

## **District Councillor's Annual Report JULY 2021**

### **Councils' Joint Local Plan Examination to Reconvene in September**

Hearing sessions for the examination of the Joint Local Plan are expected to resume again in September following a change of date – enabling them to be fully inclusive, whilst also ensuring public safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that the Stage 1 sessions, originally scheduled for June and July, will now take place over a concentrated period from September, with Stage 2 hearing sessions in mid-Autumn as originally planned

### **Next Steps For Councils' Biodiversity and Climate Change Plans Agreed**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have given the green light for £72k - £32,849 and £38,678 respectively - to go towards biodiversity mapping and a tree canopy survey across both districts. The work is based on outline costs agreed as part of the councils' Biodiversity Action Plan, and includes funding from Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS).

The mapping - already underway - covers wildlife corridors and council-owned public realm sites, as well as county wildlife sites and local nature reserves. It is a fundamental step for the councils' Biodiversity Action Plan as it will determine suitable locations for tree and hedge planting, and identify wildlife habitats and local green spaces.

A tree canopy survey, to be carried out by Treeconomics using field surveying and satellite data, will enable the councils to create a more accurate inventory of their own tree stock. Its aim is to improve tree management, and allow for better planning for future tree coverage across the district.

The survey's findings will be made publicly available via an interactive database, with measures including:

- how much carbon dioxide the trees store or draw from the atmosphere
- how the trees help reduce pollution and drain away rainwater (known as surface runoff)
- tree coverage for each ward
- quality and make up of tree coverage, including where possible, the progress of diseases such as ash dieback and chronic oak decline
- the trees' asset value

## **New 'Virtual' High Street Supports Market Town's Recovery**

Over 100 new businesses have signed up to the Virtual High Street as the site launches in Hadleigh and Stowmarket, joining over 130 already signed up to the platform in Sudbury. Shoppers can benefit from even more ways to shop local at a range of high street stores, independent retailers, market stalls, services providers as well as cafes and restaurants. Customers will be able to visit their local shops online to browse stock, place orders and arrange click and collect or a delivery from home or on the move.

The first Virtual High Street was built upon a concept launched in Sudbury in March 2020 after Sudbury Town Council identified an opportunity to support businesses during the first unprecedented national lockdown. In October, following investment from Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, the platform was relaunched with additional functionality and welcomed over 100 businesses within the first month.

Further investment from the Suffolk Inclusive Growth Investment Fund (SIGIF) means that Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have been able to appoint a Town Centre Business Liaison Officer to help expand the Virtual High Street to Stowmarket and Hadleigh followed by Needham Market and Eye in the coming months.

## **Councils To Provide Financial Lifeline For Local Projects**

Applications are now open for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' Locality Awards funding – enabling communities to improve facilities, learn new skills and work towards becoming environmentally sustainable.

A total across both councils of over £314,000 is available for Councillors to allocate to groups and organisations within their ward during the 2021/22 financial year.

This can be used for a wide range of projects, but must meet the councils' priorities for grant funding to help:

- create strong, thriving and connected communities
- support communities in their response to the climate emergency
- promote resilient and healthy communities

Please discuss any requests for funding with me and I will forward the necessary application forms, if support is agreed. Please note that available funds are limited and organisations that have been supported in the recent past may not attract support during this funding round.

## **Performance Update**

Cabinet members for Mid Suffolk District Council recently considered the latest performance reports, highlighting the council's outstanding response to the pandemic, whilst continuing to deliver against the Corporate Plan. The full report provides an insight into what service areas have achieved over the last quarter and is available to view on the council's website.

- [Find out more](#)

Regards

*Rick*

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