

**Appendix C – County Cllr. Penny Otton’s Report to Full Council –**

- Cost of Living help and advice: <https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/family.page?familychannel=6>
- Benefits advice and support: <https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/adult.page?adultchannel=0>
- Flood preparation advice: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-and-rescue-safety-advice-in-the-community/what-to-do-in-a-flood>
- Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>
- One Suffolk Business Case Approved at Council Meeting - On Tuesday 16 September, Suffolk County Council held an Extraordinary (additional) meeting to debate the business case produced by the council that one unitary council would be best for Suffolk after the two-tier system (county and district/borough councils) is abolished. Unitary councils run all services for a local area, and the government is planning for all remaining two-tier areas in the country to change to this model. The reorganization will also see the creation of a mayoral authority and mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk. The business case for One Suffolk was endorsed by the Conservative majority in the council meeting and was immediately afterwards tabled at a Cabinet meeting where the council’s Cabinet voted to formally approve it. It will now be submitted to government by the end of September. An alternative proposal for three unitary councils for Suffolk has been developed by the district and borough councils and will also be submitted to government, who have said they will make a decision on the reorganization by March 2025 – this may be delayed though, as other parts have the process have been so far. The One Suffolk business case can be found here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/one-suffolk-business-case.pdf> The Three Councils for Suffolk business case can be found here: <https://threecouncilsforsuffolk.org/wp-content/uploads/Three-Councils-For-Suffolk-Case-for-Change.pdf>
- Thurston Rail Crossing - pleased we now have a confirmed date to meet the MP. Another CIL bid going to MSDC which I have asked for details of.
- New Bus Shelter and dropped Kerbs - very happy to support.
- New Saturday Bus Service - with government money this will be able to start .
- Crossing on Station Hill - seems to be some confusion as to if this is on the list. Have asked for clarification.
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy Approved - On 9 September, the council’s Cabinet voted to approve the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which was produced following a public consultation on the draft strategy between April and June this year. The strategy sets out priority species and habitats for nature conservation in the county and gives advice on how different habitats can be improved by landowners to protect and encourage nature. Most of the area mapped out for Suffolk’s nature priorities is private farmland, Landowners can use areas mapped in the strategy to produce ‘units’ of biodiversity for purchase by developers, as they will be required to meet the government’s new Biodiversity Net Gain requirements which state that all development should be increasing biodiversity by a minimum of 10%. The units of biodiversity do not need to be onsite or near the development.  
The new strategy should also help Suffolk County Council to improve the land it owns in the county, and local planning authorities will have to take account of the strategy when development is considered. In the future, mayoral authorities like the one currently planned for Norfolk and Suffolk will be in charge of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for their area.

- Financial Forecast at Quarter 1 of 2025-26 Financial Year - Cabinet on 9 September also considered the most recent financial reporting from the council, which aimed to give a better forecast of how the council's spending might look for 2025-26. The council is predicting that it will overspend by £13.3m by the end of the year, which it will balance by taking £13.3m from its Risk Reserve. This is extremely worrying, as is the prediction that the council's Designated Schools Grant debt will rise over the year by £63.3m to a total of £161.2m deficit. Currently the government has agreed councils can hold this debt until March 2028, but a long-term plan needs to be made as many councils are now carrying a level of debt related to SEND costs which would bankrupt them if it was called in by the government.
- Solar Together Scheme for 2025 - The Solar Together Suffolk scheme, which has so far installed 32,000 solar panels at 2,651 Suffolk households, is now open for registration for 2025. Registering is free and there is no obligation to go ahead with the installation. The scheme also includes battery storage and EV charge points, and customer who have already invested in solar panels can get quotes for these too. The scheme requires householders to register online, and pre-approved solar PV suppliers then take part in a 'reverse auction' to bid for the work. After this, registered households will be emailed a personal recommendation which they can choose to accept or not. Telephone and email helpdesks are available to support residents in making an informed decision. The scheme is run by Suffolk's councils in partnership with iChoosr, who have been working with UK councils on the Solar Together scheme since 2015. For more information and to register, visit <https://solartogether.co.uk/suffolk/home>
- Apply Now for a School Place for September 2026 - Parents and carers can now apply for a place in the normal year of entry at a primary, infant or junior school and a secondary school for September 2026. The deadline for applications to secure a place at a secondary school is Friday 31 October 2025 and for primary school places, including infant and junior schools, the deadline is Thursday 15 January 2026 <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/schools/school-places/school-catchment-areas/nearest-school-checker>  
Parents and carers can apply online for a school place here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/schools/school-placesGuidance>

#### **Appendix D - District Cllrs' Report to Full Council – Cllrs. David Bradbury & Harry Richardson**

Report from Cllr. Bradbury – *due to a medical situation, no report is forthcoming for this month.*

Report from Cllr. Richardson -

- Local government reorganisation - As mentioned in my last report, Suffolk County Council and Mid Suffolk District Council (the latter working with the other Districts in Suffolk and Ipswich Borough Council) have submitted their plans for local government reorganisation. A public consultation will be held by the Government later this year and a final decision is expected in early 2026 on the future of local government in Suffolk—this being either one or three unitary authorities across the county.
- Stowmarket High School expansion - The high school in Stowmarket will have its capacity extended from 900 to 1,200 students. This is to reflect the significant housing growth in the town and in neighbouring villages such as Elmswell and Woolpit. The total cost is around £10m, with £4.8m coming from CIL funding, £3.6m from S106 funding, and £1.6m from Suffolk County Council. This also follows the ongoing expansion to Thurston Community College.
- Winter Loneliness fund reopens - The Living Well in Winter grant provides support to local organisations— including town and parish councils, village hall and playing field committees, sports clubs and centres, charities, social enterprises, community shops, and community

interest companies—to facilitate accessible and inclusive spaces, as well as affordable activities designed to help individuals maintain social connections throughout the winter months.

Up to £2,000 can be applied for and applications must be submitted by Sunday 19 October. In the previous year, this scheme 13 in Mid Suffolk projects, which included initiatives such as warm spaces, coffee mornings, film screenings, and dance classes. The application window for the grant has now reopened, with funding available for programmes that foster social connections, enhance physical and mental wellbeing, and provide welcoming community hubs. Eligible projects may include lunch clubs, after-school groups, affordable family sports sessions, craft workshops, community cafés, or other initiatives aimed at uniting residents and supporting them during the colder season.

- Grant funding opportunities - Babergh and Mid Suffolk grants and funding team will be hosting a free funding summit on Thursday 6 November at Blackbourne Community Centre, Elmswell, from 9am to 2.30pm. The event will help community organisations access the funding they need and is being delivered in partnership with Suffolk Community Foundation, Community Action Suffolk, Suffolk County Council and the National Lottery Community Fund.

### **October Briefing Note for town and parish councils – from Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils**

#### **Three councils for Suffolk business case submitted to the government**

Plans to transform local services were agreed this week by Suffolk's district and borough councils, as well as cabinet members, and have been submitted to the Government.

#### **Council says mayor must belong to us all**

The government should not disadvantage Suffolk by using a voting system in the election of a powerful new regional mayor which may not provide a strong democratic mandate, Mid Suffolk District Council has said.

#### **Case for Change plans to revolutionise Suffolk council services published**

Plans to revolutionise council services in Suffolk – delivering real improvements for local communities, saving at least £34m a year, and reinvesting £20m of that money annually into council services – have been published.

#### **Council commits £4.8m to create 300 new high school places**

Mid Suffolk District Council has pledged £4.8m to create hundreds of new places at Stowmarket High School.

#### **Grant returns to tackle winter loneliness**

A grant aimed at tackling social isolation during the colder months has returned for a third consecutive year thanks to continued funding from Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils.

#### **Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils restate objections to pylon project as application submitted**

Both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have objected to the “considerable and potentially devastating impacts” of National Grid’s Norwich to Tilbury project, with pylons proposed to cut through communities and countryside, including some of the districts’ most sensitive landscapes.

#### **Council will work with community to protect and enhance 62-acre site**

Mid Suffolk District Council has secured a 62-acre site at Thorndon and will now work with the local community to protect and enhance the area.

#### **Communities brave the elements to show support for elite cyclists**

Organisers of the Lloyds Tour of Britain thanked communities for braving the elements and turning out in force to support the race through town and villages across our districts.

#### **32,000 solar panels and counting for Solar Together Suffolk project**

The successful Solar Together Suffolk scheme is now open for registration for 2025.

**Unparalleled parking in Babergh and Mid Suffolk**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have earned 19 Park Mark and Park Access awards for their work improving safety and accessibility in their car parks.

**More students given opportunity to debate climate issues at COP-style event**

Almost 100 year 8 and 9 students from schools across Babergh and Mid Suffolk will take part in a COP-style event next month

**Mid Suffolk Sports Infrastructure Grant**

The Mid Suffolk Sports Infrastructure Grant provides funding toward major infrastructure improvements to indoor and outdoor sports facilities outside of Stowmarket. Between £20,000 and £250,000 is available for projects promoting increased uptake in physical activity.

**VCFSE funding summits**

The Babergh and Mid Suffolk grants and funding team will be hosting a free funding summit on Thursday 6 November at Blackbourne Community Centre, Elmswell, from 9am to 2.30pm. The event will help community organisations access the funding they need and is being delivered in partnership with Suffolk Community Foundation, Community Action Suffolk, Suffolk County Council and the National Lottery Community Fund. Book online: [Conference Booking Form : AideCRM](#)