

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/preparing-for-flooding>
- Flood recovery advice and support: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>
- Devolution and Local Government Reorganization - Following the publication of the government’s White Paper on devolution in December, the council held an extraordinary meeting on Thursday 9 January to decide whether to pursue inclusion in the Devolution Priority Programme. Councils had to submit an application for this ‘fast-track’ devolution by Friday 10 January, including a request for local elections in May to be cancelled if this would assist them to prepare for an accelerated process including mayoral elections in May 2026. The result of these changes is likely to be a joint mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk, and amalgamation of the county council, districts and borough council in Suffolk into one unitary council, or possibly two unitary councils. Unitary councils undertake all local services and replace a ‘two tier’ system of county and district/borough councils. The government will make a decision on which areas will be in the Devolution Priority Programme and whether their local elections will be cancelled by the end of January.
- The Acorns - once again the residents have had trouble with their bin collections in some cases due to the road work there. We have tried to get some of the problems sorted so hopefully once the work is finished all will be OK!
- Meeting with TCC head Teacher - unfortunately she had a broken foot so could not meet but asked about the ongoing work with the DFE. Still looking at bringing 6th form to Thurston.
- Fly tipping Heath Road - I did report this but have not heard if any action was taken.
- Thurston Rail Crossing – have chased the Strategic Land – Christine Thurlow if they have any news.
- Ixworth Road- following Sam Harvey’s response I have said I hope the new contractor will not be an excuse for yet more delays.
- Suffolk’s SEND Needs Assessment - The report states that SEND needs in the county are rising and expected to rise further, and that delays in EHCP assessment, ADHD and autism assessment and support, and access to mental health services for young people were unsatisfactory and in some cases getting worse, like speech and language therapy. The report recommends engagement with families and young people, address inequalities in service provision and improve planning for future services.
- Council Budget 2025-26 - One Tuesday 28 January, SCC Cabinet voted to approve the proposed budget for 2025-26. This included approving a maximum rise in council tax this year of 4.99%, including the 2% social care precept for adult care. the budget relies on delivering £28.4m of savings and mitigations across council services. Cost pressures for the council include care purchasing for adult social care, Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and placements for children in care. . The government is yet to come up with a solution for this issue, which affects many local authorities, not just Suffolk. The DSG debt is largely down to the cost of services for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- SCC Carbon Net Zero - At Cabinet on Tuesday 28 January, the annual report was presented which details the council’s progress towards its target of net zero carbon by 2030. The council is not on track to achieve this target. It has achieved a 2% reduction in emissions overall during

2023-24, but Scope 3 – the largest scope and the one the council has least control over, as it includes the emissions of council suppliers (for example home to school transport) – has increased by 2% this year due to an increase in the standard conversion factor for bus travel emissions, and a rise in staff travel due to increased demand for care services. The council is trying to reduce Scope 3 emissions, and currently 40% of the council's top 100 suppliers have a carbon reduction plan for their businesses. It is unlikely the council would be able to be completely carbon free in future as large vehicles like fire engines would require fossil fuels, but it is possible that the council could offset remaining carbon emissions by planting trees in the county.

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

Report from Cllr. Bradbury- *awaited*

Report from Cllr. Richardson

Local Plan review - Mid Suffolk will now review its (Joint, with Babergh) Local Plan in response to an increase in housebuilding targets from the government. 'Part 1' of the Local Plan, covering key planning policies, was adopted in November 2023 but 'Part 2' (covering site allocations) is still in development. For context, the government has increased the annual housing requirement from 535 to 734 in Mid Suffolk (up 37%), although we have exceeded this in recent years. Although we have surpassed the five-year land supply required of us, this may not be the case for the remainder of the Local Plan's lifecycle to 2037, hence the need for the review.

Support for farmers - At our Full Council meeting on 23rd January, councillors agreed unanimously to consider all reasonable and practical measures to support local farming communities, and to urge Suffolk MPs to push for a review of recent changes by the Government, which we fear could lead to a crippling 'Family Farm Tax'. The National Farmers Union warns that 75% of working farms could be at risk from the 'Family Farm Tax,' putting both key sources of employment and food production in jeopardy. There is also added difficulty for businesses to invest given the downgraded expectation of future interest rate cuts, accompanied by predictions of sluggish economic growth in the remainder of 2024/25 and beyond.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Mellen, will now be writing to Suffolk's MPs asking them to push for the changes to APR and BPR to be reviewed. Meanwhile, cabinet members will discuss with representatives from the NFU, Suffolk Agricultural Association and the Chamber of Commerce how the council can further support local farmers and businesses within the district.

A14 services - As you may be aware from reporting in the local press, Mid Suffolk has ordered the closure of the new service station at the A14 roundabout off the A1088. This is due to the failure to comply with planning conditions imposed when approval was granted at appeal by the Planning Inspectorate, pertaining to highway safety matters. The occupiers have not complied with the planning enforcement notice and so legal advice is being sought by the Council before consideration is given to a further response. For the avoidance of doubt, the Council is able to commence a prosecution in its role as the local planning authority.

Visit from Tokyo Metropolitan Government - A delegation of three officers from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government visited the councils' offices on 27th January. This followed the council winning, jointly with Babergh, the UK Council of the Year award win in spring last year, which recognised several achievements, including becoming the first rural UK councils to commission a pioneering full tree canopy data survey. The survey by Treeconomics established the districts' detailed baseline tree coverage data and enabled us to map Mid Suffolk's tree cover, identify where more planting was needed, and improve tree management long term. This then prompted the Tokyo

Metropolitan Government to request a meeting to better understand how this approach could be adopted in Japan.

February Briefing Note for town and parish councils – from Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
Councils have ‘no option’ but to review Joint Local Plan after Government’s huge housebuilding hike

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils say a huge rise in housebuilding requirements set by the Government has left no option but to review their Joint Local Plan.

Mid Suffolk District Council pledges unanimous support for farmers

Councillors from across Mid Suffolk’s political divide have come together to pledge their support for the district’s farmers, in the face of challenges that could undermine the farming sector and threaten the nation’s food supply.

Council orders immediate closure of A14 Elmswell Services over planning breaches

Mid Suffolk District Council has ordered the immediate closure of EG On The Move’s Elmswell Services for failing to implement essential road safety measures.

Community groups receive funding to help people ‘live well’ this winter

A total of 25 community projects across Babergh and Mid Suffolk have each received a share of more than £31,000 to keep residents warm, active and connected over winter.

International relations blossom as Tokyo looks to learn from Babergh and Mid Suffolk

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have hosted a delegation from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government – showcasing their pioneering tree canopy survey.

Funding from Mid Suffolk District Council

Various grant windows are currently open, giving community organisations the chance to secure crucial funding to support community projects. For more details, [visit the website](#).

Fuel support information on our website

A fuel support flyer has been published on our website, signposting local resources that could help those struggling to heat their homes. Find it on the [energy, fuel and utilities](#) section of the website.

Mid Suffolk’s independent living service

Babergh and Mid Suffolk’s Independent Living Service (ILS) aims to encourage independence at home, by providing a supportive network across the county. We would appreciate any support in [sharing our poster](#) and raising awareness of the scheme.

Half term activities for children

Children across the districts have a wide range of activities to choose from this half term thanks to a programme of events put together by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils.