

To Chairman and Parish Councillors
Holbrook Parish Council
17 February 2025



We are waiting to find out from the Government at any moment whether Suffolk is on the Devolution Pathway and if Suffolk County Council's request to postpone its May elections has been successful. Parishes will be updated as soon as we find out.

Devolution and extraordinary council meeting

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils are holding a simultaneous extraordinary meeting (Joint Chairs but managed separately within the meeting) on **Monday 10th February at 17.45-20.30** where the Devolution Proposal and Local Government Re-organisation will be debated by both councils. This meeting will be live streamed from the council chamber for public viewing from 17-45 for those who are interested.

Babergh District Council - Proposed Budget for 25/26

Babergh's budget will be going to Cabinet on 11 February followed by council on the 26 February for final approval. Like nearly all councils we have increasing pressures on our budget as funding does not keep step with inflation and the demand on our services. We will be increasing our Council Tax by the maximum allowed, 2.99%, which will mean Babergh's council tax will rise by £5.63 to £193 a year or £3.73 a week (band D) We will also be increasing fees and charges where we can and are looking for more cost savings. However, we will still need to dip into reserves to fund the forecast deficit of £633k for the year. We have identified £2.56m of further savings, cost efficiencies and income including £1.4m additional income from services and £700k of staff savings.

Our Medium-Term Financial Plan is showing an increasing deficit over the next five years and a complete depletion of our reserves, so much further work is required in the next year or two to address this. Within the Housing Revenue Account, we will be increasing housing and garage rents by 2.7% and sheltered housing charges will be increased by 9% to reduce their subsidy from housing rent. We have a new 30-year HRA business plan to ensure that we can meet all future commitments for renovating and installing energy efficiency measures in our housing stock. Building and acquiring new properties remains a challenge.

Councils have no option but to review the Joint Local Plan after the Governments huge housebuilding hike

The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan adopted in November 2023 is the blueprint for the district's future until 2037. It is designed to ensure that residents and communities have sufficient housing, employment and there is inward investment, that the environment and heritage is protected and that the right infrastructure is in place.

However, as the Government has increased the annual housing requirement from 416 to 775 homes in Babergh (up 86%) This despite that BDC has exceeded existing requirements in recent years. Each year planning authorities must demonstrate that they have a five-year land supply for the required number of homes. Under existing requirements this has been exceeded by BDC. But the higher figures set by the Government in Decembers National Planning Policy Framework review will make this more challenging in the future. If that happens the risk is that national planning policies will take over the Joint Local Plan and councils may find themselves required to approve planning applications on sites contrary to the development plan.

The Council will now build on the work to date and start a full review of the Joint Local Plan. A revised timetable will be brought forward to the council in February - setting out a period of further evidence gathering and consultation before the plan itself is reviewed. This was discussed at the Town & Parish Liaison Meeting in January.



Community Groups receive funding to help people “live well” this winter

A total of 12 Community projects across Babergh have received a share of more than £15,173 to keep residents warm, active and connected over winter. Holbrook Chapel who provides Community Spaces for residents at least twice a week every week, was awarded a grant of £2000 which helps with the extra heating provided at these events.

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

Both Councils hosted a delegation of three officers from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government on 27th January showcasing their pioneering tree canopy survey.

Last year our councils were awarded UK Council of the Year award at the prestigious local government iESE Public Transformation Awards. This win caught the eye of the Tokyo Metropolitan Governments statistics division.

The award recognised several UK Firsts including the first rural UK Councils to commission a pioneering full tree canopy data survey. This was undertaken by Treenomics and established the districts detailed baseline tree coverage data.

This enabled the councils to:

- map their districts tree cover
- identify where more planting was needed
- and improve tree management long term

Keen to understand more and explore how they might be able to use this data in Japan, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Officers contacted the Councils and arranged their visit.

Funding Opportunities and Support available

Parish Councils as well as voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise groups (VCFSE) are encouraged to access the webpage of Babergh District Council. The webpage details the funding opportunities and support available to the above VCFSE groups.

Organisations can submit one application to multiple funds. Within the funding opportunities and support available to VCFSE organisations a range of terms are used which may not be familiar to all applicants.

View a Glossary of Terms for VCFSE Funding.

Funding Available - CIL Monies, Section 106 and Capital Grants plus many others.

If you have any queries, please email BMSDCGrants@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

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 **energy, fuel and utilities section** on the website or Contact Tele 0300 1234000


Independent Living Service

Babergh’s Independent Living Service aims to encourage independence at home by providing a supportive network across the country.

The ILS will focus on creating a suitable home environment for our vulnerable residents, their families and their carers. This includes listening to people and offering guidance on financial support, adaptations and relocation assistance.

Who is the service for: -

- must live in Babergh,

- 
- have a registered (or able to be registered as) disability,
 - own a home or rent from a private landlord.

If you are a council or housing association tenant, contact your Housing Officer for help and advice on how you can remain safely in your own home or consider alternative accommodation.

Access the Independent Living Service on our website or Contact Tele 0300 1234000

Mary McLaren

District Councillor – Stour Ward

Mary.McLaren@babergh.gov.uk

4 February 2025.