

District Councillor's Report – Nov 2020

Keeping Up-to-date On Covid-19 Across Suffolk

Mid Suffolk District Council, as part of the Suffolk Resilience Forum, continues to work with: neighbouring authorities, the Emergency Services, Public Health and NHS colleagues to protect its residents and communities. As part of their communications effort to help keep you abreast of the situation across the county, regular Suffolk Coronawatch Bulletins are being produced to give a snapshot of the current situation in Suffolk - along with updates on the work being carried out as part of Suffolk's Local Outbreak Control Plan. You can find the bulletins on the Suffolk County Council website.

Home, But Not Alone Phonenumber Goes Live Again

The "Home, But Not Alone" free phonenumber, which supports vulnerable people in our communities who may be struggling with the impact of Coronavirus, is up and running again in response to the new lockdown.

The phonenumber helped thousands of people and families across Suffolk, who often didn't have a network of family or friends to call upon, to access emergency support such as food and medicine deliveries and befriending schemes during the lockdown earlier this year.

The telephone number is freephone **0800 876 6926** and will be staffed from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

The "Home, But Not Alone" phonenumber complements The Suffolk Advice and Support Service phonenumber (0800 068 3131) which helps those with debt, benefits employment or housing worries.

Councils Finalise Plan For Districts' Future

Councillors are set to consider the latest Joint Local Plan – shaping how Babergh and Mid Suffolk's towns and villages will deliver housing, important infrastructure, and essential employment until 2037.

Should the plan be agreed at full Council meetings later this month, it will help ensure suitable and sustainable homes are built in the right places and support Babergh and Mid Suffolk's ambitions to build great communities with bright and healthy futures.

It will protect and enhance the natural environment, whilst promoting sustainable development and transport options, The plan will enable infrastructure to keep pace with population growth, and is supported by a detailed Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The Local plan also seeks to develop the local economy, encourage tourism and revitalise town centres.

Extensive work has been undertaken by officers and a cross-party working group to reflect feedback from communities – with over 18,000 comments received from those with an interest in the plan, including local businesses and residents, during previous public consultations.

Once publication of the plan has been agreed by Councillors, it will carry increased weight in the planning decision making process and will be formally adopted by the councils after examination by a Planning Inspector.

Prior to submission of the plan for examination, there will be a six-week period inviting comment on the legal compliance and soundness of the plan. These representations will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration during the examination.

Political parties across both councils have previously acknowledged the need to finalise the plan promptly, with changes to national planning policies, including local plans, potentially arising following the government's recent planning consultations.

Councils Demonstrate They Can Meet Future Housing Requirement

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils recently published their Five-Year Housing Land Supply position statement, evidencing that Government housing requirements can be met by the districts until 2025 and beyond.

The reports set out the councils' deliverable housing supply, reflecting relevant policy and guidance, and assess whether this will meet the five year local housing need – calculated using the Standard Method and a buffer of 5%, as determined by the Housing Delivery Test.

Cross-party Councillors In Agreement On Response To Planning System Overhaul

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councillors are united in their response to the government's Planning for the Future consultation – insisting that proposals must not be at the detriment of local communities and should not lose focus on the challenges facing rural districts.

Amongst many points made to the government, Councillors do not agree that planning should be fast tracked for “beautiful” buildings. Given the varied landscape in England, where one road can be totally different in character to the next, it is not felt that something as subjective as beauty should be decided on by national government policy.

A similar viewpoint applies to plans for local design guidance to be established, with a textbook approach and allowing approval through permitted development potentially putting both districts at risk of generic, ill thought-out and poor-quality development.

These concerns, along with many others raised by officers and all political parties, have been highlighted in a 40-page response to the Government’s overhaul of the planning system. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will seek to bring forward legislation and policy changes to implement their reforms.

Regards

Rick

Rick Meyer

Richard.meyer@midsuffolk.gov.uk

Tel: 07771703668