

District Councillor's Report – Nov 2022

How your council can help you with the cost of living

Support packages to combat the cost of living, energy bills and council tax are all available through Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, with residents urged to check they are receiving the support they are entitled to. More information is available at: <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/benefits/cost-of-living-support/>

Residents urged to have their say over whether council tax bills should be reduced by up to 100% for those on low incomes

A public consultation is underway over a plan to cut council tax for the poorest households in Babergh and Mid Suffolk. The consultation, which runs to November 24, asks for views on how the councils should run their Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2023/24, and whether bills should be reduced by up to 100% for working age adults with the lowest incomes. More information is available at <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/council-tax/exemptions-discounts-and-reductions/council-tax-reduction-low-income/#CTR2324>

:

Winter warmth funding for community causes

Thousands of pounds were made available to grassroots groups last month to keep the doors of their activities open for longer this winter. The Winter Warmth Support Grant, offered groups and non-profit organisations between £250 to £5,000 to cover the rising costs of energy, rent and food, and to keep operating without passing on increased costs to residents across Babergh and Mid Suffolk. More information is available at: <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/news/winter-warmth-funding-for-community-causes/>

Councils' commercial property arm continues to generate income for districts

Babergh and Mid Suffolk's commercial property company CIFCO made a £6.7m profit last year and generated £3.7m in net income for the councils to plough back into services, councillors heard this week. This means that since CIFCO Capital Ltd was established jointly by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils in 2017, it has not only maintained its debt repayments in full but also generated net income last year of £1.7m for Mid Suffolk, bringing the total net income received by the councils by the end of the last financial year to £9.25m.

In reports presented to Mid Suffolk District Council, councillors heard how the company's accounts for 2021/22 showed a £10m increase in the value of the company's portfolio of properties – with the portfolio valued at £94m.

The last financial year marks the first full year of trading for CIFCO since completing the acquisition phase of the portfolio, which is now comprised of 21 properties, based in the eastern region and beyond, and split across industrial, retail and office sectors, effectively balancing risk.

Despite fears that the pandemic would leave CIFCO exposed, the company cites rigorous risk management and a diverse portfolio for helping them weather the impact of Covid and collect a higher proportion of rent from their tenants than the industry average – with company now realising £5.3m per annum in rental income and low void rates across the portfolio, with vacant units quickly re-let.

Residents to help name Babergh and Mid Suffolk's new bin lorries

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have launched a competition to help them name their new environmentally-friendly bin lorries – in the biggest upgrade to their fleet in almost 10 years. Residents across Babergh and Mid Suffolk are being invited to submit names for 22 brand-new bin lorries at www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/binlorrycompetition.

The competition closes at midnight on Sunday 13 November, with winners contacted later in the year.

Bird flu outbreak

The latest information on the recent bird flu outbreak in Suffolk can be found at <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/news/suffolk-bird-flu-outbreak/>

Anyone can become homeless

In recognition of World Homelessness Day, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are encouraging residents to challenge their view as to the type of people that can become homeless or what homelessness looks like. The perception of homelessness is often someone male, single and sleeping on the street, people with drug and alcohol issues, or people who have caused an issue and have been asked to leave their accommodation. However, homelessness can affect anyone - because of a range of everyday circumstances

- Family/friends no longer able to accommodate
- Loss of private-rented accommodation
- Fleeing violence, including domestic abuse
- Loss of social-rented accommodation
- Relationship breakdown

If you need help or support please contact our housing solutions team on 0300 123 4000 or email housingsolutions@babberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk.

New unit for retail giant The Range gets go-ahead at Gateway 14, Stowmarket, and will create 1,650 jobs

Detailed planning consent has been given for the first unit at Gateway 14, Stowmarket, to be occupied by home, garden and leisure products retailer The Range - creating an estimated 1,650 jobs. The Range is one of the fastest growing retailers in the UK, with over 200 retail stores nationwide and a further 100 planned. It already has two existing major distribution centres in the UK and the new site in Suffolk will help meet consumer demand in the South and South East.

Gateway 14 Ltd is wholly-owned by Mid Suffolk District Council, and has outline planning consent for a 2.36m sq ft mixed-use innovation, business and warehousing scheme, and construction of the site infrastructure is already well underway. The landmark development will provide high specification buildings with sustainability a central feature, including EV charging, LED lighting, solar, smart energy systems and rainwater harvesting. The development is BREEAM Excellent - exceeding the planning requirements for BREEAM Very Good.

More information about Gateway 14 can be found by visiting the [Gateway 14 website](#)

Exemplar housing development for Elmswell to be considered

Council-owned land in Elmswell could be used for a development of 50 environmentally friendly low carbon homes. The £15m investment would not only provide high quality sustainable new homes for residents, but also deliver much needed affordable homes for the local community and demonstrate to developers the type of sustainable and high standard that the council wants within its district.

Under the innovative scheme, properties would be 'sustainable by design', all with fabric first approach increased insulation, airtight and low energy designs – maximising solar power and reduced energy costs. Plans would include planting to encourage biodiversity, including shared outdoor community spaces and a community garden with water collection, and planted buffer zones between new homes and existing neighbours.

The scheme would be delivered by the council's own development company Mid Suffolk Growth Ltd, a venture set up to enable the council to deliver more new housing and meaning higher standards than the profit margins of other developers would allow. A similar scheme is planned for Walsham Le Willows.

Stage is set for expansion at the John Peel Centre

Iconic venue, the John Peel Centre for Creative Arts, is set to welcome more visitors, events, and experiences, as they expand into neighbouring 11 Market Place. A partnership between the John Peel Centre and Mid Suffolk District Council is bringing the vacant building at 11 Market Place in Stowmarket back into use.

Once used as the town's Assembly Rooms, and formerly as a NatWest bank, the additional, flexible space could be used to create an alternative entrance to the John Peel Centre from the marketplace. The expansion will also create more space for music, art, performance, and a range of community uses for the whole town to enjoy.

The John Peel Centre first opened its doors and welcomed bands on stage in 2011. Since that time, it has carried the legacy of DJ John Peel supporting new music, up and coming bands, theatre and much more. Proposals for the space will be shared with the local community for their views and feedback before a final masterplan is developed.

Regards

Rick

Rick Meyer

Richard.meyer@midsuffolk.gov.uk

Tel: 07771703668