

To the Chairman and Parish Councillors – Holbrook Parish Council
From Councillor Mary McLaren – Stour Ward
20 April 2026

Government confirms ambitious new future for local government in Suffolk.

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 25 March 2026 confirmed that three unitary councils will be created in Suffolk replacing the current system of Suffolk County Council and the five district and borough councils :- Babergh, East Suffolk, Ipswich, Mid Suffolk and West Suffolk.

Suffolk's District and Borough Councils welcomed the Governments decision on the future shape of local government in the county.

Work to examine the future structure of local government in Suffolk began with the publication of the English Devolution White Paper in December 2024.

The consultation and discussion involved all serving councillors in the Districts and I was proud to be part of the exploratory discussions that were held in various parts of the district and the constant map drawing, and re-drawing enabled us all to feel involved in the preparation work.

Under the new arrangements the new councils will come into operation in April 2028 with councillor elections scheduled for next year in May 2027 to establish the shadow authorities responsible for shaping and overseeing the transition.

Existing District and Councillor Councillors who will not be standing in next years election will continue in their existing roles until May 2028.

The Shotley Peninsula will become part of the Southern and Ipswich Council

For more information visit the **Three Councils for Suffolk website**

Footnote – Given the success of the Shotley Parish Councils Alliance, the group will be strong and knowledgeable enough to contribute to the new council development.

May I suggest that different Parish Councillors are given the opportunity to attend the Alliance Meetings to understand the benefits that have evolved since its inception. As a district councillor I find it very informative and helpful.

Shape the future of your community

Communities are being encouraged to shape the future of their areas by creating a Neighbourhood Plan. Until last year a basic grant was supplied by an organisation called Locality with a basic grant payment of £10,000. This was withdrawn in June 2025. Now Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have agreed alternative funding of up to £20,000 to support groups prepare Neighbourhood which will help to meet housing need in the area. There are already 50 adopted Neighbourhood Plans in Babergh and Mid Suffolk with others in preparation or being considered.

Emergency support call for households hit by soaring heating oil costs.

More than 20,000 homes in Babergh and Mid Suffolk rely on heating oil which has seen prices double because of the war in Iran.

Calls have been made for the regulation of the heating oil market and emergency financial support.

We have many elderly and vulnerable residents living on fixed incomes in isolated villages who are worried about how they will afford to heat their houses. Families and elderly people are being forced into greater fuel poverty. In addition, many rural communities because of poor public transport services are reliant on their cars and rising petrol prices which increases the pressure on our residents.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils are advising those impacted to look at the existing options available for help.

These include collective buying schemes that bulk buy to secure a better deal for households.

[Find out more about Community Action Suffolks community oil buying and bulk LPG scheme](#)

[Find out more about The Oil Club](#)

[Interest-free loans are also available from the Eastern Savings and Loan Credit Union](#) to spread the cost of oil. These are subject to affordability, a credit check and a membership fee.

People who are struggling to pay their heating bills may also be able to apply for a grant from the [Suffolk Local Welfare Assistance Scheme](#)

See the full list of the potential support on our Council Website

[View the Energy, Fuel and Utilities page on the Babergh District Council website](#)

People can also contact: -

Sudbury and South Suffolk Citizens Advice on 01787 321400

or

Ipswich Citizens Advice 0808 278 7867

New “Grazing Walks” leaflet launches to promote car-free days out

Babergh District Council has helped to introduce a new Grazing Walks illustrated map and visitor leaflet, designed to help visitors enjoy easy and sustainable days out and short breaks across the Harwich Haven using train travel and **the Harwich Harbour Ferry**.

With £1,300 put forward by Greater Anglia’s Customer and Community Improvement Fund, the leaflet links the ferry’s three drop off points at Harwich, Shotley and Felixstowe. It also helps bring together information for visitors to plan a full day out. Babergh District council alongside partners Mid Suffolk District Council and East Suffolk District Council also provided funds.

The leaflet includes information such as local walking routes, places to eat and drink, accommodation options and key attractions.

The project offers a unique way to showcase an area rich in wildlife and history whilst supporting the local economy by encouraging visitors to spend longer in each destination.

This initiative follows [the launch of the Grazing Walks initiative in Babergh and Mid Suffolk in in 2025](#) which introduced a detailed guide to the districts and highlight perfect places to enjoy a picturesque walk followed by a treat at a local pub, shop or café. Elsewhere applications to Greater Anglia's 2026 Customer and Community Improvement Fund are currently open.

Finally - New bin rollout across our district

New Bins will be delivered in Late April and May

Please watch out for the information coming to your house.

All the FAQs on the Babergh District Council Website

Visit the Suffolk Recycles Facebook page.

Finally Local Elections on the 7 May 2026

- **Are you registered to vote?**
- **Make your vote count.**

Mary McLaren

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9 April 2025.