



Facing the Future

May 2011

Welcome to our fourth 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?

In order to save money, and to protect front line services as far as possible, our two councils have already agreed to integrate our staff under a shared chief executive. To then make further savings, we have also agreed in principle that the preferred way forward would be to replace the two councils with a single new district council, provided this is supported by a majority of those voting in a local poll.

We have also been looking at how we could work better with our town and parish councils, whether as two separate district councils or one.

New joint chief executive

All town and parish councils across both Babergh and Mid Suffolk were sent information in March announcing the appointment of Charlie (Charlotte) Adan as the new shared chief executive for both district councils.

We are delighted to be able to confirm that Charlie will be taking up her new role on Monday May 23.

Charlie has had extensive first-hand experience in building good long-term relationships with town and parish councils 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.

Additionally, Charlie was herself a parish clerk in Nottinghamshire for the five years she lived in that county – so she understands many of the challenges facing the people directly involved in this level of local government.

Locality arrangements

We will be continuing discussions with parish and town councils and other community representatives throughout the coming summer to develop detailed locality working arrangements. This work will build upon the initial ideas expressed by those parish and town councils who completed the online questionnaire and attended our road shows at the end of last year.

The locality arrangements will be designed to ensure that we consider the needs and requirements of local communities as we integrate the functions and services offered

by each council and also consider the implications of the potential merging of the two Councils to create a new single council.

This work will include:

- Further consultation and engagement with parish and town councils on the potential structural arrangements (eg options such as parish clusters/area forums etc).
- Work to determine the role and remit for the model (including powers, responsibilities, and links to other bodies).
- Consideration of the nature and function of these arrangements (i.e. frequency and format of meetings, nature of the officer support function)
- Working up the officer support role.
- Keeping an eye on what developments occur with the County Council's proposals to make alternative arrangements for service delivery

We will also be working with groups such as the Suffolk Association of Local Councils and the Suffolk Association of Voluntary Organisations to ensure that their views and requirements feed into the work we are doing.

Once we have developed locality proposals based on our further planned discussions, we will then consult all town and parish councils more formally on these, together with the budget proposals for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils for 2012/13. We anticipate that this consultation will take place in September 2011, and is likely to include a number of liaison meetings across the Babergh and Mid Suffolk area.

We do hope that your council will want to be involved in these discussions to help shape our working arrangements for the future – irrespective of the outcome of the local poll.

What next?

The Local Poll

During week commencing Monday May 9 everyone registered to vote in local government elections in Mid Suffolk and Babergh will receive a local poll pack.

The question being asked in the poll is whether Babergh and Mid Suffolk district councils should be replaced by a single new district council.

The information pack will provide information about the whole issue and guidance as to how eligible electors can cast their votes. More detailed information will also be available on the websites of both councils.

There will then be a four week period (until Monday June 6) to vote on whether our two councils should be replaced by a new single district council.

The whole local poll will be run by the independent Electoral Reform Services.

If more than 50% of those voting in each council area vote yes, we will ask the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to carry out a boundary and electoral review.

We would ask for a review based on the current boundaries of the two councils. We would not agree to the inclusion of other council areas in this review if that meant that residents in any part of our two districts might become residents in another council's area, against their wishes.

At the end of this review, which will also include public consultation, the recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England will be considered by the Secretary of State. If he gives his approval, one new single district council would be likely to be created from April 2013.

However, if more than 50% of those voting in either council area vote no, integration of staff and services will continue but the two councils would remain as separate authorities.

We would then have to find other options to raise income and reduce spending.

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 you would like more detailed information on the local poll and other aspects of the proposed creation of a new single district council, please go to the Babergh or Mid Suffolk websites:

www.babergh.gov.uk/babergh/workingtogether
www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/workingtogether

If you have any questions regarding the poll or the potential merger please call the Working Together helpline on (01449) 724850 or email workingtogether@midsuffolk.gov.uk or workingtogether@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
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