

District Councillor Report: Walsham Le Willows

May 2025

Devolution – Mayoral Combined Authority	At last month's extraordinary council meeting, the response to the consultation for the council on the Norfolk and Suffolk mayoral authority was discussed. The response, which included some positive aspects and some negative comments, was unanimously approved.
Local Government Reorganisation	An early example of problems caused by the uncertainty is cancellation of a project to create a combined new depot for waste services, housing and other activities. The location and scope now need to align with the changed geography of the county which is yet to be settled. Meanwhile Mid Suffolk and Babergh have each committed £750,000 to refurbish existing depots such as at Creeting Road, Stowmarket.
Solar for business	<i>A new pilot partnership is set to turn solar energy into savings for businesses in Babergh and Mid Suffolk.</i> Businesses can reduce their carbon emissions and save money on energy bills by signing up to have solar panels provided and installed on their premises, for free. Electricity generated by the panels is then sold to the business at a rate lower than their current tariff, helping to slash energy bills and improve their bottom line. Solar for Business has been running successfully in West Suffolk for nine years – helping more than a hundred companies to save a total of around £700,000 and 2,000 tonnes in harmful CO₂ emissions per year. The initiative is now being extended, with businesses across Babergh and Mid Suffolk also able to sign up to the scheme.
Improving our Council Housing Services	To help further improve performance and tenant satisfaction, the councils have now launched their 'repairs pledges', reflecting what tenants say is more important to them, to help guide decisions and day-to-day activities: ➤ Timely appointments: ensuring appointments are prompt and convenient ➤ Communication: keeping tenants updated at every stage of their repair ➤ Tidiness: always leaving the work area clean and tidy – respecting their homes ➤ Right first time: The goal is to get the job done correctly the first time, every time.

	➤ Respectful and friendly: ensuring our team members are courteous and respectful ➤ Good quality of work: taking pride in delivering high-quality workmanship on every repair
Mid Suffolk Culture Fund	Thanks to the new Mid Suffolk Culture Fund, nine organisations have received a share of £100,505 for projects that contribute toward Mid Suffolk's rich cultural scene. Recipients include DanceEast for its dementia support classes – encouraging those affected by the condition to share in the joy of dancing, as well as East Anglian Traditional Music Trust, who promote the region's musical roots through traditional instruments and dance. There's also an opportunity for the district's youngsters to discover a new passion, with grants given to the Stowmarket Culture Group for the 'Jubilant' youth summer arts festival, which involves 10 schools, and to ERD Connection for the 'Thrive and Flourish' youth theatre group, also in Stowmarket. Further funding has been awarded to the John Peel Centre and The Food Museum as part of their long-standing partnership with Mid Suffolk District Council, ensuring that these important hubs of art and creativity can continue to provide unique and exciting experiences in the future. Other organisations have also benefited from a contribution to their core costs, such as the Association of Suffolk Local Museums, Stowmarket Arts CIC and Suffolk Artlink, with each now able to appropriately recruit and resource in order to continue their work in the community.
Retirement Homes	McCarthy Stone has submitted its bid to Mid Suffolk District Council to build 61 retirement living homes in Violet Hill Road, Stowmarket. The construction would follow the demolition of the site's existing buildings, which belonged to the former TruckEast head office before the expanding business relocated to a new site in Bury St Edmunds in 2022. If approved, a new three-storey building would accommodate 47 apartments and a further 14 twobedroom bungalows. The development would include a communal homeowners lounge, a guest suite, reception area, refuse storage, mobility scooter storeroom and communal gardens.
Locality budget 2025/26	The next round of locality funding is now live so I am able to accept applications for grants. The total amount per councillor has increased to £10,000. Full details available https://midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/locality-awards