



TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER #7

September 2011

Welcome to our 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?

Since the last newsletter in June - immediately after the results of the local poll into the merger between the two councils was narrowly defeated - Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have continued with their integration and transformation plans, but the two councils will remain as two separate legal entities.

We both face even greater financial pressures and increasing demands to provide services in new and more flexible ways.

Both councils believe that by integrating our staffing structures - to achieve savings - and transforming how we do what we do including with our town and parish council partners and other stakeholders - to improve services wherever possible - we hope to have a stronger long-term future and achieve better outcomes for all. This way we hope to minimise cutbacks.

Please see a brief update with how our plans are progressing below.

We are also looking to work with town and parish councils and key stakeholders, in helping us to identify ways of addressing both councils 2012/13 budget shortfalls.

There is more information on the Budget Challenge within this newsletter – plus information about our October town and parish council liaison meetings.

The Budget Challenge

Babergh and Mid Suffolk are appealing to town and parish councils, community groups and residents to make sure they take part in Babergh and Mid Suffolk's Budget Challenge – before the deadline of Friday September 30.

As you will know, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are facing severe cuts in budgets for next year and beyond.

Reductions in the amount of money received from the Government, increases in inflation and demand on services, means that by working together, £2.8m in savings need to be found in order to balance the books for 2012/13. This could come from savings or by looking at ways to increase further income.

Babergh Councillor Jennie Jenkins, Member of Babergh's Strategic and Financial Planning Task Group, said: "We need to make sure everyone who would like to take part in this open call for ideas has done so before our deadline of September 30th.

"Both Babergh and Mid Suffolk district councils are already working hard to achieve tough savings targets but it has been made clear that we need to do much more.

"Never before have either of our councils approached organisations, community groups and residents so early in the budget process but we need to hear people's ideas on what services they would like to keep or be willing to pay more for."

And Mid Suffolk Cllr Derrick Haley, Portfolio Holder for Finance, added: "Never has there been a more serious call to our residents to get involved and truly help shape the way in which Babergh and Mid Suffolk balance their budgets.

"Once people have come up with their ideas, Babergh and Mid Suffolk plan to evaluate the responses in the autumn before drawing up detailed budget proposals.

"These are tough times and tough decisions will have to be taken. We need residents' input to help us make the right decisions."

For the following two years (2013-15), the two councils need to find an additional £4.6m worth of savings in total from a combined budget of £20m.

In total, between 2011-15, Babergh needs to save £3.5m and Mid Suffolk needs to save £3.9m making a total of £7.9m.

Before the deadline of September 30, both councils are encouraging residents to take part in the budget challenge by answering five questions about the way in which the council currently works and how services might run in the future.

All responses received will be considered by both councils when looking at the budget in more detail between now and the end of the year.

To take part you can find out further information online: www.babergh.gov.uk or www.midsuffolk.gov.uk or by speaking with your local district councillor.

Town and Parish Council liaison meetings

The next town and parish liaison meetings for Babergh and Mid Suffolk have been organised for:

- Wednesday, October 12 in Babergh's Council Chamber, Hadleigh, at 9.30am and 6pm.
- Thursday, October 13 at Mid Suffolk District Council Offices, Needham Market, at 9:30am and 6pm.

These meetings are so that members of towns and parish councils across both districts can access information face-to-face with council representatives.

If you would like to confirm attendance at one of the meetings and you haven't already done so, please call Gillian Hilder on (01449) 724681.

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 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