

To Chairman and Councillors – Holbrook Parish Council
From Councillor Mary McLaren – Stour Ward

Holbrook Parish Council Report 15 April 2024

Councils named best in the UK at prestigious awards ceremony.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk have taken a top honour on the national stage. The councils which are separate sovereign authorities but share a single workforce were named UK Council of the Year at the iESC Public Sector Transformation Awards in London on Wednesday 6 March.

The award is presented to a council deemed outstanding in transforming its services and creating vibrant communities.

The judges praised the councils for their joint vision and innovation - achieving a number of UK firsts – and noted how by working in collaboration with each other, with partners, and their communities they continue to raise the bar for public services.

Some highlights of their successes

- The Gateway 14 development on the outskirts of Stowmarket will become the flagship hub for business, innovation and logistics. E.g. The Range is creating 1650 jobs in its new distribution centre. A full business case for a new £18million Skills and Innovation Centre is planned.
- Led pioneering environmental work to cut carbon emissions.
- First rural councils to start the switch from diesel to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil to fuel its fleet of bin lorries.
- Installed hundreds of solar panels on the roofs of four leisure centres to improve energy efficiency.
- Installed solar covered parking bays in two Leisure Centres as one of the first councils to trial the technology.

The award reflected not just the success of the last year but the council's transformation since becoming a dual authority in 2011. The decision to share a joint Chief Executive and a single workforce has saved around £2million per year.

Upcoming Elections – Police and Crime Commissioner.

The next election within our district is on Thursday 2 May and deadlines to register to vote, apply for a postal vote and get appropriate voter ID are fast approaching. To access the details and relevant links and information please access the Councils website.

£3.8m pledged for energy efficient council houses

Last week Babergh and Mid Suffolk received a £1.6m boost in government funding to bring down energy bills for tenants. This will be added to the £2.25m already committed by councils to install energy saving measures in social housing to enable retrofitting and decarbonising to take place.

The funding is to help lower income households by delivering warm and energy efficient homes, lifting tenants out of fuel poverty by saving money on their energy bills.

Work is now underway to target council properties with the lowest EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) ratings with improvements to be carried out over the next two years.

NB Warm Homes Suffolk offer grants for energy efficiency measures to private homeowners and landlords whose gross income is under £36,000.

Councils pledge further help to prevent homelessness.

More than 1500 households at risk from homelessness have been helped to keep a roof over their heads by both councils since 2019.

The council's joint homelessness reduction and rough sleeping strategy has been reviewed by the council to ensure it reflects the current challenges facing both districts. ~The council housing solutions service is



Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich IP1 2BX
Telephone: (0300) 1234 000
www.babergh.gov.uk www.midsuffolk.gov.uk

facing increasing demand not only from tenants struggling to pay their bills but also those looking for help because private landlords are selling up and putting a further squeeze on available in the area. The report shows that during 2022/23 the team received 627 homeless applications in Babergh compared to 581 in 2021/22. The council are working hard behind the scenes to support residents before they reach crisis point, the early intervention team are offering advice and practical help to tackle financial issues and supporting those affected by domestic abuse.

Although “rough sleeping” is less of an issue in rural areas the strategy describes how contact is made currently with people sleeping on the streets within 24 hours of a referral being received by the outreach support. Since April 2020 41 rough sleepers in Babergh have secured long term accommodation.

The strategy commits to further work in all areas as well as providing temporary accommodation particularly children, pledges further work to help those facing financial hardship and the expansion of Central Suffolk Lettings - the councils trailblazing lettings service. Access the Council Website to learn more about the opportunities you have if you have a property to let.

Grid reinforcement cannot come at any environmental cost.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils have formally objected to the National Grid’s plans for more electricity pylons between Bramford and Twinstead – saying the impact on the countryside is too great.

Cash Injections for local community projects – CIL Monies

In March the Council voted to approve the latest round of CIL bids which includes such projects as play area upgrades, creation of walking paths and installation of solar panels.

CIL Payments, which are a legal requirement, paid by developers of residential sites across the district will fund nine successful bids during this round of applications. The CIL Team welcomes all funding bids and encourage Parishes, Community Groups and Charities to come forward with great ideas to improve the infrastructure of their communities.

Parking charge proposals include reductions for shop workers and long-stay visitors.

The proposed Short Term Parking Charges in Sudbury, Hadleigh and Lavenham came before the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 March 2024. As the Chairman of that Committee my role was to encourage apolitical questions and debate as the Scrutiny function is to be seen to be above party politics and provide “critical friend” observations and recommendations. As at least 50% of the Committee and their residents were directly affected by the proposals it was difficult to steer an unemotive pathway. The main thrust of the paper described the public engagement process that had taken place over a six-week period and the committee members were required to review that process and its value.

The Committee added a number of recommendations to those already in the paper presented. The Paper has now gone to Babergh Cabinet Members and a decision regarding the proposed charges will be made by the Cabinet at their next meeting on Monday 8 April 2024 at 11am. I shall be attending that meeting as I am required to attend all Cabinet Meetings as Chair of O&S.

Mary McLaren

Mary.McLaren@babergh.gov.uk

1 April 2024.



Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich IP1 2BX
Telephone: (0300) 1234 000
www.babergh.gov.uk www.midsuffolk.gov.uk