

Babergh District Councillor's Report

June 2025

Annual Council Meeting

At our annual council meeting last month, in accordance with our coalition agreement I once again became council leader for the forthcoming year. It will be dominated by finalising our proposal for the future council structure in Suffolk, but we still need to continue to deliver for our residents as Babergh District Council.

We are now halfway, or perhaps 2/5ths of the way, through this final Babergh term and we are starting to thinking about the legacy that we want this final Babergh administration to leave our successors. The cabinet met recently to identify what we still want to achieve during the two or three years we have until the unitary councils take over. It is quite a long and ambitious list and you will hear more soon. [Newly elected leader on ambitious plans and the need for innovative successor councils](#)

However, I will say that first and foremost is ensuring a stabilised financial position, with a final balanced budget that still retains some funds in our reserves. I would hope that all councils in the county are aiming to do this to give the new councils a good start.

The newly elected leader of Babergh District Council says there is a 'long and ambitious list' for the district ahead of major changes to local councils in the next three years.

Babergh District Council's new Chair supports domestic abuse charity

Babergh District Council's newly-elected Chair Cllr Ruth Hendry is supporting a charity close to her heart for her fundraising this year, having revealed she experienced domestic abuse as teenager.

Local Government Reorganisation Update

At the start of May, the Government provided feedback to the interim proposals for Local Government Reorganisation submitted by Suffolk's councils. [Response to Government feedback on Suffolk councils' plans for Local Government Reorganisation](#)

We continue to work with the other district and borough councils to develop our plan for either two or three unitary councils to meet the differing needs of our county's diverse communities. The plan will be submitted to the Government in September following full council meetings.

Suffolk County Council continues with its preferred option of a single unitary for the county – effectively just a rebranding of the existing council but including the district services. We believe that this offers nothing in terms of innovation in service delivery, which is sorely needed, whilst the districts are looking at how local government can be redesigned for the future and, crucially, funded in a sustainable way. The county council is basing its preferred structure purely on estimated cost savings and has suggested some unproven numbers to justify it. However, this has come from a report commissioned by the County Councils' Network – not an independent organisation. Even so, this should not be just about the cost savings but also about better services – and maintaining local

connections and representation. Experience elsewhere – Somerset being a prime example – tells us that any putative cost savings from a single unitary council must be viewed with some skepticism as very large unforeseen overspends on adult and children's services will inevitably continue.

SCC is also promoting the fact that their single unitary will reduce the total number of councillors across the county from about 300 to 120 – aligning themselves with the populist canard that we need fewer politicians. Apart from 120 being far too unwieldy for one council, it would stretch representation much too thinly. It would not be in our residents' best interests and would just exacerbate the lack of local connections that is already a key criticism of a single unitary.

An important part of developing our proposal will be seeking the views of our town and parish councils, and residents, businesses, organisations and communities across our districts. And I do mean seeking their views in order to inform our proposal – not just to tell them what our decision is.

Working with Suffolk's other district and borough councils, we have just [launched a wide-reaching survey](#) across the county inviting residents, businesses and communities to help shape the future of our county. This impacts everyone, and we want as many people as possible to have their say.

Make sure you [take the survey](#) yourself and share it with your community. We will also be sending promotional materials to each clerk and would be grateful for your support in encouraging local residents to have their say. Babergh will also be carrying out a number of face-to-face workshops with town and parish councils, so we can design *together* how any future unitary councils can work most effectively with them. We will keep you informed of these.

‘Ensuring respect and fairness’ - Councils restate commitment to Armed Forces Covenant

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have restated their commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant – an important pledge for thousands of families in the districts.

Council partners with EEZYBIKE to launch new electric bikes in Sudbury e-Bikes

Two new electric bikes can now be hired in Sudbury thanks to a new partnership between the council and Suffolk-based electric bike company EEZYBIKE.

Councils pledge to continue improving services for social housing tenants

Housing teams at Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have turned the tide for tenants, transforming the service they provide and promising further improvements still with the launch of their new 'repairs pledges'.

A message from our Chair on the 80th anniversary of VE Day

Ahead of the 80th anniversary of VE Day on Thursday, 8 May, former Chair Cllr Elisabeth Malvisi issued a message to mark the occasion.

Onwards and upwards for Babergh Chair's chosen charities

Babergh's outgoing Chair, Cllr Elisabeth Malvisi, has raised more than £3,800 to be shared equally between her two chosen charities.

Free tree for every Babergh and Mid Suffolk baby born in 2025

This year's applications for a popular free tree scheme are now open for families in Babergh and Mid Suffolk celebrating new arrivals.

Suffolk Community Awards open for nominations

Nominations for the Suffolk Community Awards 2025 are now open. The awards aim to celebrate all those that have improved the quality of life for communities across the county. Nominations can be made on the [Suffolk Community Awards website](#).

Suffolk Community Awards

Nominations for the Suffolk Community Awards 2025 are now open.

The awards celebrate all those that have improved the quality of life for communities across the county.

There are a range of awards to be won, with specific categories for community organisations, individuals, councils, councillors and beyond.

Nominations need to be submitted by Sunday 13th July, with the award ceremony set to take place on Tuesday 23rd September at the Food Museum, hosted by Mark Murphy MBE.

[Visit the Suffolk Community Awards website](#) to make a nomination.

Suffolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy Consultation

The public consultation for Suffolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy is ongoing and runs until Wednesday 11th June.

The draft strategy, developed by the [Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership](#), which our councils support, identifies priorities and actions for restoring and enhancing nature across the county.

Please help spread the word and [direct people to the Suffolk County Council website](#) to find the full draft strategy and a link to the consultation. You can [email the Norfolk and Suffolk Nature Recovery Partnership](#) with any queries.

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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