

Babergh District Councillor's Report

August & September 2026

Town & Parish Liaison Meeting

Our latest Town & Parish Liaison Meeting took place on 27th July at the Stevenson Centre in Gt. Cornard. It covered the latest on LGR, including the wider public sector reform that is underway; current Community projects and grants and opportunities for engagement; a waste and recycling update; and an update on planning policy, including the timetable and scoping consultation for our new Joint Local Plan, and Neighbourhood Development Plans.

Local Government Reorganisation

Preparations for LGR are proceeding well. Andy Burnham, as expected, is very keen to proceed with both LGR and Devolution at pace, with even more powers being proposed for regional mayors. The districts – and Suffolk county council – are cooperating with the programme plan and activities that are underway. We still anticipate that the Structural Changes Order will be laid before parliament and made by the end of the year. This is the secondary legislation that provides the legal basis for creating the new councils and holding their elections next May.

The [Future Suffolk](#) website is being updated continually with the latest information.

NPPF

A new, radically different National Planning Policy Framework was published on 17th August and took effect immediately. I will provide more information next month, but it will have implications for our JLP and NDPs.

Steps taken to manage meadow land and reduce fire risk during hot weather

Residents are being reassured over action being taken by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils to manage its meadow areas – reducing fire risk during hot, dry weather while also protecting wildlife.

Latest community investments are child's play

Playgrounds, a leisure centre upgrade and a children's library are amongst the community projects received a share of more than £745k CIL from Babergh District Council in August.

Constable Country protected as conservation area expanded

The historic area in and around East Bergholt made famous by the work of John Constable has been given enhanced protection after Babergh District Council approved the expansion of the existing conservation area.

'Unconventional Constable' at the artist's East Bergholt birthplace

In August, visitors to East Bergholt were able to turn back the clock and step into the world of landscape painter John Constable using mixed-reality headsets.

As part of the Constable 250 celebrations – marking the 250th anniversary of John Constable's birth in East Bergholt – this unique exhibition used advanced 3D design and game-engine technology to bring his iconic artworks to life. It was delivered by immersive technology specialists Xibitr in partnership with Babergh District Council and Colchester and Ipswich Museums.

It was a very interesting and realistic way to see these works of art – and the reimagining of the scenes by local primary school children. Pieces of wood with Constable's doodles on them could be picked up and turned around to look at both sides. Visitors were completely in the virtual world, even to the extent of walking around the table in the middle of the room, forgetting it wasn't real.

Reporting empty properties

The Government wants to reduce the number of empty homes, by bringing them back into use in a sustainable way to increase overall housing supply.

To do this, we have an empty homes initiative called 'Houses 4 Homes'.

It aims to help fulfil the growing housing need, and offer more choice to the market, by reducing the number of long-term empty homes within the districts.

We work with landlords and owners of empty properties to get them occupied again.

If you are aware of an empty property, please report it to us.

You can [report a property via the Babergh](#) and [Mid Suffolk websites](#), by [emailing the Houses 4 Homes team](#) or calling our customer services team on 0300 1234000.

Help promote our self-build register

Did you know we have a self-build register to help our strategic housing team and planners understand the demand for such projects within our districts?

If you know any friends, family, or residents in the districts thinking about building their own home – please encourage them to register their interest on our self-build register.

Alternatively, if you know an architect, builder or contractor who regularly works in Babergh and Mid Suffolk please do mention it so they can make their clients aware.

[Find out more on our website](#)

Funding summits

Our grants and funding team are busy planning summits for each district, designed to help voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations access the funding they need.

Funding summits will take place on:

Monday 5th October

Lavenham Village Hall

Wednesday 21st October

Debenham Community Centre

The summits will include a series of workshops and talks, delivered by our team as well as our partners at Suffolk Community Foundation, Community Action Suffolk, Suffolk County Council and the National Lottery Community Fund.

More details about the summits, including how to book a space to attend, will be available in due course so please look out for further information soon.

Dedham Vale Forum 2026

On Thursday 17th September, the 2026 Dedham Vale Forum will take place at Firstsite in Colchester, bringing together anyone with an interest in the Dedham Vale National Landscape and Stour Valley.

This year's event will feature talks on:

- wetland enhancements for birds in the Dedham Vale
- preserving our dark skies and international recognition
- engaging Stour Valley communities with nature
- the Bottengoms project and Ronald Blythe

[Head to the forum Eventbrite page to book and find more information](#)

Questions remain unanswered – councils repeat objection to pylons project

In a closing statement to National Grid's Norwich to Tilbury examination, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have 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.

Residents invest in renewable energy

Switch Together continues to help residents across Babergh and Mid Suffolk reduce energy bills and invest in renewable energy.

In 2025, the scheme attracted 664 registrations (245 in Babergh and 419 in Mid Suffolk), resulting in 102 completed solar and battery installations. More than £726,000 was spent by residents, with installations expected to save over 74 tonnes of CO₂ annually, equivalent to removing dozens of petrol cars from the road.

For 2026, 850 households have registered across the two districts (341 in Babergh and 509 in Mid Suffolk), demonstrating growing demand for low-carbon technologies.

Personal recommendations have now been issued, with participant decisions, installer surveys and installation delivery underway, and all installations are expected to be completed by March 2027.

Suffolk residents can get a free proposal to replace ageing heating systems with heat pumps

All of Suffolk's public sector organisations have come together to help residents in Suffolk replace ageing gas, oil or LPG boilers with a heat pump combining a £7,500 or £9,000 government grant, depending on current heating fuel, with group-buying savings on installation.

Strength and balance classes

As part of a broader partnership with the ICB, East Suffolk Council and Ipswich Borough Council, strength and balance classes continue to take place each week across our districts, designed to help older residents feel stronger and more stable on their feet.

Sessions take place at:

Stowmarket – [Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre](#), Tuesdays from 1:30pm to 2:30pm

Needham Market – [Needham Market Community Centre](#), Wednesdays from 11:30am to 12:30pm

Combs Ford – [Stowmarket Community Centre](#), Mondays from 3pm to 4pm

Debenham – [Debenham Sports & Leisure](#), Mondays 9:15am to 10:15am

Hadleigh – [Hadleigh Pool & Leisure](#), Tuesdays 11:45am to 12:45pm and Thursdays 12pm to 1pm

East Bergholt – [Constable Memorial Hall](#), Tuesdays 11:45am to 12:45pm

Holbrook – [Village Hall](#), Mondays 1:45pm to 2:45pm

Sessions can be booked and further information can be found by visiting the relevant website for each destination.

Feel Good Suffolk's healthy lifestyle survey

Feel Good Suffolk is inviting adults in Suffolk to take part in a short survey about healthy lifestyle support in the county.

The [survey](#) only takes a few minutes and your answers will help give a better understanding of what people need, what gets in the way and how healthy lifestyle support could work better.

Councils' armed forces commitment recognised with silver award

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have received a silver award for their ongoing commitment to the armed forces community.

Councils' 'excellent' commitment to gender equality recognised

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have been officially recognised as Menopause Friendly employers – raising awareness and supporting those experiencing the symptoms of menopause.

Car Club electric vehicles named

Earlier this year, Sustainable Suffolk invited residents to help name the county's fleet of 18 electric community vehicles.

More than 250 names were submitted and all of the vehicles have now been named.

In Babergh, Maiden Way car park in Hadleigh is home to Lady Lightning and Honeybee and Girling Street car park in Sudbury is home to Lecky and Car-bon Cutter.

In Mid Suffolk, Station Yard car park in Needham Market is home to Casper and Watt Wagon, while Stevie the EV and The Stowmobile are located at Crown Street in Stowmarket.

[Read the full story](#)

Find your nearest vehicle and join Suffolk Car Clubs [via the Co Wheels website](#), with referrals earning £25 in driving credit – worth more than three hours of driving time.

Meetings

Cabinet, Council and Planning Committee meetings can be watched, either live or catch-up, on our [YouTube Channel](#).

For agendas and minutes, please visit the [Democratic Services homepage](#).

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