



To Chairman and Councillors Holbrook Parish Council  
From Councillor Mary McLaren – Stour Ward  
Monthly Councillor Report.  
16 March 2026

**Babergh District Council has agreed a budget which protects vital services and unlocks funding to deliver promised community projects.**

On Tuesday 24 February councillors agreed a 2.99% increase to its share of council tax bills. This means a Band D household will pay Babergh DC £199.52 per year, a total increase of £5.79 – or 11p a week.

This is the equivalent of £3.84 a week for all district council services – including rubbish and recycling collections, the upkeep of parks and green spaces, leisure facilities, planning services, regeneration projects and help for those at risk from homelessness.

Babergh Leader – Cllr John Ward said “This year is probably the most difficult budget setting we have faced. For years the funding we have received from the government has failed to keep up with the demand for our services and the increased costs we face.

Difficult decisions have been made to identify savings and additional income. Just days before the budget setting the government changed the council’s provisional finance settlement.

The total impact of this was a net funding cut of £717k for Babergh over the next three years.

Babergh keeps only 9% of the total council tax bill with the rest going to Suffolk County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and town and parish councils.

**Pylons project would devastate special Suffolk Landscapes councils warn**

The National Grid plan for more pylons in the Suffolk countryside should be halted, leading councillors in Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils told a Public Hearing on 11 February 2026.

National Grid proposes 159km of new overhead lines between Norwich and Tilbury, with the route cutting through the Suffolk countryside.

It also includes 21km of underground cabling, including some through the Dedham Vale national landscape and up to seven new compounds to connect underground sections to overhead lines.

At a hearing in Ipswich, both councils called for a delay to the project so other options could be considered and costed - such as an undersea route or undergrounding for the entire length of the project.

They cite serious concerns about the impact on the environment, communities and business.

To quote Councillor John Ward: -

“The landscape of the district is highly valued, with the National Landscape designation, many cultural and historic associations, and sensitive views that contribute to the unique character of Babergh District and the wider region. These are the views immortalised by Constable and Gainsborough.

The impact on the Dedham Vale National Landscape will be particularly devastating with wide swathe cut through one of the most beautiful and historic parts of the region.

Of course, grid re-inforcement is necessary and all options have impacts – residents understand that. But we have never had a proper national debate about the trade-offs between costs and impacts of all new energy projects”



### **Council renews pledge to boost biodiversity**

Babergh District Council has renewed its commitment to protect, restore and enhance the district's biodiversity after approving a new action plan.

At a cabinet meeting on 10 February 2026 the council approved its updated Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for 2026-2030 which had been developed by a cross-party working group.

The plan re-affirms its long-term commitment to protect, restore and enhance the district's natural environment for generations to come.

It also sets out how the council will continue to improve biodiversity on their own land as well as the steps it will take to support communities, landowners and partners into the future with:-

- creating healthier habitats and reversing habitat loss,
- enhancing tree, hedgerow and wildflower planting,
- expanding wildlife corridors and networks,
- supporting wildlife recovery,
- helping the district adapt to climate change,
- increasing engagement and awareness of biodiversity and its importance - encouraging residents and businesses to act.

Previous successes and initiatives: -

- mapping existing and potential wildlife corridors, helping identify areas for future habitat enhancement,
- A rural UK first of its kind tree canopy survey,
- the creation of new wildflower areas on council managed land,
- the launch of a community landowner scheme (including town and parish councils) which has seen 314 trees and 5,295 hedgerows planted to date as well as 1470m<sup>2</sup> of wildflower seed spread in Babergh,
- Supporting landowners with advice including awareness of available grants,
- Gifting almost 3000 trees jointly with Mid Suffolk to new parents through the councils Tree for Life scheme.

### **Tech donation gives new life to old devices and gets rural communities online**

A new initiative distributing re-furbished laptops will help tackle digital exclusion and isolation in Suffolk.

FCC Environment (FCC) has donated 10 refurbished laptops to the Rural Coffee Caravan - a local charity dedicated to tackling isolation and supporting residents across rural communities.

FCC, which runs the 11 re-cycling centres in Suffolk on behalf of SCC has worked in partnership with Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils - which play an active role in bringing together local organisations to improve digital access.

The donated laptops will be distributed to residents who are not able to afford a device, helping to bridge the digital divide and improve access to vital online resources.

Volunteers at the Rural Coffee Caravan will also support recipients to feel more confident using devices and getting online safely as part of their wider programme of digital support.

According to the Reuse network, each re-used device saves significant carbon and represents a charitable donation valued at £100 per laptop.

**For more information about the Rural Coffee Caravan access their website.**



## Wildlife Wise encouraging grant applications to protect wildlife on the Suffolk Coast

Organisations looking to deliver projects that help protect vulnerable wildlife and their habitats on the Suffolk Coast are being reminded of the grant funding that is available from Wildlife Wise.

Wildlife Wise is a partnership project between Babergh District Council, East Suffolk Council, Ipswich Borough Council and Mid Suffolk District Council.

Applicants can seek up to £5000 to help ground nesting birds to breed and to allow sensitive wildlife habitats to flourish without visitor disturbance. The funding can also be used to manage public access to the coast.

Find out more and apply on **Wildlife Wise Website** or email the **Wildlife Wise** team for more information.

### Call for Sites – Between 20 October and 9 January 2026

The Call for Sites exercise is an essential evidence gathering process for the New Joint Local Plan. An earlier call for sites between 5 January and 2 February 2024 was the precursor to the most recent call for sites

The Map of all sites submitted during these exercises can be accessed on the Babergh District Council website. **The following must be noted**

- This is not a list of preferred development locations. Publication promotes transparency and ensures communities have early visibility of what has been suggested.
- No planning status is granted by submission. Sites do not benefit from any presumption of development.
- Submissions will now be assessed against planning policy, constraints and deliverability criteria.
- Residential sites submitted in 2024 are still included in the assessment process.

Assessments will be published through the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment In Spring 2026. Officer Assessment does not determine allocations – that occurs at the draft planning stage and will be subject to full public consultation.

### Better Recycling Updates

Residents on Shotley Peninsula should have all received their initial letter regarding the New Waste collection systems.

Parish councils will also be in receipt of information packs regarding new Waste Collections.

New green lidded bins and food waste caddies are due to begin arriving on Babergh doorsteps **from April**.

Instructions on the correct use of the new bins will be circulated and well publicised.

Facebook, Instagram and Tiktok also provide information on the Better Re-cycling Channels.

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