

District Councillor's Report – Jan 2023

Council Leaders Welcome Landmark Devolution Deal For Suffolk

The leaders of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have welcomed an “ambitious and exciting” devolution deal for Suffolk. The landmark deal devolves more powers to Suffolk, bringing around £480million of investment over the next 30 years. It will enable the county to drive growth and plan for the long-term with certainty. The deal also includes £5.8m to regenerate brownfield land into affordable homes and drive economic growth across Suffolk, devolvement of the Adult Education budget so provision can be shaped to meets local needs, additional transport powers and £3m to improve energy efficiency in homes.

The deal also includes provisions to directly elect the leader of Suffolk County Council. There will be full public consultation and if it proceeds, the election of the leader will take place from May 2024.

Revealed: Winning Names For Babergh And Mid Suffolk's New Environmentally Friendly Bin Lorries

Earlier this year, people across Babergh and Mid Suffolk, were invited to submit names for the councils' 22 brand-new bin lorries. The two-week long competition saw over 400 individual name suggestions sent into the councils – with locals of all ages, from villages to towns, all getting in on the fun. The councils' crews and waste team then had the challenge of choosing just 22 – picking their favourites from a shortlist of just over 30 names.

Set to make their collection debuts in just a matter of days, the councils have now revealed the winning names:

Ed Sheerbin
Gary Bineker
Stranger Bins
Chitty Chitty Bin Bin
The Binbetweeners
Strictly Come Binning
Binderella
Trashosaurus
Mission Binpossible
The Binner Takes It Al
Lord of the Bins
Beauty and the Bin
Waste warriors
Bin here, there, everywhere
Binnie the Pooh
Bincredible Hulk

The Adventures of Binbin
Binin' in the Rain
Bindiana Jones
To Binfinity and Beyond
Mary Popbins
Gone with the Bin

The competition was launched to mark the councils' biggest upgrade to their 35-strong waste fleet in almost 10 years – an investment of £2m*.22 brand new environmentally friendly bin lorries, will replace many of their current lorries, having emptied around a combined 40 million bins over their working lifetimes. They will be fuelled by certified sustainable Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) produced from waste cooking oil, after Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils became the first rural UK councils to switch to the fuel last year. This will enable them to continue slashing their carbon emissions by up to 90%, as well as reducing other pollutants.

Pioneering Councils Complete £2.8m Carbon-Cutting Solar Investment To Slash Leisure Centres' Reliance On The Grid

Over 100 council car parking spaces in Sudbury and Stowmarket have been covered with solar panels, to help power and reduce carbon emissions at two council-owned leisure centres. They are among the UK's first rural local authorities to trial the technology, which will reduce the centres' reliance on the grid and cut carbon emissions.

70 solar carports are located at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre in Stowmarket, providing up to almost 24% of the centre's annual electricity demand. The installation includes battery storage so excess energy produced during sunnier periods can be saved for later, as well as eight electric vehicle charging points, including two rapid chargers.

The works cost £1.4m which was funded by £800k match funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' Getting Building Fund (awarded by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership). This was topped up by a combined £650k from the councils. The scheme is part of a wider £2.8m overall investment in solar across the councils' four leisure centres. Last year, they also installed 1,278 solar panels on the centres roofs, along with other energy saving measures – paid for by £1.4m in grants from the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. Together, the solar carports and roof solar panels are now producing nearly 50% of Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre's annual electricity demand.

Councils' New Tenancy Policy Recognises 'A Home Is Not Just A House'

Council tenants across Babergh and Mid Suffolk can look forward to continuing certainty over their homes with the possible adoption of the councils' new tenancy policy. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' cabinets will meet to discuss the adoption of the policy, which supports the councils' vision to improve the wellbeing of

its tenants, supporting the development of family life and thriving communities across the districts.

The policy sets out a clear explanation of the range of tenancies that the councils offer and how and they are managed. It reinforces the councils' recognition of and the importance of all residents having a safe and sustainable place to call home, alongside the need for high-quality social and affordable housing.

Councils' Successful Bid For Housing Fund Pot

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are amongst local authorities to win funding from the Local Government Association to commission a vital, county-wide housing strategy review. The £20,000 pot will kickstart a county-wide programme aiming to increase the number of genuinely affordable properties available to meet those in housing need. The Housing Advisers Programme grant will fund the provision of bespoke expert support to councils.

Suffolk's successful bid was led by East Suffolk Council, which will work with Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council, Babergh District Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and West Suffolk Council – identifying opportunities to bridge the gap between housing supply and demand. Working together as the Suffolk Housing Board, the councils have identified 900 properties available for rent, 5,000 properties marketed for sale, 1,000 long term empty homes and 6,000 second homes. And yet, despite this, there are currently a significant number of households living in unsatisfactory, unsuitable accommodation, experiencing, or at risk of homelessness.

The Suffolk Housing Board will therefore agree proposals that remove barriers to accommodating people, as well as gaps in policies where accommodation solutions could be encouraged. The councils will use this opportunity to join up their approaches, exploring ideas such as resource pooling, funding empty home renovations, early engagement, legal advice and community engagement.

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First Tree Planted At Gateway 14 in Stowmarket

6 December saw the first tree planted at Gateway 14 in Stowmarket, to mark the start of the landscaping regeneration at the site.

Gateway 14, which is wholly owned by Mid Suffolk District Council, will benefit from a range of high-quality landscaping features. This includes native trees and hedgerows and sub canopy plants. They will not only support wildlife but will also provide a natural visual screening from the surrounding areas and establish the site as a high-quality business park. The £700,000 contract is being undertaken by Bury St Edmunds-based Pro-Scape Ltd. They will be delivering the landscaping, alongside all the principal infrastructure work on Gateway 14, including highways and green areas totalling some 70,000 sq metres of planting. There will be over 15,500 trees, 2,200m of native hedgerow, 30,000m² of native buffer planting, and 62,000m² of

wildflower meadow. In addition to these works, the local tree warden group - The Suffolk Tree Warden Network, has grown various trees and plant species from local seed which will be planted alongside the landscaping work.

Town And Parish Liaison Meetings – A reminder

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are reinstating their regular meetings with town and parish councils, with invitations already issued via clerks. The next sessions, in early February, will be an opportunity to share current thinking on Babergh and Mid Suffolk budget setting, update on progress with the Joint Local Plan and plans for the 2023 elections. MSDC is keen to hear about town and parish plans for local Coronation celebrations, and introduce our new locality officers and approach.

The meeting for Mid Suffolk is on Tuesday 7 February, 1.30 to 3.30pm at The Mix, 127 Ipswich Street, Stowmarket. IP14 1BB.

Should you have any queries, or if your clerk has not received an invitation, please contact business support officer Sophie Cummins.

Regards

Rick

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