Babergh District Councillor's Report November 2026

Regulator publishes findings of councils' housing services inspection

The Regulator of Social Housing sets and enforces four Consumer Standards – Safety and Quality, Tenancy, Neighbourhood and Community, and Transparency, Influence and Accountability – applicable to all registered social landlords in England from 1st April 2024. These standards form part of a strengthened consumer regulation regime introduced under the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023.

The Regulator has published its findings after an inspection of the housing services provided by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and has awarded us a C2 grade. C2 is the highest grade achieved by any council in Suffolk this year and across the country only two councils and four housing associations have been awarded C1. We are aiming to achieve C1 next year.

Councils help lowest income families receive the support they need

Targeted support for the districts' lowest income households unlocked almost £300k in unclaimed benefits for families across Babergh and Mid Suffolk last year, new figures have revealed.

Government update on Local Government Reorganisation in Suffolk

Well, the saga of Local Government Reorganisation continues. Another month, another change! I know it is a dry subject and it does seem that we politicians are a bit obsessed with it, but it really does matter as it will affect how local services are delivered for decades to come.

Local Government Minister Jim McMahon made a statement to the House of Commons on 29th October and confirmed that council reorganisation is still going ahead.

As you may remember, the original decision to create three new unitary councils in Suffolk was unexpectedly withdrawn, along with others, by the Government in September, pending a review of the whole programme.

As promised, the Government has now completed the first phase of its review, and it is satisfied that the criteria and process for LGR are robust and aligned to its priorities.

I was in the minister's Teams call on the 29th. The minister made it clear that he is not asking for new proposals, so the county council leader is wrong when he says 'that the government has not said it is restricted to the proposals already submitted'. On the contrary, the minister said he will rigorously test the assumptions and evidence underpinning the two already submitted. He will be 'checking everything' before making a fresh decision – as he will be doing for the proposals submitted for all the other areas undergoing LGR.

The districts and borough are ready to respond to any queries and provide any further evidence as required to reinforce the messages in the case for Three Councils for Suffolk. I am confident that the case will remain the stronger of the two and that a fresh decision will favour it.

We expect to hear the decision by March 2027 at the latest.

I said back in early September, when the government paused LGR, that the Suffolk County Council leader's triumphalism at what he said was a victory was both premature and unseemly. The

subsequent assertions by some county councillors that LGR was completely dead are now looking a bit silly. The government was always going to regroup and come back with a way forward that will stand up to any future legal challenge. The completion of a 40-year LGR journey was not something that was going to be stopped, particularly as it really is necessary to make devolution work, which is the government's real goal.

I know there are some who question the need for LGR at all; however, I do agree with the minister when he gave a very powerful explanation as to why the status quo is not an option.

The timetable for both LGR and Devolution has now been set:

- District elections will take place in May 2027, for a two-year term.
- Unitary council elections will take place in May 2028. These will operate as shadow councils for 11 months.
- Mayoral elections will take place in May 2028.
- The new councils will take over from the county and districts on April 1st 2029.

All this is encouraging and the year's delay, although disappointing, is understandable. I will keep you informed of all developments as I hear them.

Ten years of Screen Suffolk

Screen Suffolk – the county's film service representing all district, county and borough councils, and funded by the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders group – is set to mark its 10-year anniversary in November.

Their work has seen areas in our district featured at Kersey (for Magpie Murders), Harkstead (for Slow Horses), and Pin Mill (for an Ed Sheeran music video), to name a few.

Since its launch, Screen Suffolk has supported more than 650 productions and helped generate an estimated £20m+ in economic impact for the county, as well as helped see our residents benefit from 'Set Ready' courses.

Read more about their work over the years in the recent Suffolk Economy In Focus report, which includes a short showreel video.

Emergency Ready

The Government has recently launched its 'Be Ready' campaign, urging households to prepare for up to three days of disruption caused by everyday emergencies like severe storms.

Being prepared includes simple actions such as signing up to the Priority Services Register – a completely free service that helps gas, water and electricity companies identify customers who might need extra support during an emergency.

Find all the information and resources you need on the Government website

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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