransformation@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:planningtransformation@midsuffolk.gov.uk)

## **It's Your Vote – Use It**

Elections will take place on **Thursday 22nd May 2014**, to elect Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), to serve for the next 5 years. The Eastern Region of the UK will elect 7 Members.

Polling stations will be open from 7:00am until 10:00pm.

All registered electors will be sent a poll card, which should arrive by 17th April. These will give details of the location of their polling station, or when to expect to receive their postal vote papers.

Any elector who has not registered to vote, or any elector who does not currently vote by post but wishes to do so, should complete and return a form as soon as possible. Completed forms to register to vote must be received at the relevant office by 6th May. Forms to apply to vote by post must be received by 7th May. Forms are available on our websites, or from [aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://aboutmyvote.co.uk), or can be posted if requested by phone. Please call the appropriate council.

The ballot paper will show the political parties and any individual candidates who are standing for election. Under the name of the political party will be the names of up to 7 candidates. The final list of parties and candidates will be available from 24th April.

Counting of the votes will take place on Sunday 25th May. Seats will be allocated on a proportional basis, and the results will be declared after 9:00pm that day.

More detail will be on the Babergh and Mid Suffolk websites – [www.babergh.gov.uk/elections](http://www.babergh.gov.uk/elections), [www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/elections](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/elections).

**By-elections** will take place at the same time, in some areas:

In **Babergh**, electors in the South Cosford ward will vote for a District Councillor. This will affect people who live in Aldham, Elmsett, Kersey, Nedging-with-Naughton, Semer and Whatfield. They will receive two ballot papers.

In **Mid Suffolk**, electors in Stowmarket's North ward will vote for a District Councillor and a Town Councillor. They will receive three ballot papers.

### **Paws on Patrol**

Dog walkers in Babergh and Mid Suffolk are being asked to help police sniff out crime as part of a new 'Paws on Patrol' initiative.

The scheme is being supported by both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils. It encourages dog walkers to register with the police and then report any suspicious behaviour they may come across whilst out and about, either by calling the non-emergency 101 number, or 999 if they believe a crime is in progress.

Two registration days across the districts have been organised. One took place on Sunday 23 March at Needham Lake and a second will be held on Saturday 12 April at Alton water from 10 am to 2 pm. As well as being able to sign-up to the scheme, dog owners will have the opportunity to get their dogs micro chipped for free courtesy of the RSPCA Suffolk East & Ipswich Branch; get a complimentary doggy bag and meet with dog business providers and have the opportunity to chat with canine behaviourists and dog trainers.

The scheme also encourages dog owners to be responsible community members ensuring that they clean up after their pet and it is vaccinated, micro-chipped and wears an ID collar. Once



joined-up, a membership pack will be issued and discounts available from supporting dog related businesses.

The Paws on Patrol committee are currently in the process of identifying further venues for launches later in the year, in west of the Babergh area, and the north of Mid Suffolk.

Anyone who is interested in joining the scheme but is unable to make any of the registration days should contact their local Safer Neighbourhood Team by dialling 101 or email via the website: [www.suffolk.police.uk](http://www.suffolk.police.uk).

### **Want more going on in your town or village?**

An inspirational day of talks, forums and activities has been arranged for anyone who wants to develop the towns and villages in which they live.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Communities Team has organised two FREE events where people can come along and find out how they can organise activities such as a community festival, events and activities for the local village hall, recruit new volunteers, start a community group or run a sports club.

The Community Roadshows will be a jam-packed day including inspirational speakers talking about community success stories, informal forums to discuss ideas and share best practice and an information market with community professionals on hand to tell you about their work. As well as leaving with a head full of ideas, you'll also have a toolkit packed full of information, contacts and ideas on how to get your ideas off the ground.

The first roadshow will take place on Saturday 17 May, 10am-12.30pm or 1.30pm-4pm at Stutton Village Hall, Maningtree Road, Stutton, IP9 2TA.

Some of the topics that will be covered on the day by guest speakers include how to start a volunteer group, help on applying for funding and funding forms explained, how to apply for money from the Section 106 pot and the importance of promotion online.

On top of this full day of activities, there will also be an opportunity for people to apply for on the spot speed-funding for any ideas they may have to help kick start them. These sessions will run between 12.30pm-2pm.

Zoey Banthorpe, Communities Officer for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, said: "The idea behind these events is to encourage and help people put on more events and be more active in the village or towns in which they live. There are so many things that people could do – such as setting up their own Digital Cinema Club, organising a festival or community event, taking on the management of a local green space or setting up a sports club for young people within the village.

"I would urge anyone who has ever thought of doing something like this to come along. We have all the tools on offer and can help you get your idea kick-started. You do not need to be an expert or have any previous experience of organising events; you just need to have the enthusiasm to make things happen in your community and we can help with the rest."

The second roadshow will take place in September at Woolpit Village Hall. Details about this event will follow later in the year.

To find out more, or to book your place on the event, contact Jo Beever in the Communities Team by emailing: [jo.beever@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:jo.beever@midsuffolk.gov.uk) or 01449 724654 or visit [www.babergh.gov.uk/roadshow](http://www.babergh.gov.uk/roadshow) for the full programme.

Places are limited, so make sure you get booked in quick!

### **Countywide call to shape the future of housing in Suffolk**

Over 80,000 households will receive questionnaires inviting residents to have their say on what they value most about living in Suffolk and their aspirations for the future.

From today, in what will be Suffolk's biggest housing survey, all seven district and borough councils are calling on people to tell them about where they live, and what housing choices they are likely to face.

Everyone can get involved - from young people moving away from the family home to older people planning for the future. All participants can opt to enter a free prize draw, with £100 in retail vouchers available for one winner per local council area.

The results will help local councils influence the way housing is provided in future to meet the needs of a changing population. When combined with census results and housing market information, the countywide survey will paint a compelling picture for planners and housing developers alike.

Speaking on behalf of all partners, Ian Blofield, Chairman of the Suffolk Strategic Housing partnership, said:

"This major survey will determine the way we meet the county's housing needs for years to come. The fact that the whole county is involved is important as it will give us a clear picture about what matters to people when it comes to where they live, what could be improved and what people will need as they grow older.

"With the wider economic pressures that we face, and an ageing population, we must be in a position to use evidence to back up our decisions about the county's housing needs as we plan ahead."

Using the electoral roll, printed surveys will be issued to a random sample of 25% of the county's population. Anyone can complete the survey online by visiting [www.tinyurl.com/SuffolkHousingSurvey](http://www.tinyurl.com/SuffolkHousingSurvey)

With well documented links between the quality of housing and people's health, and an emphasis on developers to build houses that meet demand, and in which people want to live, councils expect to be able to use the information provided by the survey to plan for the next decade.

Ian Blofield continues: "I am pleased that all of our district and borough councils, county council, University Campus Suffolk and voluntary organisations are working together to plan and deliver the survey.

"This represents our commitment to listen to people's views. It also makes a significant cost saving to carry out a countywide housing survey rather than each district and borough undertaking their own individual surveys."

The deadline for completion is 23 April 2014. The results will be published later in the summer

### **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](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/workingtogether/keypartnersarea)

or:

[www.babergh.gov.uk/babergh/KeyPartnersArea](http://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 maybe some areas you are keen to know more about. Let us know by emailing [emma.morton@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:emma.morton@babergh.gov.uk).

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](mailto:workingtogether@babergh.gov.uk)

For Mid Suffolk [workingtogether@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:workingtogether@midsuffolk.gov.uk)

Town and Parish Council Integration and Transformation Newsletter