District Councillor Report: Hunston

Nov 2026

Mid Suffolk Magazine	This magazine highlights the work of the District Council over the past few months, and it is posted to every householder. Hopefully you have now had this delivered.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM	
Local Government Reform	The government had previously decided to replace our current 'two-tier' council system with new 'unitary' councils. Three new unitary councils for Suffolk would have been: • Ipswich and Southern Suffolk • Eastern Suffolk • Western Suffolk These would have replaced Suffolk County Council and the five district and borough councils: Babergh, East Suffolk, Ipswich, Mid Suffolk and West Suffolk. This would have provided a single tier of local government. On Sept 7th, 2026, the government paused this process and now it is not clear whether it has been abandoned or whether it will be resurrected. The decision to have a Mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk is still in place with elections currently due to be held in May 2028. This means that Suffolk County Council and all the District Councils will continue to exist. There will be District Council elections in May 2027. To be honest it's all a bit of a muddle. Mid Suffolk District Council is remained focused on the delivery of services and supporting businesses and communities who are based in Mid Suffolk. I have been underwhelmed by the way the whole process has been managed. However, our existing local government structure is not going to work over the longer term. The current structure is confusing and doesn't have the resources to deliver what residents expect. Most people think their Council Tax is mainly used for road maintenance or refuse collection or other neighbourhood services. In fact, well over 70% of all local government funding is spent on adult social care and children's services and this percentage is growing every year. Unless there is change the system will grind to a halt.
COUNCIL HOUSING / HOUSING	

Result of inspection by social housing regulator	The Social Housing Regulator has awarded Mid Suffolk District Council a **C2 rating** - the second tier on a scale of C1-C4, with C1 being the target grade for all social landlords. This is the highest grading of any district or borough council in Suffolk, and the judgement reflects the good progress made over the last few years from a very difficult position (we self-reported to the housing regulator in 2023 for failures around safety compliance for gas and electrical checks). The regulator was satisfied the council had a timely and responsive repairs service, noting a significant reduction in a repairs backlog in 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 the areas acknowledged. The judgement said that improvement is needed to bring all homes up to the required standards. 13% of Mid Suffolk District Council's homes, did not meet the Decent Homes Standard - a set of minimum conditions covering safety, repair, services, and insulation. This is not a surprise – the Council's stock condition survey had already made clear where the Council needed to prioritise, and these figures are regularly reported and scrutinised. An improvement programme is already under way to ensure all homes meet the standard in the next year.
New Council Housing	The keys have been handed over for a batch of new affordable homes in a Suffolk village. The 67 properties have been built by Bellway in Bramford. The homes include a mix of one and two -bedroom flats, two - bedroom bungalow, and three - bedroom family houses, available for both rent and shared ownership. The keys were handed over to Mid Suffolk District Council as part of a developer's community contribution agreement, known as Section 106.
Additional temporary accommodation	20 additional units of temporary accommodation have been acquired by Mid Suffolk to avoid using unsuitable and expensive accommodation for homeless families.
BETTER RECYCLING	
Better recycling	The new recycling regime came into force in June 2026. Mid Suffolk has diverted more than 2,825 tonnes of food waste in the first 3 months. This the equivalent of around 1,880 average – sized cars. This is now all being converted into biogas and fertilizer. The changes are described here: https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/waste-collections

	Any issues please email recycling@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk and copy me in.
PLANNING	
Joint Local Plan scoping	Mid Suffolk District Council has published the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) as evidence to support the Joint Local Plan and also to support the preparation of neighbourhood plans across the districts. See Mid Suffolk SHELAA – Oct 26 This map is interesting SHELAA 2026
Mid Suffolk Council writes to Government over changes to planning reforms	Mid Suffolk councillors have hit out at Government planning reforms, warning they could leave local communities with less say over new developments. The Mid Suffolk District Council is to write to the Government to raise concerns over changes to Neighbourhood Plans, green spaces and the way planning applications are decided.
THRIVING DISTRICT	
Construction of £18m Stowmarket Innovation Gateway complete	Construction of a 'transformational' £18 million, state-of-the-art skills and innovation centre in Stowmarket has been completed – and is ready to open this summer. The Innovation Gateway, at Gateway 14, will offer a range of office spaces for high growth start-ups, collaboration and innovation areas, meeting rooms and high-quality training spaces. The project, led by Mid Suffolk District Council, was made possible thanks to a Freeport East agreement to provide £16.66m for its construction, with the remaining costs provided by the council.
£45m investment in Gateway 14	Assan Panels a Turkish company has invested £45m on a new facility at Gateway 14. The building has been built using the same insulated sandwich panels it will be making at the giant Freeport East site at Gateway 14. This is a further company building high tech sustainable building materials locating in our district.
Eye post office	Eye post office is reopening. This will restore the service to the area after the previous branch closed in December 2022.
New fund launched to transform district's high streets	Businesses across Mid Suffolk can now apply for grants worth up to £10,000 to spruce up shopfronts, improve accessibility and implement energy efficiency upgrades. Mid Suffolk District Council's new Town and Village Centre Business Improvement Fund is designed to support projects that make businesses more attractive and sustainable, helping them to remain resilient and open opportunities for growth.

	Funding can support a range of improvements, including new shopfronts and signage, lighting, accessible doors and ramps, customer facilities, security measures, solar panels and other equipment to support business growth or environmental performance. Mid Suffolk launches grants of up to £10,000 for businesses | East Anglian Daily Times
£30k fund helps growing projects take root	Community groups across Mid Suffolk can apply for grants of up to £30,000 to create or expand local food-growing projects thanks to a new funding scheme from Mid Suffolk District Council. The Community Growing Fund is designed to support communities looking to establish new growing spaces or enhance existing sites where there is a clear local need. Grants of between £5,001 and £30,000 are available to local VCFSE (voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise) organisations for the purchase of land and the development of projects such as community gardens, orchards and other food-growing spaces. Part of the council's broader Food and Drink Action Plan, the fund aims to increase access to locally grown food, strengthen food security and encourage more sustainable food systems. As well as supporting food production, projects funded through the scheme will also help bring people together, improve health and wellbeing, and give residents opportunities to develop their skills and confidence in growing food. £30k fund helps growing projects take root - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk
Sports facilities in Stowmarket	**A state-of-the-art 3G community football pitch and new athletics track have been completed in Stowmarket – opening up new sporting opportunities for the district's residents.** Built in the grounds of Stowmarket High School, the 3G pitch and mini athletics track will be managed by Everyone Active and available for community use outside school hours through a booking system. The 3G pitch project was funded by the Government's Football Foundation with contributions from Mid Suffolk District
Sports grant	The community sports grant is for sports projects outside Stowmarket, the largest town in the council's area, to "ensure sporting opportunities are spread out across the whole district". Since the fund was started in 2025, £400,000 has been paid out. There is £750,000 available to be applied for by voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations in 2026-27.

	Walsham le Willows Sports Club received £110,000 for the screen and other improvements, including floodlights and a gym extension. Stradbroke Tennis Club was given nearly £48,000 for the resurfacing of tennis courts.
Businesses set for energy savings under new scheme	A new scheme has been introduced to enable business to get solar panels. These are fitted for free but the electricity cost savings are shared with the Council. A pair of businesses in Eye are the first to see energy savings thanks to a new council partnership. Sister firms Wrightfield and Wrightform, based at Mid Suffolk Business Park in Eye had 250 solar panels installed last month as part of the Solar for Business scheme. The cost of the panels is covered by the Council, and the business receives electricity at a lower rate. The panels are on track to save £10,000 in electricity bills during the first year as well as saving 25 tonnes of CO€.
Maintenance work at Leisure Centres	A £1.2m maintenance programme at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centres took place this summer at Stowmarket and Stradbroke. There was work to the roofs, external lighting upgrades, and some changing room repairs.
CIL awards	Developers building homes within the districts are charged a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which the councils then reinvest in neighbourhoods via their towns and parish councils. In this latest round of funding, 29 town and parish councils in Mid Suffolk will receive a share of a £553k. The town and parish councils can decide how to spend this money to best support the development of their local area and meet the need of the community. .
Mid Suffolk Youth Council	Launched last year by Mid Suffolk District Council, the Youth Council is designed to give young people a chance to have their voice heard and get involved in local politics. The initiative was driven by research showing the disconnect between young people and politics, with almost three quarters of those asked believing that politics should be taught more in schools or colleges. Debenham High School was the first to elect members to the Youth Council with Stowupland High School following closely behind with three of their students also having been elected. Claydon High School, Finborough School, Hartismere School and Thurston Community College all in varying stages of appointing students.

	Each school can elect three students aged between 11 and 19 to serve a two-year term.
COST OF LIVING	
Mid Suffolk Council Funding for Citizens Advice	Citizens Advice services in Babergh and Mid Suffolk have received significant financial backing as part of the latest round of community funding from the district councils. Through the councils' Community Development Fund, Sudbury & South Suffolk Citizens Advice has been awarded £103,000, while Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice has received £129,265. These local Citizens Advice branches are recognised as key strategic partners of the councils and, by receiving these crucial funds, they can continue to provide residents with free and essential guidance on everything from housing and debt to benefits and wellbeing support.
Residents urged not to miss out on heating oil help	Mid Suffolk District Council has joined forces with local Citizens Advice services to reach residents who may be missing out on financial help with heating oil. The councils are now writing to residents who heat their homes with oil and may be eligible for help but have not yet accessed it. Heating oil support can be accessed locally through Suffolk County Council's Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF), which replaced the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme on 1 April 2026. Residents struggling with essential costs or heating oil may be eligible for a crisis payment or a specific heating oil payment.
NATURE RECOVERY	
Riverside land purchased to save it from development	A riverside site will be protected from development and enhanced as a wildlife haven after Mid Suffolk District Council purchased the land and teamed up with the River Waveney Trust. The land is by the River Waveney in Palgrave, and is mostly covered in trees and scrub, alongside some more open areas. It was put up for sale and marketed for its development potential – but Mid Suffolk stepped in to buy it, protecting it for the local community. Mid Suffolk has now agreed a plan with the River Waveney Trust (RWT), which will take over the management and restoration of the site. It will form part of the RWT's 'River Access for All' project, reconnecting Waveney Valley communities to their rich waterside heritage.

New nature reserve near Needham Market	Mid Suffolk District Council have introduced a fund to allow communities to purchase land for biodiversity. A new nature reserve has been created thanks to a £50,000 funding boost from Mid Suffolk District Council via its Community Nature Recovery Grant. Chalkeith Conservation Ltd has purchased a 20 acre site in Needham Market. Located off Chalkeith Road and Barking Road, the land will be managed long-term as a protected reserve, preserving a highly biodiverse habitat that has become scarce in the UK. Ecological surveys have identified numerous protected and endangered species on the site.
PYLONS	
Pylons	National Grid proposes 159km of new overhead lines between Norwich to Tilbury, with the route cutting through the Suffolk countryside. The pylons are are national government decision. Mid Suffolk District Council has restated their objection and again called for the plan to be halted – with questions remaining unanswered over the devastating impact of the scheme for local communities, businesses, environment, heritage and landscape. It 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. Although negotiations with National Grid have secured some improvements to planned construction practice and ecological management, in a joint closing statement submitted today, the council said there too many questions still unanswered regarding the significant and devastating impacts of the scheme on the districts.

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