

Mid Suffolk District Councillors' Annual Report (2025/26)

Helmingham Annual Parish Meeting, May 2026

- **Local Government Reform**

Following Government's announcement that unitary councils will be created across the whole of England, it has now been decided that Suffolk will be split into three unitary councils. Parts of Mid Suffolk will be in all three areas. Crowfield will be in the Eastern and Central Suffolk area.

Suffolk County Council elections are being held on May 7th 2026 and there are expected to be elections for the new unitary councils in 2027. Elected unitary councillors will not take on all their powers and responsibilities until 2028 so there will be a year of overlap before the existing council structure is fully handed over.

The formation of the Strategic Authority covering both Norfolk and Suffolk with a directly elected Mayor has been delayed, and we are expecting elections for the Mayor to also be held in 2028.

- **Budget**

The District Council's share of Council Tax is to be raised by 2.99%.

This rise is unavoidable as the Government has now linked future grant monies to the assumption that the share of council tax has risen, so if we had not taken a small increase this year we would be facing a "cliff edge" of funding in the near future.

In addition to the day-to-day provision of council services and activities, the 2026/27 budget includes funding for a wide range of programmes, including:

- Implementation of the new food waste collection scheme
- Enhancements to our current waste depot in readiness for this, plus further support for recycling education
- Cost of living support
- Council Tax Support scheme
- Grants programmes for towns and rural communities outside of Stowmarket
- Investment in leisure centre maintenance
- Stowmarket sports facilities delivered through the SHELF Project, plus support for wider Stowmarket regeneration
- Support for the Cosy Homes insulation scheme which has been expanded to help residents obtain solar panels
- Grant funding for nature recovery and community biodiversity groups
- Support for new footpaths and cycle ways
- Completing the build of the Stowmarket Innovation Gateway
- Expansion of the area's temporary accommodation (which avoids homeless residents being put into bed and breakfast accommodation and saves on costs going to private providers).

- **Recycling and Waste**

MSDC has been working on the Better Recycling scheme which will be fully launched in June. Food waste will be collected weekly and additional items such as soft plastics and tetrapaks will be able to be recycled. A second (blue) recycling bin has now been delivered to all homes across the district as well as the smaller food waste bin and caddy. The blue-lidded bin will be for glass bottles, jars, tetrapaks, plastic bags, cans and plastic bottles. Paper and card will go in the existing green-lidded bin. More information can be found at

www.suffolkrecycles.org.uk

- **Nature recovery**

A new scheme was launched in January offering small grants up to 2K and larger grants up to £50k for projects that protect and expand wildlife corridors and habitats within the district – including tree planting, wildflower meadow creation, or other environmental initiatives to safeguard natural spaces for future generations.

Organisations such as environmental groups, schools and town and parish councils can apply.

MSDC also introduced a new £525,000 fund to support ambitious nature recovery, flood mitigation and water management projects across Mid Suffolk. The fund opens for applications next week. The Catchment and Landscape Nature Recovery Grant promotes larger-scale, collaborative initiatives which could span multiple sites and landowners. With a focus on river catchments, it will support projects that benefit communities as

they address biodiversity loss, with a particular emphasis on priority habitats and species. It will also support natural flood management, as well as projects to improve water quality and security [Funding opportunities and support - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk](#)

Mid Suffolk District Council has purchased eight acres of land in the heart of Stowmarket to preserve it as a future riverside haven for nature and wildlife for future generations. The land, between Takers Lane and the River Rat, adjoins the council's existing open space at Pikes Meadow – unlocking potential for a new riverside walk, connecting Combs Ford and Gipping Way.

- **Planning and Housing**

The Government introduced new increased housing targets earlier this year so MSDC made a decision to update the existing part 1 Local Plan which included the planning policies, and to include a new settlement hierarchy and allocated sites. Work is still ongoing, making good progress. A 'Call for Sites' took place and a map of submissions has been published: <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/web/babergh/w/call-for-sites>. Submitted sites do not benefit from any presumption of development. Officers are now assessing those sites against planning policy, constraints, evidence and deliverability criteria.

- **Wades Barn**

There has been considerable concern locally over the recent licence application for Wades Barn. The application was for outdoor performances of films, live and recorded music, and sale of alcohol between 10.00 and 22.30, 7 days a week possibly with outside traders and up to 4999 people in attendance. I have met with residents and corresponded with them and also with the licensing team. The licence application has been withdrawn, and I anticipate a modified version will be coming forward.

- **Speed limits**

Framsden residents are seeking a modification and extension of the speed limits on the B1077 from Chapel Hill (before the windmill) southwards, and would welcome support from Helmingham parish in extending this to approx. 500m south of the junction with Gosbeck Rd.

- **Supporting the community**

Projects in the ward which have been supported from my Locality budget this year include:
Improvements to Village Halls :New curtain rail for Crowfield, Heaters for Framsdén, and a contribution to a new floor in Stonham Aspal.
Sports and Play: Electronic scoreboard for Earl Stonham Cricket club, Play equipment in Mickfield, and interim expenses for Stonham Aspal Football club.
Coach outing for Earl Stonham Over 60's club.
Funding towards the Upper Gipping Farm Cluster.

Mid Suffolk District Council information is available via www.midsuffolk.gov.uk or by phone **0300 123 4000**

I would like to thank the Parish Council for all their work throughout the year.

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