



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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## Accommodation Review Underway

As part of the process of meeting the financial challenge that Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, like all local authorities, face, we have now launched a review of the two councils' accommodation needs. This review is being carried out by commercial property consultants Lambert Smith Hampton. In providing Lambert Smith Hampton with their brief for this review we have been very clear that the right office accommodation is critical to the development of Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils' partnership and that it must improve the efficiency of staff and provide effective access for the public of both districts.

It is important to be clear that **no decision has been taken to move or otherwise reassign office space at this stage**. This accommodation review aims to inform any such decision the councils may make in the future and ensure that any dangers of reassigning office space are clearly indicated and considered before any decisions are made.

Once it is clear what the costs and the benefits of any change in accommodation may be the councils will be in a better position to decide what, if any, changes need to be made to where staff are based across our two districts.

Lambert Smith Hampton aim to present their findings later this summer.

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## Woolpit Demolition paves the way for new affordable homes

Outdated council homes at Steeles Road, Woolpit were demolished to make way for a brand-new £2.7 million development which will create 25 much-needed modern homes for affordable rent.

Councillors from Mid Suffolk District Council joined representatives from Orbit Homes and affordable housing developer Lovell to mark the official start of demolition work at a special event at 11am on Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> May.

The demolition was in preparation for the construction team from Lovell – a leading provider of affordable housing – to start building the brand-new Orbit East housing development for Orbit Homes. The new homes will be built on the site of the demolished houses and on land off Steeles Road in the village.

The scheme will create four one-bedroom flats; eight two-bedroom houses, ten three-bedroom houses and three four-bedroom houses. All the properties will be for affordable rent and will achieve high levels of energy-efficiency, meeting Level Three of the Code for Sustainable Homes. The scheme includes 46 parking spaces as well as changes to the road layout to create a cul-de-sac style development.

The homes which were demolished were of non-standard construction and failed to meet the Council's Decent Homes Standard which requires properties to be warm and weather tight with modern facilities.

Laura Handford, Orbit Homes Regional Development Manager, says: "It's really good to be involved in this project especially as we will be providing quality homes for existing and new residents. We are working alongside Mid Suffolk District Council to ensure minimal disruption to the existing residents and looking forward to starting on phase two".

Councillor Marilyn Curran, Mid Suffolk District Council's Portfolio Holder for Housing, said: "Mid Suffolk District Council is delighted that work on 25 new affordable homes is finally starting. We are committed to providing good quality, affordable homes for our residents. This project will see outdated and not-fit-for-purpose housing being replaced by modern, sustainable homes that will enable families and residents to stay in an area of Mid Suffolk in which they have chosen to live."

Lovell regional director Tony Tann says: "This development will make a real difference by delivering a range of warm and modern, well-designed affordable homes for rent for local people. Our team is delighted that demolition is now under way and we look forward to working closely with the local community and Orbit Homes throughout the construction programme."

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## June's Parish Liaison Meetings

Parish Liaison Meetings are now scheduled for the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June in Babergh, to be held at Hadleigh, and the 5<sup>th</sup> of June in Mid Suffolk, to be held at Needham Market. Meetings will be taking place at both 10am and 6.30pm on both dates. As always, these will give you an important opportunity to discuss the issues that are most relevant for you and your parishes.

There will be a presentation on Electoral Arrangements, 2014 Individual Electoral Registration and the 2015 elections but then in a change to previous meetings, the June meetings will focus on Planning issues. District Councillors across both Babergh and Mid Suffolk have highlighted a number of important planning issues that are facing Parishes and we are keen to provide information on these issues.

As such, June's Liaison Meetings will include a time when you will be free to find and talk directly to corporate managers from Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils about Planning issues that affect your parishes. Rather than a single discussion you will be able to pick which area you would like more detail on and speak to a Council officer who can best answer your questions. Among the areas that officers will be covering are Neighbourhood Planning, Section 106 negotiations and the commercial confidentiality involved and the new Community Infrastructure Levy mentioned below. For more details on the planning focus of these meetings, see the piece on "Planning and our Local Communities" below.

We look forward to seeing you there and remember to bring your questions on how these planning issues will affect you. You should already have received the invitation letter; if you have yet to respond, please do fill in the form attached to the invitation and return it to [Josephine.beever@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:Josephine.beever@babergh.gov.uk) by Tuesday the 27<sup>th</sup> of May.

## Planning and our Local Communities

As you will be aware Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils now have a single team of Officers serving, what are still, two sovereign Councils. As part of the continued integration of staff we are involved in a project to redesign how planning services are delivered. Often when we talk about Planning we think only in terms of the applications that the Council receive and, ultimately, have to decide. It's easy to forget that Planning actually means so much more.

Planning also covers the creations of Local Plans, policies and specific guidance documents. The delivery of Heritage and Conservation services, Community led planning and the development of Neighbourhood Plans, as well as protection against unlawful and inappropriate development. The Council also employ Officers who ensure that the developments submitted for approval will also contribute appropriately towards the delivery of affordable housing or open space and leisure facilities.

With ever changing Regulations, as well as some of the helpful "simplification" of Planning by central government, it's no wonder that this complex set of services is often difficult to comprehend.

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We want to make it easier to understand the Planning Services we offer. What those Services do and how we may be able to help you on a more local level. But first we need to ask you how best we can do that.

We know some of the issues that are important to you. From previous conversations we know that planning enforcement is often an issue. Neighbourhood Plans and the constant stream of new regulations also seem to be of interest, and concern, to others. Localism, Land Bids, the Community Infrastructure Levy, how applications are presented at Planning Committee, there are a whole host of issues.

In order to find out more about how we can most effectively help our Parish and Town Councils in relation to our Planning Services we will be having some short sessions during the upcoming Parish Liaison Meetings, described above, to discuss how best to communicate with you about the changes being made to those services as well as the regular changes made to Planning regulations, how to help you ensure that you feel confident in responding to planning consultations and that you understand how your comments influence planning committee.

We hope these sessions will feel different from before and enable honest conversations about the range of issues around Planning. This will help us understand how we can communicate better and enable you to have more informed involvement in the process.

## Community Infrastructure Levy – a new way to fund local infrastructure

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are looking at introducing the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), a new levy that local authorities can charge on developments in their area to encourage local development but also to make sure that the infrastructure in the region can afford to keep up with new homes and businesses. Money raised from CIL charges can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure that is needed as a result of the development, from improved roads to flood defences to schools and hospitals.

In the next few weeks Babergh and Mid Suffolk will be opening a consultation on the introduction of CIL to the public. We are particularly keen for feedback from Town and Parish Councils and local developers, who will be most affected by the new charge. A Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule has been prepared in accordance with the recommendations of a CIL Viability Study report for Babergh and Mid-Suffolk and we will shortly be contacting you directly with information on how to take part in the consultation. The Town and Parish Council Liaison Meetings mentioned above will include an opportunity for you to put your questions on CIL to council officers. This is just the first stage of the process of drawing up plans for how CIL will be introduced in Babergh and Mid Suffolk, with more consultation and public exhibition of plans planned for the coming year.

CIL is designed to be faster, more transparent and fairer than the previous agreement developers had to enter into under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act

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1990. By charging a clear, set levy on each square metre of a development, CIL avoids the costly and time consuming negotiations and agreements that could lead to confusion and uncertainty in Section 106 agreements.

The charges will set by the local Council, based on the size and type of the new development. The money raised from the CIL can be used to support development by funding infrastructure that the Council, local community and neighbourhoods want, like new or safer road schemes, park improvements, education facilities or a new health centre. The Community Infrastructure Levy:

- Gives local authorities the freedom to set their own priorities for what the money should be spent on;
- Gives local authorities a predictable funding stream that allows them to plan ahead more effectively;
- Gives developers much more certainty from the start about how much money they will be expected to contribute;
- Makes the system more transparent for local people, as local authorities have to report what they have spent the levy on each year; and
- Rewards communities receiving new development through the direct allocation of a proportion (15% or 25% depending on whether a Neighbourhood Plan is in place) of levy funds collected in their area.

Local authorities can also charge different CILs on different parts of their district, encouraging development in some areas while imposing higher costs on areas where development is not considered desirable. Both the CIL level and details of any variations across the district in question will need to be published and consulted on before being implemented.

## Deal With It Day Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014

Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils Waste Services Team, along with our contractor Serco, were invited to attend the recent 'Deal With It Day' organised by Sudbury Town Council in the Springlands area of Sudbury.

The event was conceived by Sudbury Town Council's Town Warden, Bradley Smith, alongside whom we have worked closely in the past to resolve problems and improve the local area. The new concept 'Deal With It Day' set out to resolve issues on one single specified day, with the help of numerous agencies pulling together to achieve the best results.

Waste Services were very pleased to be involved, we collected several tons of rubbish and unwanted items at the end of the day, working alongside the Public Realm team who were on hand to clear any fly tipped material. We were also joined by members of Babergh and Mid Suffolk's Environmental Services and Housing teams.

We spoke to many residents throughout the day, distributing collection calendars, information packs and authorised refuse sacks to enable any accumulated rubbish to be collected later that day. We are always keen to provide help and advice to anyone

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who finds that they are struggling with their waste or recycling and it is always good to be able to meet and help people face to face.

By the end of the day, the area was cleaner and tidier; many problems had been identified and dealt with. We forged some good links not only with the community that we are all part of, but with our partner agencies as well, paving the way for further similar events in the future.

## Village of the Year Competitions close soon

The Village of the Year competition closes this weekend. The winner of the competition, which is open to any village with under 500 voters on its electoral roll, will not only be named their district's Village of the Year but will also go on to be entered into the second stage, the County Round. Any villages that progress to the third stage, the final round, could win the Suffolk Village of the Year title and receive a cheque for £1,000, £50 National Garden Gift Vouchers and help towards a celebration party, including a Firkin of Adnams beer and £200 to help with the costs.

You should already have your application forms for the competition. If you haven't submitted yours, please do so swiftly to [Josephine.beever@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:Josephine.beever@babergh.gov.uk). The closing date for submissions is Saturday the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, so get your applications in quickly!

## 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 five years. The Eastern Region of the UK will elect seven Members.

Voter registration has now closed and all polling cards have now been set out. The deadline for postal votes has also passed. On the day, polling stations will be open from 7:00am until 10:00pm. All registered electors will find the details of the location of their polling station on their polling card. A full list of polling stations is available on our websites:

### Mid Suffolk:

<http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/UploadsMSDC/Organisation/Democratic-Services/Council-and-Democracy/Electoral-Services/2014-Euro-Election/14-04-25-MSDC-EPE-Situation-of-Polling-Station-Notice.pdf>

**Babergh:** <http://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Uploads-BDC/Organisation/Democratic-Services/Council-and-Democracy/Electoral-Services/2014-Euro-Election/14-04-25-BDC-EPE-Situation-of-Polling-Station-Notice.pdf>

As mentioned in the last newsletter, 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.

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**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.

## 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@babbergh.gov.uk](mailto:emma.morton@babbergh.gov.uk)