

**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>
- Cuts to Winter Fuel Payments - At Council on 17 October, a motion was passed that the council would write to the government and ask them to reverse the decision they have made to cut the eligibility for the winter fuel payment for pensioners. It is estimated that this will affect thousands of pensioners in the county. The council also announced a new £3m fund for interest-free loans to residents wishing to undertake energy efficiency upgrades such as insulation, solar panels, batteries, or heat pumps. The loans (up to £15,000) to be repaid over a maximum of seven years at 0% interest. The scheme will be open to homeowners across Suffolk from November, but you can register your interest now at <https://www.lendology.org.uk/warm-home-suffolk-loan>. My group are obviously in favour of retrofitting homes to make them more energy efficient, although as the council will be returning an unspent £5m to the government in March from their previous retrofitting scheme, we would urge people to apply if they are eligible - to make sure we are reducing as many energy bills as possible across the county.
- Pavement safety and preventing trips and falls - At Council on 17 October my group brought forward a motion that the county review its priorities for repairing pavement defects. Currently, if there is a difference in the surface level of the footway of 20mm or more, this will be repaired, but we argued that in areas of high footfall or where a trip or fall had been recorded, this threshold was too high. Most members of the public who trip or fall are over 65, would make sense for the repair policy to be more flexible. The administration at the council did not vote to pass our motion, but reported that a review of their highways processes was being undertaken.
- Protection from Flooding - You may have seen in the press that Suffolk County Council have announced an extra £1.5m of funding to deliver the first phase of works identified in the flood investigations following Storm Babet. The council is writing to the government requesting £20m for flood protection to help prevent future flooding in the county, as it is likely extreme weather will become more likely due to the effects of climate change. My group raised concerns about other areas of flooding and whether the council had a strategy for dealing with the problems or a list of priorities when it comes to protecting local infrastructure. Finally, at Scrutiny Committee on 24 October, a report was presented on highways flooding and the responsibilities held by the council, water companies and the Environment Agency. Suffolk County Council is the lead flood authority for Suffolk and although it has responsibility for surface water flooding, it does not have the capacity to manage it all and has to prioritise its response. Priority is given to works to address internal flooding to five or more properties, or flooding to major infrastructure for 10 hours or more. If you have a stream or watercourse on your land, you have responsibilities to mitigate against flooding. You can find information about this in the council’s guide to riparian ownership: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and->

[transport/flooding-and-drainage/maintenance-of-ditches-and-other-watercourses/riparian-ownership-in-suffolk](#)

- There are also some links at the top of this report on how to protect your property from flooding and advice on how to deal with the aftermath of flooding.
- Thurston Rail Crossing - I have agreed the extra CIL payment for Network rail but have stressed that we must have a timeline for this work to be completed and presented . I have not heard back from the MP for a date.
- Meeting with residents and MSDC Cabinet Member for Planning - I hope the residents found this useful and I am pleased that MSDC are proposing extra support for Thurston. The latest planning approval again raised many issues that were highlighted by the PC and myself .
- Improving Access to GPs - At Health Scrutiny on Wednesday 9 October, we heard from the NHS Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) about what they were doing to improve access to GPs in the county. Low numbers of GPs and a high demand for appointments has caused problems recently with many people unable to make appointments to see their doctors. The committee heard how practices were switching to cloud-based telephony to decrease the reliance on a limited number of phone lines (which contributes to the chaos of the 8am rush for appointments each morning), and digital booking so that AI can prioritise the urgency of appointments based on symptoms (it is still possible to book appointments by phone and in person if patients are unable to book online). Members of the committee expressed concern that community pharmacies are also under pressure currently, and also that GP surgery buildings were in a poor state, with some plans for new surgeries abandoned due to cost,
- Survey of Pharmacies - have sent details to clerk but would be good to publicise.
- Suffolk Local Transport Plan - a newly-developed plan which details the long-term vision for transport in Suffolk has been launched for public consultation. Local communities helped shape a new draft of the Suffolk Local Transport Plan by sharing their views back in February of this year and the council is now asking for feedback on the final proposed document. The plan details activity between 2025-2040 and sets out a long-term vision for transport in Suffolk, including decarbonisation of transport, strengthening the local economy, promoting health, wellbeing and social inclusion, and creating better-connected places that encourage a range of transport choices.

The council has also produced fifteen 'Area Transport Plans' and a 'Suffolk Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan' which are the funded implementation plans for the wider Suffolk Local Transport Plan. These plans outline how the Local Transport Plan's vision and objectives will be delivered in key locations across the county. The consultation is available via [www.suffolk.gov.uk/LTP](http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/LTP) and will close on Monday 25 November 2024. The Local Transport Plan and its associated plans will then be presented to Suffolk County Council Cabinet in 2025.

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

- Affordable Housing on former Stowmarket Middle School site - 38 new affordable homes have been constructed on the site that was previously occupied by the former Stowmarket Middle School, which closed in 2015. These houses include a wide range of sizes and rents, in order to increase affordability.
- Council meeting - The monthly council was due to take place on the 31<sup>st</sup> October, however it was cancelled due to agenda items being deferred to later meetings. The next meeting is due to take place on the 21<sup>st</sup> November.

## Appendix C and D – Minutes of 06.11.2024

- New Progress Power Community Benefit Fund - Mid Suffolk District Council has opened applications to a new fund which will make £270,000 available to community organisations and projects over the next three years. The Progress Power Community Benefit Fund has been provided by power generation business Drax as part of the development of the Progress Power Station on the former Eye Airfield site. £90,000 has been made available by the company each year to support local projects in the vicinity of the power station, with the fund and grant applications administered by Mid Suffolk District Council.
- Stowmarket Town Centre revitalisation - At this month's cabinet meeting, funding was agreed for a list of new measures to help revitalise Stowmarket Town Centre. MSDC have agreed to invest £1.5m generated from the Gateway 14 development into regenerating Stowmarket town centre by bringing empty units back into use. The Stowmarket Town Centre Gateway Fund is now up and running, with applications sought from agents and landlords of empty units, as well as potential tenants, to see how funding may be best used to help new business and community ventures off the ground. Measures discussed included a £400k grant scheme to assist with existing retailers, a further £225K in enhanced street cleansing and public realm services for the town, and feasibility work into demand for hotel accommodation. The shopfronts scheme could include new signage, canopies, lighting, or reinstatement of traditional or historic features that have been lost. This would be aimed at small and medium-sized firms, with national businesses excluded. £100k will also be available to increase sustainability from the Wayfinding project, and £16k at developing overnight accommodation within the town.
- Solar Together Scheme Deadline extension - The extension for the Solar Together scheme has been extended to the 15<sup>th</sup> November. The scheme is available for all residents for free.
- Living Well in Winter Grant - The annual Living Well in Winter Grant was launched this year in order to support communities through the winter months. This includes assistance with financial management, improved accessibility for recreational activities, and the creation of new connections to allow community ties to flourish during the winter months. The Living Well in Winter grant will help local organisations such as town and parish councils, village hall or playing field committees, sports clubs and sports centres, charities, social enterprises, community shops, and community interest companies deliver new and existing accessible spaces and activities during the colder months. Last year, a total of 14 projects received funding from the grant. Successful projects included community cafes, additional family sessions at preschools, coffee and chat sessions, and activity clubs. Now, the grant window has opened again, enabling applicants to address issues like social isolation and decreased physical activity, which are exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, particularly during the winter. Other eligible projects might also include lunch clubs, after-school clubs, the continuation of warm spaces, subsidised family sports sessions, hobby workshops and beyond. Organisations can apply for a minimum of £500 and a maximum of £2,000 and have until Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November to do so.
- Suffolk Taxibus (MSDC Rural Transport Grant funded projects) - Mid Suffolk district council have launched their taxibus service . A number of routes are due to start operating shortly , the most relevant one for our parishes is on this link <https://www.suffolktaxibus.com/stowmarket-circularvia-thurston> The routes are not the same as the existing taxibus service from Woopit to Bury St. Edmunds. From 1 November, Mid Suffolk Taxi Bus operated by Swift Taxi Cabs will provide transport services across central and south Mid Suffolk. Initially, they will have two routes available - [Stowmarket Circular via Thurston](#) and [Stowmarket Circular via Bacton](#) . These routes have been chosen with the areas having been identified as having the greatest immediate need – such as lack of current provision.
- Community rail partnership - The Council has supported the formation of Greater Anglia's new Community Rail Partnership for the Ipswich to Cambridge line. The aim of the partnership is to

help develop and promote rail services along this key regional rail corridor, helping to align the evolution of services in line with local needs. The new Ipswich to Cambridge partnership will look to focus on the communities served by trains along the line (Ipswich, Needham Market, Stowmarket, Elmswell, Thurston, Bury St Edmunds, Kennett, Newmarket, Dullingham and Cambridge). Mid Suffolk District Council will provide funding for the partnership alongside Greater Anglia, Suffolk County Council, the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority, West Suffolk Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Ipswich Borough Council and Cambridge City Council.

- Street cleansing and ground maintenance - Mid Suffolk's Cabinet have approved a proposal to enhance public realm services, increasing scheduled street cleaning and ground maintenance work in Stowmarket town centre, and creating REACT – a Respond, Enforce and Clean Team – to provide additional capacity to respond to urgent and reactive street clearing issues across the district. The creation of REACT will allow the public realm street cleansing team to focus on scheduled work across the district's large rural area – including dog and litter bin emptying, litter picking on the main rural road routes and villages, and mechanical sweeping – without the distraction of having to respond to reactive cleansing incidents. The new team would also play a role in education and enforcement, giving advice on street cleansing issues, patrolling problem areas, gathering evidence and issuing warnings and notices, working alongside the council's environmental protection team, where appropriate.
- Local issues - The Fishwick junction in Thurston has been closed whilst final construction to the new staggered junction is ongoing; a diversion has been put in place via Pokeridge Corner. Confirmation has been received from Suffolk Highways that a one-way system has been installed in Kiln Lane, Stowlangtoft to mitigate additional traffic using the road whilst the bridge on the A1088 remains closed. The police have also undertaken to monitor the Kiln Lane regularly.

### **November Briefing Note for town and parish councils – from Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils** **[Councils renew call for urgent government action to end council housing funding crisis](#)**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have renewed their call for urgent government action to end the financial crisis that is currently facing council housing.

### **[New community transport services to better connect Mid Suffolk](#)**

Two new community transport services are to launch in Mid Suffolk next month – to better connect local communities and reduce emissions.

### **[Redundant school site provides top class council homes](#)**

Next month 24 families will pick up the keys to their new town centre homes, following the transformation of the former Stowmarket Middle School site into affordable rent council housing.

### **[Council considers package of improvements for Stowmarket](#)**

Mid Suffolk councillors are considering a raft of new measures to support Stowmarket town centre, enhance the street scene and improve the quality of life for residents.

### **[Troubleshooting taskforce about to hit the streets?](#)**

Mid Suffolk councillors are considering a £360K boost for street cleansing and ground maintenance – including the creation of a new troubleshooting taskforce to tackle litter hotspots, fly tipping, and graffiti across the district.

**Fund launched with £270,000 available for community projects**

Mid Suffolk District Council has opened applications to a “unique” new fund which will make £270,000 available to community organisations and projects over the next three years.

**Crucial grant aimed at tackling social isolation in winter returns for second year**

A grant aimed at tackling social isolation in winter has returned for a second year, thanks to funding from Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils.

**Increased bin collections set to herald ‘recycling revolution’**

Residents in Babergh and Mid Suffolk will get more opportunities to recycle from 2026 as part of nationwide changes to waste collections.

**‘We will protect our heritage’ – Council’s pledge as Shrubland Hall owner fined**

The owner of Grade II\* listed Shrubland Hall has been fined £3,600 after two structures were erected on the historic estate without planning permission.

**Cash injection for communities in Babergh and Mid Suffolk**

Town and parish councils in Babergh and Mid Suffolk are set to receive more than £979,000 in developer contributions to help community infrastructure keep pace with housing growth.

**Council backs new Community Rail Partnership**

Mid Suffolk District Council is supporting the formation of Greater Anglia's new Community Rail Partnership for the Ipswich to Cambridge rail route.

**More time to get your Suffolk solar panel and battery storage quote**

Suffolk's Solar Together scheme deadline has been extended to 15 November 2024 - with over 3,100 Suffolk residents already signed up for a quote.

**Businesses recognised as Innovation Awards shortlist revealed**

The finalists for the Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Innovation Awards have been revealed.

**Exciting programme of half term activities for children in Babergh and Mid Suffolk**

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.

**Suffolk councils join national campaign to save recycling from the bin**

The Suffolk Waste Partnership joins Recycle Week to celebrate Suffolk's recycling and help save packaging from the rubbish bin.

**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.

**Rural Housing Event – Wednesday 6 November**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are hosting a rural housing event. Come along to hear about the benefits of rural led housing schemes.