

Babergh District Councillor's Report

February 2026

Councils call for urgent reform of sewage sludge regulations

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are calling for urgent action by the Government to tighten regulations governing the spreading of sewage sludge on agricultural land, citing serious concerns for public health, farming and the environment.

'We back the bid' – Councils support Ipswich ambition to be City of Culture

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are backing Ipswich's bid to become City of Culture 2029 – saying it deserves Suffolk-wide support. I was very pleased to propose a motion at the recent Babergh council meeting that was supported unanimously and then taken up by Mid Suffolk at their meeting. A successful bid will not only be great for Ipswich, it will also have huge benefits for other parts of the county, particularly Babergh with our artistic heritage.

Update on local elections

As you will have heard, the Government has announced it will be cancelling 29 elections due to take place this May, including those scheduled for Suffolk County Council and Ipswich Borough Council (which elects in thirds in three years out of each four-year term).

This followed representations from councils due to hold elections advising that postponement would help free up more capacity to deliver local government reorganisation.

The correspondence between the government and Suffolk County Council is a masterclass in sophistry and buck-passing, with neither wanting to be seen to take the blame for cancellation. Suffolk's letter was enough for the government to infer they wanted cancellation without saying so explicitly, and the government was happy to oblige saying they were just acceding to what the council wanted.

Norfolk CC wasn't quite so clever: their initial letter was too ambiguous and the leader was asked to clarify. She responded using wording copied from Suffolk, which was enough to get her over the line. Essex CC was even less clever: after an initial ambiguous letter their second letter still didn't say enough and so the government confirmed that their elections would go ahead, noting the public comments from the leader saying he didn't want a cancellation. I bet he is wishing he had kept quiet!

I remain of the view that the elections should go ahead and that the capacity argument is spurious. The leader of Suffolk is desperate to hang on to power to control the LGR process in the county.

However, some uncertainty remains. Reform UK have started Judicial Review proceedings to challenge this decision, and this case will be heard by the High Court on 19th and 20th February. If the challenge is successful, the elections may still go ahead.

In the meantime, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils stand ready to deliver the county council

elections in our area if required and will continue to make necessary preparations until we are instructed otherwise.

If May's elections do not go ahead, the next scheduled elections in line with the local government reorganisation process, would be for the new unitary council(s), with the election of shadow councillors in May 2027. There may also be by-elections before then if required. I expect that this may happen: a number of councillors in Norfolk have already resigned, forcing by-elections there. It's all getting quite messy.

Better Recycling updates

As you will be aware, weekly food waste collections and the ability to recycle more items from home – like glass, Tetra Pak, plastic bags and film – are coming to Suffolk this summer.

Residents across the county will start receiving their new bins over coming months, alongside information about their new recycling services, including what goes in each bin.

An initial information pack will be landing on doormats during January and February, detailing the upcoming changes and what residents can expect.

You may also start noticing a variety of adverts appearing on some buses, bus stops, billboards, petrol stations, supermarkets and other locations across Suffolk too.

Additionally, Better Recycling social media platforms have been created across a variety of channels, helping to share all the important information that residents need to know ahead of the changes coming in June.

Norwich to Tilbury examination update

The Rule 6 letter for the Norwich to Tilbury examinations has now been published, setting out the date and agenda for the preliminary meeting to discuss procedural matters and the expected timetable for other hearings in the examination.

Members of the public and any registered interested party can attend the meetings, watch along or speak, if they wish.

The first meetings will be held in a blended format – in person at Ipswich Town Football Club and virtually via Microsoft Teams. It will also be possible to watch a livestream of the meetings. I will be attending and speaking on 11th February.

Inspiring the next generation to explore their future in creative careers

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, in collaboration with East Suffolk District Council and MENTA, have launched a brand-new initiative designed to ignite curiosity, confidence, and ambition in young people.

Helping households to save money, eat well and reduce food waste

Households across Suffolk can now get free access to Five Dinners – an award-winning meal planner which helps them eat healthily, save money and reduce food waste.

Find out how much heat your home is losing – by borrowing a thermal camera for free

Suffolk residents can now borrow a thermal camera from their local library for free to detect where heat is escaping their homes and take action to stop the leaks.

Last chance for free net zero support

Babergh-based businesses don't have long left to receive their free net zero support from Groundwork East. This fully-funded, expert advice can help businesses to save energy, cut costs and share their sustainability story with loyal customers. Find all the details on the [Carbon Charter website](#).

Paperless billing

With council tax and business rates bills due to land on doormats in the coming months, we are again encouraging residents and businesses to opt for paperless billing.

Not only does it reduce paper waste and the need for postage, supporting our environment, but also means residents can access their account and let us know of changes quickly and easily.

You can find the relevant links below:

- [Paperless billing for Babergh council tax](#)
- [Paperless billing for Babergh business rates](#)

The main council tax and business rates pages - accessible via the links above - also have a wealth of information, including how to sign up for Direct Debit.

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](#).

John Ward
Babergh District Councillor
Brett Vale
john.ward@babergh.gov.uk