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

Government update on the Local Government Re-organisation in Suffolk

On 29 October 2026, Government Minister Jim McMahon made a statement to the House of Commons providing an update on LGR. As you may remember the original decision to create three new unitary councils was unexpectedly withdrawn last month meaning that local district elections would go ahead on existing council boundaries in May 2027.

Government has now completed the first phase of the review and say they are satisfied that the criteria and processes for LGR are robust.

We are now expecting a fresh decision to be made on the future of local government in Suffolk, based on the proposals previously submitted and are ready to respond to any queries or offer assurances as required regarding the three-council case, to ensure that the final decision is the best one for the residents of Suffolk.

We expect to hear this decision by March 2027 at the latest.

Shadow elections for the new unitary councils in all areas are then expected to take place in May 2028 ahead of the new councils going live on 1 April 2029.

Regulator publishes findings of Councils' housing services inspection.

The Regulator of Social Housing has published its findings after an inspection of the housing services provided by Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils.

It has awarded both councils the C2 rating – the second tier on a scale of C1-C4 with C1 being the target grade for all Social Landlords.

The regulator is satisfied that councils' have a timely and responsive repairs service and noted a significant reduction in the repairs backlog over the last two years.

A positive council culture of fairness and respect for tenants, tenant feedback positively shaping future services and a responsive complaints system were among other areas acknowledged.

The judgement says a key area both councils must focus on is bringing all home up to the required standard.

The regulator is assured that both councils have accurate, up-to-date information about the conditions of its homes. However, it notes at the time of the inspection 16% of Babergh District Council's homes and 13% of Mid Suffolk District Council's homes did not meet the decent home standard – a set of minimum conditions covering safety, repair, services and insulation.

An improvement programme is already under way at both councils to ensure all homes meet this in the next year as they aim to achieve the C1 Standard.

Meanwhile the regulator said that while it has assurance both councils are meeting health and safety compliance, additional work is needed around record keeping. Both councils are already making processes more robust to address this.

In awarding the C2 Grade, it considered all four of its consumer standards: -

- **Safety and Quality –** How we ensure the safety, quality and decency of tenant's homes.
- **Transparency, Influence and Accountability -** How we provide information, listen to tenants and act on their views.
- **Neighbourhood and Community -** How we work with other organisations to help ensure tenants live in safe neighbourhoods
- **Tenancy -** How we allocate and let homes and manage tenancies.

The regulator was satisfied the councils had procedures in place to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour and hate incidents in neighbourhoods where there are council properties.

It said the councils are also meeting the required standards in how it allocates and manages tenancies, and complaints are addressed fairly, promptly and effectively.

The councils must now set out an action plan addressing the regulator's findings which will be presented to November Cabinet Meetings.

Addendum

As the Chairman of BDC Overview and Scrutiny Committee I am very pleased to report that there is a Babergh Tenants Scrutiny Board made up of tenants from across the district who give up their free time to scrutinise the work of the Housing Team and interact with Tenants to seek out the truth about their tenancy. They submit their reports to the Director of Housing regularly and provide their reports twice yearly for scrutiny and recommendations to the BDC Overview and Scrutiny Committee. They work extremely hard and the reports they have produced are honest and challenging for the Housing Directorate. The Chairman of the Tenants Scrutiny Board lives in Stour Ward.

Councils help lowest income families receive the support they need

Between September 2025 and September 2026 Babergh and Mis Suffolk District Council's cost of living team contacted hundreds of households identified through data as being most at risk of financial hardship. Working alongside partner organisations, the team helped many residents claim benefits and financial support they were entitled to but had previously been unable to access.

Working with over 20 partners including Citizen's Advice, health colleagues, the Department of Work and Pensions, housing teams and community organisations, the team secured £207K in unclaimed support for households in Mid Suffolk and £73K for Babergh over the 12-month period. The ongoing "lifetime impact" is estimated to a total more than £1.3million.

Households were targeted for help using the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) – a tool which combines data from multiple sources to build a picture of households' financial situations and potential entitlements to benefits, such as Pension Credit and Attendance Allowance, free school meals and holiday activities, help with housing and heating costs and disability entitlements.

The councils' team works closely with **South Suffolk Citizens Advice (Sudbury**) through the Accessible Advice project, ensuring households identified through LIFT have access to accredited advice and a dedicated caseworker as a single point of contact. To date more than more than 100 residents have received direct support through the project, with hundreds more expected to benefit in the coming months through targeted referrals, outreach and wraparound advice.

Over the coming months the councils hope to build on their success by further scaling up outreach work, helping even more residents through early intervention and local insight and providing more information about accessing hardship support through the Government's new Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) which brings together elements of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme (LWAS) such as crisis payments, heating oil funding and housing payments.

If you are **a local group that delivers** outreach support/events and would appreciate a signposting session to help your clients, or you would like to find out more about how the team might be able to help you, email: -**costofliving@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk or find further information on the BABERGH website**

"ARE YOU EMERGENCY READY?" GOV-UK Campaign" Access the Government Website for comprehensive detailed advice
***From severe weather to cyber-attacks, emergencies can disrupt the services you rely on.**
***Being ready for 3 days helps you manage while support reaches those who are in need.**
***Download our Be Ready checklist**

The Government has recently launched its "Be Ready" campaign urging households to prepare for up to three days of disruption caused by everyday emergencies like severe storms.

Parish Councils currently reviewing their Emergency Plans will find this document a helpful addendum to that plan.

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