

Parish Report – September 2024

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Mid Suffolk councillors are considering a £360K boost for street cleansing and ground maintenance – including the creation of a new troubleshooting taskforce to tackle litter hotspots, fly tipping, and graffiti across the district

Cabinet members are due to consider a proposal to enhance public realm services at their meeting next week, increasing scheduled street cleaning and ground maintenance work in Stowmarket town centre, and creating REACT – a Respond, Enforce and Clean Team – to provide additional capacity to respond to urgent and reactive street clearing issues across the district.

According to a report published ahead of next Tuesday's cabinet meeting (October 8), the creation of REACT will allow the public realm street cleansing team to focus on scheduled work across the district's large rural area – including dog and litter bin emptying, litter picking on the main rural road routes and villages, and mechanical sweeping – without the distraction of having to respond to reactive cleansing incidents.

The new team would also play a role in education and enforcement, giving advice on street cleansing issues, patrolling problem areas, gathering evidence and issuing warnings and notices, working alongside the council's environmental protection team, where appropriate.

The proposed enhancements for Stowmarket town centre include more frequent cleaning and maintenance schedules, and is in addition to the £50K investment the council has already made in Stowmarket Town Council's new Town Ranger Service.

Residents in Babergh and Mid Suffolk will get more opportunities to recycle from 2026 as part of nationwide changes to waste collections

Councillors at Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have endorsed plans which will see improved recycling introduced from 2026, alongside already agreed plans for weekly food waste collections starting at the same time.

The changes, which went before Full Councils this week, ensure the councils can meet new government legislation

From 2026, people will be able to recycle more items in their existing household recycling bin.

Glass and cartons such as Tetra Pak – which currently have to be taken to Suffolk’s recycling centres and bottle banks - will be included. Plastic film would be incorporated from 2027.

This additional recycling, combined with new weekly food waste collections, would have a significant impact on recycling rates, allowing over 58% of the waste that residents currently have to put in their black rubbish bin to be recycled instead.

A separate bin, box or bag will be provided for paper and cardboard.

This separation, known in the waste industry as ‘twin-stream collections’, would ensure this isn’t affected by other items in the bin, improving its recycling value and quality.

Unusable or expired items that residents will also be able to put in their food waste bin, include:

- leftovers
- meat, fish, and bones
- tea bags and coffee grounds
- bread, pasta and rice
- eggshells and dairy products
- fruit and veg peelings

This reduced amount of general rubbish, in particular food items which are most likely to cause bins to smell, means the councils will move to more cost-effective three-weekly rubbish bin collections from 2026.

However, the councils’ waste team will be sympathetic to those with exceptional needs on a case-by-case basis, such as those with larger families, with medical needs or without available space for the new bins.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have renewed their call for urgent government action to end the financial crisis that is currently facing council housing.

At their respective full council meetings this week, both councils resolved to write to Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner and local Members of Parliament to reiterate the need for immediate changes to the broken financial model that dictates England’s council housing system.

Across the country, many councils are facing significant financial problems due to years of erratic national policy changes. In 2012, councils had to take out a loan to buy their own properties, creating a significant amount of debt to be self-financed through rental income. At the time, rents provided councils with enough money to start repaying the debt and continue investing.

However, the Government later restricted rent rises – a welcome measure for tenants, but there was no additional income for housing authorities to maintain investment.

By the 2023/24 financial year, in the case of Mid Suffolk, the district was faced with a £3.7m shortfall in its Housing Revenue Account (HRA), with the cabinet having to authorise the use of reserves this summer to fill that hole.

Both councils are already among more than 100 council landlords to sign up to a new report calling for the Government to take urgent action to restore lost income and unlock local authority capacity.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are developing a new economic strategy and want to hear your views

As part of the development of the strategy, the economic development team are hosting a series of workshops to collaborate with business leaders, partners, voluntary services, policymakers, and academics from a range of sectors.

The expertise and insights gained from these sessions will be instrumental in shaping a robust strategy and plan.

There are two remaining workshops with spaces available:

Wednesday 2nd October 10am to 1pm at Sudbury Arts Centre

Monday 7th October 9:30 am to 12:30 pm at The Mix Stowmarket

You can book your space at a session by completing the online registration form.

https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=7GqcEEZQIUqPPIT2O6GK9IV_OZS96AxJreu5fG3_sYIUOVNYMjBPTJJCWkhMNFQ4TUdNSEE2N01WTC4u&route=shorturl

We appreciate that not everybody will be able to attend the in-person events and for those who are unable to join a workshop, we have created an online survey to ensure you can submit your views.

https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=7GqcEEZQIUqPPIT2O6GK9IV_OZS96AxJreu5fG3_sYIUQk1SUE0wMVVXMkVONjdmWEhWVpUT000Qi4u&route=shorturl

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have added their voices to a joint statement following the news that a proposed Suffolk devolution deal has been scrapped by the Government.

A joint statement on behalf of all of the district and borough councils in Suffolk was issued by Ipswich Borough Council this morning.

It read:

"The district and borough councils within Suffolk look forward to working with Suffolk County Council and the Government to develop a new devolution deal which will deliver for the whole of Suffolk."

Babergh and Mid Suffolk communities are set to see more than £836,000 injected back into local projects

Babergh and Mid Suffolk communities are set to see more than £836,000 injected back into local projects – including major investments in helping to protect local heritage and village hall improvements – thanks to money collected from developers.

Cabinet members at Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils voted to approve the latest round of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) bids which includes a total of £200K towards Stowmarket's Food Museum, in addition to projects such as footpath and bridleway upgrades, improvements to village halls, sports pavilions and parks.

CIL payments are a legal requirement paid by developers of residential sites across the districts.

Bids made for CIL funding are reviewed regularly by the councils and funding is earmarked for those projects that help enable local infrastructure to grow alongside housing developments.

This round of CIL will fund six successful projects in Babergh and 13 in Mid Suffolk.

Since May 2018, Babergh and Mid Suffolk have issued thirteen rounds of CIL funding totalling more than £15m, all of which has been provided to infrastructure projects across the districts.

In Babergh, the successful bids include works at Belle Vue Park to create provision for disabled access to the park, toilets, and a changing places facility as well as energy efficiency upgrades to a village hall in Boxted and Hartest.