

## **District Councillor's Report December 2021**

### **£5.1million For Mid Suffolk Recovery**

An investment pledge of £5.1million has been made by Mid Suffolk District Council to help deliver a range of projects to boost the District's recovery from the impact of the Covid pandemic. At November's meeting, Mid Suffolk District Council's cabinet allocated the seven-figure sum, announced in February, to priority areas around Communities, Environment, Economy, Customers, Housing and Wellbeing, following a series of cross-party task groups to discuss areas in need of support.

The fund allocations are split across 39 projects. Among the headline schemes are £75,000 of support for domestic abuse victims, including security measures like alarms and stronger locks; a £300,000 loan fund for community land trusts to obtain deposits for mortgages; £100,000 for a targeted apprenticeship scheme for those at risk of homelessness; £100,000 towards increasing aspirations for young people, including youth market stalls and youth social prescribing, and £100,000 to fund a business case for a skills and innovation centre at Gateway 14. Further £100,000 grants will go towards supporting a sustainable travel plan, supporting town centre visions for Stowmarket, Needham Market and Eye, and Covid recovery grants for community groups, while £38,000 will go towards expanding the Active Schools programme to tackle obesity in schools, and £30,000 will fund the continuation of school holiday activity programmes.

### **Feedback Sought On Future Development In Districts**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have published their draft five-year housing land supply statements – outlining the anticipated supply of new homes between now and 2026.

The National Planning Policy Framework requires both councils to identify and update a supply of specific deliverable sites which are capable of providing a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement. This is known as the housing land supply. This process must be done annually, reflecting relevant policy and guidance and taking into account lead-in times and build rates, as well as other factors. An appropriate buffer is also included in calculations to ensure choice and competition in the market for land.

The draft Housing Land Supply Position Statements, indicate that both districts can meet the statutory housing requirement, with Babergh demonstrating a housing land supply of 6.86 years, compared to 9.54 years in Mid Suffolk. Further information on this is available on the [Babergh's Joint Local Plan website](#) and [Mid Suffolk's Joint Local Plan website](#), with comments invited on the robustness of the housing land supply information and evidence related to the delivery of sites by midday on Friday 17 December 2021. Once published, the final housing land supply statements for the

2021-2026 period will be given material consideration in the assessment and determination of planning applications in the districts, superseding last year's reports.

### **New Name For Needham Lake Café And Visitor Centre Announced**

Councillors have marked the 'topping out' of the new Needham Lake café and visitor centre and announced the name will be Duck & Teapot following a public vote

### **Shop Local On The Virtual High Street This Christmas: [Virtualhighstreet.uk](https://www.virtualhighstreet.uk)**

Finding the perfect gift while shopping local this Christmas has just become easier as the Virtual High Street unveils a raft of discounts and offers for the festive season. The Virtual High Street now has over 350 businesses signed up from Sudbury, Hadleigh, Stowmarket, Needham Market and Eye as well as surrounding towns and villages. With everything from fashion to food, the Virtual High Street is home to a range of independent retailers, market stalls, cafés, restaurants, and professional services allowing customers to browse, order online and click & collect to help with Christmas shopping.

The Virtual High Street in Needham Market launched this September and many of the businesses have been keen to get involved and share their Christmas offers. Shoppers will be able to find discounts and offers at Elton House News, Vintro Interiors, The Angel, Casa Louise, the Post Office, Little Stylish Gifts, and Coffee Craft N Moore. In Stowmarket there are festive offers at Baldwins, Langhams, Handy Hardware and Choose Refills while in Eye, Fleurs Artisan and Bruha Brewing also have great deals for customers.

It is free for businesses to join the Virtual High Street and any local business who would like to join the Christmas campaign still has time to get involved and promote their own offers.

### **Clampdown On Landlords With Funding Boost For Suffolk Councils**

Families living in privately rented cold and draughty properties in Suffolk can look forward warmer homes in future thanks to a new campaign to clamp down on landlords. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are amongst the Suffolk councils to have secured a total of £248,282 in funding from the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to deliver the project by March 2022.

Since April last year privately rented homes must meet a minimum energy performance rating of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band E, making it illegal to rent out homes below that unless landlords have a limited exemption. Landlords caught failing to fulfil their obligations can be fined of up to £5,000 per property and per breach. Badly insulated properties often leave those renting their

homes struggling to keep warm and with higher energy bills. The rule change is expected to see energy efficiency upgrades such as loft insulation, double glazing and cavity wall insulation being installed by landlords in around 290,000 properties - with an estimated average bill saving of £180 a year for each home. This move forms part of the government's actions to protect consumers, particularly those on lower incomes, as we manage the impact of global gas price rises.

The £4.3 million of extra funding from the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to councils across the country is designed to support them make an extra 100,000 engagements with the most difficult to reach landlords with the worst performing properties. Councils were invited to bid as part of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) competition with 117 local authorities entering and 59 of them successfully securing funding.

The money will support innovative measures including local radio ads, roadshows and workshops with landlords to raise awareness of the rules, free property surveys, as well as enhanced and targeted mail reminders and translation services to reach those not currently complying.

### **Community Car Park Plays Crucial Role In Vaccination Drive**

A new car park serving Woolpit Health Centre and the local community was official opened by Mid Suffolk councillors and NHS representatives this month – securing much-needed parking for Covid vaccination patients.

### **Funding For Elmswell Primary School Expansion Given Go-ahead**

A Community Infrastructure Levy bid from Suffolk County Council to finance further school places in Elmswell received the green light this month, with Mid Suffolk's cabinet approving £1.56m towards the project.

### **Avian influenza (bird flu)**

The Chief Veterinary Officers for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have agreed to bring in new measures to help protect poultry and captive birds. The new housing measures came into force across the UK from 00:01 on Monday 29 November 2021 to protect poultry and captive birds from avian influenza following a number of confirmed cases across Great Britain in recent weeks. Find out more here. Please help spread the message within your local area to inform anyone who keeps birds. You may also wish to share these Facebook and Twitter posts by

Suffolk Trading Standards on any relevant social media pages your town or parish manages.

Wishing you a safe, happy and healthy Christmas

Warmest regards

*Rick*

**Rick Meyer**

[richard.meyer@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:richard.meyer@midsuffolk.gov.uk)

Tel: 07771703668