

# Parish Report – March 2024

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## **Tax premiums agreed for owners of second homes and empty properties**

Councillors at Mid Suffolk District Councils have agreed higher tax premiums for owners of second homes and long-term empty properties, as part of a raft of measures to bring more homes back into use.

There are more than 680 in Mid Suffolk, which councillors are keen to see used to meet growing housing need.

The councils already impose a council tax premium on the owners of properties that are empty and unfurnished for two years or longer, but under new legislation, the councils would be able to target empty properties after just one year from April 2024 – and impose a levy on second home owners from April 2025.

At meetings this week, both councils agreed a new joint policy that will see the owners of properties left empty for a year or more paying double, with a premium of up to 100% from April 2024; properties empty for five years or more seeing their council tax bills treble with a premium of up to 200%; and owners of properties left empty for 10 years facing quadrupled bills, with a premium of up to 300%.

Owners of 542 in Mid Suffolk will see their council tax bill double from April 2025.

The premiums are just one way that the councils are encouraging empty properties back into use. There is also information on the councils' websites about Houses 4 Homes – the councils' empty homes initiative and the range of help it can offer owners to bring properties back to use, including providing loans, landlord lettings and income assistance and construction support. Find out more about Houses 4 Homes here: [Empty homes - Babergh District Council](#) and [Empty homes - Mid Suffolk District Council](#)

The councils also offer a free lettings service and guaranteed rent scheme to private sector landlords. Central Suffolk Lettings works with landlords to increase access to good quality homes in the private rented sector to eligible tenants. Find out more about Central Suffolk Lettings here: [Central Suffolk Lettings: FREE Letting Services - Babergh District Council](#) and [Central Suffolk Lettings: FREE Letting Services - Mid Suffolk District Council](#).

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## **More of Suffolk's tree cover and orchards to be restored**

1,877 new trees are being planted across the county by Suffolk's councils, with a focus on re-establishing orchards

Suffolk County Council has secured funding of £201,213 from the government's Local Authority Treescapes Fund for 1,877 new trees.

The bid was made on behalf of Babergh District Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, East Suffolk Council, Ipswich Borough Council and West Suffolk Council.

The funding will go towards planting the trees, many of which are 'standards' around six feet in height when planted.

It also covers three years of maintenance to help the trees become established.

The fund aims to restore tree cover in non-woodland areas which may have been impacted by issues such as disease, habitat degradation or ageing tree stock.

Many of the proposed projects will involve their local community and pupils from local schools.

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## **Budget: Mid Suffolk agrees budget 'to back communities and drive change'**

The council agreed a 2% increase to its share of the bill for 2024/25 – below the 2.99% the Government expected when funding settlements were made.

This means Mid Suffolk's proportion of the council tax bill for a Band D property, which is currently £171.59, will increase by £3.44 – just 7p a week.

The district's share is less than 10% of the total bill, with the remainder going to Suffolk County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and town or parish councils.

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## **Rural Transport Grants Scheme launches**

Funding available for community transport operators in Mid Suffolk is set to better connect local communities and reduce emissions

Mid Suffolk District Council have launched a new Rural Transport Grants Scheme to help provide passenger transport routes across their district.

The hope is to better connect local communities and reduce emissions, by providing viable alternatives to solo car journeys.

This will, in turn, help lower emissions and improve air quality in line with the council's and the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership's net zero emissions targets.

Six grants of up to £100,000 are available.

Each is allocated to one of six areas of operation, which include:

Central Mid Suffolk

South Mid Suffolk

South East Mid Suffolk

South West Mid Suffolk

North East Mid Suffolk

North West Mid Suffolk

Existing community transport operators can apply to deliver a transport service within any of the areas via the councils website, until Monday 15 April 2024.

Applications will need to show, among other aspects:

- how the route will be run in the greenest and most sustainable way possible  
This could include utilising hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) or biofuel, and minimising 'dead mileage', with ambitions to go electric as soon as it becomes a viable option
- that strategic stops have been considered, such as rail stations, colleges and healthcare sites, among others  
This is to ensure any new service appeals to a wide demographic supporting residents of all ages

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### **Councils' loft insulation offer for Suffolk homes**

Funding is available to help Suffolk residents make their homes warmer and save money on their energy bills

Funding is available to help Suffolk residents make their homes warmer and save money on their energy bills.

Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders, which includes Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, have launched a Suffolk Loft Insulation offer.

Thanks to teaming up with builders' merchant Travis Perkins, Suffolk residents can get a significant reduction on loft insulation.

There are four product options available and residents will receive a 50% discount off their purchase (up to £200), with free delivery.

According to The Energy Saving Trust, it is estimated that an uninsulated home loses a quarter of its heat through its roof.

An effective way to reduce this heat loss, and heating bills, is to insulate your loft, attic or flat roof.

Correctly installed insulation should pay for itself many times over in its 40-year lifetime.

The offer is open to anyone and will close once the allocated funding has been spent.

To find out more visit the Green Suffolk website and simply fill out the online order form.

Travis Perkins will then get in touch to arrange payment and delivery.

The Loft Insulation Grant is being funded by Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders and Travis Perkins and will help contribute to Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan and our vision for Suffolk to become Carbon Neutral by 2030.

