

Town & Parish Council Newsletter

Newsletter No: 27 March 2016



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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We upload every issue of the newsletter to our website: if you would prefer to share the newsletter from there rather than as an email attachment, you can always find the latest edition online at:

<http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/home/town-and-parish-council-newsletter>

Or:

<http://www.babergh.gov.uk/home/town-and-parish-council-newsletter>

Across Babergh & Mid Suffolk

£1bn Devolution Deal announced for East Anglia

Following weeks of negotiation between Government, local councils and LEAs, a deal worth over £1bn for East Anglia has today been announced by George Osborne MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

As part of the deal East Anglia would receive:

- £900m (£30m a year for the next 30 years) to invest in infrastructure
- £175m to invest in housing

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The Deal, which sets out a fundamentally different relationship between Government and local public services, was negotiated by Leaders from councils across Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and the New Anglia and Greater Cambridgeshire and Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnerships.

If ratified by the relevant councils and LEP Boards, The Deal would see decisions currently being made by Government on such things as infrastructure, growth, employment and skills being made in East Anglia in the future.

Cllr Jennie Jenkins, Chair of Suffolk Public Sector Leaders Group said: “The Deal reflects the fact that Suffolk and the rest of East Anglia delivers some significant economic benefits to UK PLC and beyond through agriculture, on and offshore energy and research and innovation in science and technology.

“However, it is important to be clear that what has been published today isn’t a ‘done deal’. It requires ratification by each of the local councils and the LEP Boards.

“We will also be carrying out extensive engagement over the coming months with local communities and businesses across Suffolk with feedback being used to inform the paper that councils will consider in the summer.”

The Deal requires the creation of a Combined Authority and directly elected Mayor and it is proposed that the first mayoral elections would be in May 2017 alongside county council elections.

The directly elected Mayor would act as Chair to the East Anglia Combined Authority and would exercise the following powers and functions devolved from Government:

- Responsibility for a multi-year, consolidated and devolved local transport budget
- Responsibility for a new Key Route Network of local authority roads that will be managed and maintained by the Combined Authority on behalf of the Mayor
- Powers over strategic planning and housing, including £175m ring-fenced funding to deliver an ambitious target of new homes

The new East Anglia Combined Authority, working with the Mayor, would receive the following powers:

- Control of a new additional £30 million a year funding allocation over 30 years, to be invested to the East Anglia Single Investment Fund, to boost growth
- Responsibility for chairing an area-based review of 16+ skills provision, the outcomes of which will be taken forward in line with the principles of the devolved arrangements, and devolved 19+ adult skills funding from 2018/19.
- Joint responsibility with the government to co-design the new National Work and Health Programme designed to focus on those with a health condition or disability and the very long term unemployed.

Further negotiation and clarification on the specifics of the Deal will continue over the months ahead before each of the councils debates the Deal at Full Council meetings

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in the summer. Ahead of these meetings there will be extensive engagement with communities and businesses.

This is the first Deal for East Anglia but, as has happened elsewhere in the country, the local authorities and LEPs are keen to negotiate further Deals over the coming months and years.

The Deal document can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/east-anglia-devolution-deal

2016/17 Council Budgets see small Council Tax rises

At full Council meetings last month both Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Council voted on their budgets for the 2016/17 financial year.

Mid Suffolk District Council met on Thursday 25 February to discuss their budget.

Mid Suffolk residents in a Band D property will face a rise in their council tax of just under 6p a week (£2.97 a year) after councillors voted in favour of the 2016/17 budget today (Feb 25).

However, more than half of the district live in Band A, B and C properties and will see an even smaller increase of 5p a week or less (£2.64 a year or less) on their council tax bills. Those in the largest properties will face an 11p a week increase, just under a £6 a year rise. The increase was voted through as the council faces a significant decrease in core funding from central government.

However, the council has pledged that those most in need will not pay more than 5 per cent of their council tax bill as it continues its Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The key highlights from the meeting are:

- An increase of 1.9 per cent in council tax precept
- Mid Suffolk is using £500k of Government support from the New Homes Bonus and Business Rates Grants to support the budget
- A decrease of 1 per cent on council house rents, equivalent to an average rent reduction of 84p a week, as required by the Welfare Reform and Work Bill
- An increase of 1 per cent on sheltered housing rents, equivalent to an average increase of 7p per week
- An increase of 10 per cent on garage rents, equivalent to an average increase of 76p per week, which will be used to maintain and increase council housing stock
- No change to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for eligible residents

Babergh District Council met on Tuesday 23 February to discuss their budget.

Babergh residents will face a rise in their council tax of 10p a week (for a Band D property) after councillors voted in favour of the 2016/17 budget this evening (Feb 23).

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It is the first time in four years that councillors have made the tough decision to increase their part of the council tax precept by 3.5 per cent. This means those in the smallest properties face just over a £3 a year rise, those in a Band D property a £5 a year increase and those in the largest properties a £10 a year rise. The increase was voted through as the council faces a significant decrease in core funding from central government.

However, the council has pledged that those most in need will not pay more than 8.5 per cent of their council tax bill as it continues its Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The key highlights from the meeting are:

- An increase of 3.5 per cent in council tax precept
- Babergh is using £2 million of Government support from the New Homes Bonus and Business Rates Grants to support the budget
- A decrease of 1 per cent on council house rents, equivalent to an average rent reduction of 92 pence a week, as required by the Welfare Reform and Work Bill
- An increase of 10 per cent on garage rents, equivalent to an average increase of 76 pence per week, which will be used to maintain and increase council housing stock
- No change to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for eligible residents

Cllr Jennie Jenkins, Babergh District Council Leader, said: "For the first time in four years Babergh has taken the extremely difficult decision to increase its part of the council tax bill. It is not a decision we have taken lightly but we have taken it in order that we are able to maintain essential services and put us in a better position to face the financial challenges of the next three years.

New Charge for Rubble, Soil and Plasterboard Waste

Suffolk residents taking rubble, soil and plasterboard to Suffolk Household Waste Recycling Centres are being advised that current restrictions to the amounts allowed will soon be removed, and small charges will apply.

From 1 April 2016, residents will be able to bring unlimited amounts rubble, soil, hardcore and plasterboard* to Suffolk Recycling Centres and a charge will be made according to the amount presented, starting from £2 per 25kg bag. This decision, made by Suffolk County Council, will help to reduce costs of the service as part of the overall 2016/2017 budget savings. The new arrangements remove the current two bag limit on these types of materials at Recycling Centres.

On arrival, customers will need to report to site staff who will determine the amount they need to pay based on weight and payment will be taken by debit or credit card. A receipt will be provided for all transactions. Helping householders to dispose of these materials at Suffolk Recycling Centres is not a statutory duty and is a cost to the taxpayer, although it is a service well appreciated by householders and small businesses.

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Customer surveys show that current arrangements are thought to be restrictive and complicated, and these changes will simplify the process.

The best thing residents can do is reduce or reuse their waste wherever possible. Residents are encouraged to donate hardcore and rubble for reuse online via www.suffolkfreegle.org or www.freecycle.org

Residents can retain excess soil for planting and potting, or ask neighbours, friends or relatives if they have any use for it. There are also alternative options for dealing with these types of waste including hiring a skip or tonne bag.

Further information is available at www.suffolkrecycling.org.uk

Polling Station Staff & Counters Needed

Babergh & Mid Suffolk Electoral Services Team are looking for people who may be interested in working during Election periods next year, when we often have vacancies to fill for Polling Station Staff & Counters.

If you are interested please email: canvass@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

We will contact you in September 2016 to come in and take part in a workshop to see whether you would like to help us.

Mid Suffolk District

Work Starts on New Council Houses in Laxfield

A sod-cutting ceremony on Tuesday 2 March marked the start of nine new council houses in Laxfield – part of a project to build 65 new homes in Mid Suffolk and Babergh, the first new council houses in either district for nearly 30 years.

Mid Suffolk District Council's Housing Portfolio Holder, Cllr Nick Gowrley, and Cllr Julie Flatman, Ward Member for Stradbroke and Laxfield, were joined by Paul Pitcher, of Suffolk-based construction firm Wellington, to cut the first sod to mark the start of the £1 million project to build nine houses, flats and bungalows on two sites in the village.

Four one-bedroom flats and two two-bedroom homes will be built on the Noyes Avenue site, where the ceremony took place, with three two-bedroom bungalows set to be built on a separate site on Mill Road. All of the homes will be let under 'local needs' rules, with priority being given to people on Mid Suffolk District Council's housing register.

The Laxfield project is part of a wider initiative announced last year to build 38 new council homes in Mid Suffolk and 27 in Babergh. The project is being delivered with

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development partner, Havebury Housing Partnership, with the homes constructed by Lowestoft-based Wellington.

The nine new homes are set to be completed later this year.

New MyGo Employment Service Launches

A new service that offers young people help to gain employment or to access further skills, training and education has opened its doors for its first clients in Stowmarket.

MyGo, which is based at The Mix in Stowmarket, is the district's first dedicated youth employment service and is the flagship product of the Greater Ipswich City Deal. It marks an extension to the service that was launched in Ipswich in November 2014.

The MyGo service for 16-24 year olds is the result of Mid Suffolk District Council's partnership with Suffolk County Council and a collaboration with The Mix, Job Centre Plus, public services provider PeoplePlus and national employment charity Tomorrow's People.

Its official launch on Wednesday 27 January was be marked with an event which brought together all of the key partners, as well as staff, clients and employers.

MyGo in Ipswich has been extremely successful with 3,000 people registering for support and more than 800 of these having secured employment as a result.

Investment by Mid Suffolk has enabled MyGo to launch in Stowmarket on a quicker timescale than originally planned and in a permanent location.

The service has already seen more than 350 young people through its doors asking to access MyGo's services since it opened its doors at The Mix – an already established youth service within the town – on 1 August 2015 and the service provides the same as the centre in Ipswich. Local young people can now access:

- Employment support for young people whether they are unemployed or not and a more intensive support for young people at risk of becoming long-term unemployed.
- Support from day one of unemployment, or before, in a welcoming and professional environment that integrates access to benefits and employment support into a single offer.
- A constant and trusted advisor (coach) to support and challenge the young person to progress into work and enable them to navigate the complex programme offer available.
- A seamless service from 16-24 years that prevents cut off of support at 18 and removal of artificial service barriers that often prevent progress.
- A universal drop-in for all, careers advice and, for those who require it, a dedicated work coach to support them into work.

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Babergh District

Community Caretaker Scheme Pilot rolled out in Babergh

Babergh District Council is offering grant funding to town parish councils to enable them to employ a street cleanser at a local level in our Community Caretaker scheme. The agreed number of hours cleansing per week would be based on the size and demographics of the town or parish. The pilot in the Babergh district of the scheme, which is successfully used for more than 30 parishes in the Mid Suffolk area, started in January 2016.

We have 5 parishes in the Babergh district taking part in the trial:

- Bures St Mary
- Holbrook
- Stratford St Mary
- East Bergholt
- Lavenham

The pilot will run for 6 months after which we will evaluate. Early feedback is very positive so it is hoped that the scheme will continue in the pilot parishes and be offered to other interested town and parish councils.

The scheme provides employment for a local person and the real benefits are:-

- The caretaker knows their local area and where the hot spots are
- They have no travelling time or vehicle cost so 100% of funding is spent on litter clearance
- It creates civic pride – the community see a local person picking up litter and are less likely to drop litter
- The parish council can deploy their litter picker on days/times that suit them

Babergh still offers a routine mechanical sweeping service and continues to collect fly-tipped waste from the areas taking part in the trial.

The Scheme in Mid Suffolk

At present 30 Town and Parish Councils in Mid Suffolk receive grant funding to employ a local Community Caretaker who carries out general litter picking and cleansing duties within the town or parish. These cleansers are directly employed by the town or parish council giving the area more control over where the resource is best utilised.

What are the benefits to the town or parish council?

- The ability to have those areas cleansed that are most important to them.
- Employment for a local person

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- Local pride; often the cleanser is someone who lives within the community so others are less likely to litter if they know the person who will be clearing up after them.

Why would the District Council offer the scheme?

- The scheme is already set up and runs successfully in Mid Suffolk
- The District Council would have less need to deploy staff to those areas with a Community Caretaker

How to find out more

If you're interested in the Community Caretaker Scheme, either the existing scheme in Mid Suffolk or the pilot in Babergh, get in touch with Sarah Carter, Public Realm Officer, via sarah.carter@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk or on 01449 724 946.

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 duncan.merren@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk