Babergh District Councillor's Report October 2026

Town & Parish Liaison Meeting

Our next Town & Parish Liaison Meeting will take place on Tuesday 20th October, 10am-12pm, at Sudbury Town Hall. For more information or for any questions, please contact our communities' team.

This will focus on the new National Planning Policy Framework and Neighbourhood Plans.

Leaders react as government withdraws Suffolk LGR decision

The leaders of Babergh and Mid Suffolk district councils have given their reaction after the government announced the decision on local government reorganisation in Suffolk, along with others, had been withdrawn, pending a review of the LGR process.

It would seem that there are legal questions surrounding the decisions and, rather than engaging in a protracted court case, the new Secretary of State at MHCLG, Angela Rayner (also the SoS before the last one!), has decided to ensure everything is completely watertight before proceeding. Whether the review will mean that new proposals have to be prepared or existing ones updated remains to be seen.

We don't yet know the scope or timetable for the review, but we have been promised that this information will be made clear before the end of this month. Noises from government indicate that they do want to move at pace, but we will have to wait to see what that means. We do know that Andy Burnham's top priority is to set up regional Strategic Authorities, with or without a mayor, where they don't currently exist.

We have been told that unitary elections have been postponed and that elections for the existing districts will now take place next year. But there are lots of unanswered questions. How long will the district term be? Will the unitary elections take place in 2028 alongside the mayoral election? Will the latter be brought forward to its original date of May 2027?

The only thing we do know is that the delay to LGR will be costly and we can thank the new administration at the county council for that.

NPPF & Neighbourhood Plans

On 30th September, we send an email to all parish clerks outlining important planning changes following the publication of the new National Planning Policy Framework in August. We will be discussing these further at the Town and Parish Council Meeting on 20th October, so it would be good if all parishes, but particularly those embarking on Neighbourhood Plans, are able to send a representative to the meeting.

I am very pleased that I have been able to secure £8,000 funding to help Polstead and the Quartet Parishes prepare their Neighbourhood Plans. This is the only instance of two grants going to the same district ward.

Joint Local Plan

Our JLP Scoping Consultation took place over the Summer and has now finished. 1,146 responses were received, which compares favourably with 370 in West Suffolk and 840 in East Suffolk. It also compares favourably with responses in similar sized local authorities across the country. A response in excess of 1,000 provides a high level of statistical significance enabling us to confidently feed the results into the next stages of the JLP.

Bramford to Twinstead Pylons

National Grid's contractor, Balfour Beatty, will be starting works on the River Box Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) crossing on 2nd October 2026 and continue through to January 2027.

The HDD crossing will provide a trenchless installation method for the 400kV underground cable beneath the River Box and surrounding environmentally sensitive areas, minimising surface disturbance and avoiding direct impacts to the watercourse. The HDD will go under the River Box for 100m only near where the existing pylons cross the river just south of Nussteads, Whitestreet Green.

River Stour Day Trippers – Update for Stratford St. Mary

SCC councillor Darius Laws and I attended a meeting on 30th September where a review of the Summer at the river was conducted.

The long hot Summer has put a huge amount of pressure on the now popular riverbank on the Stratford St. Mary/Dedham border. The continuous hot weather throughout the Summer has, however, meant that the peaks and troughs in visitor numbers of previous years were replaced by a more even spread, which presented fewer problems.

The planning enforcement for the commercial activity on the field is now with the Planning Inspectorate. The matter of recreational use of the field is still of concern to Dedham parish council, but there is little that can be done about that, other than a tall fence either side of the footpath, which would be problematic in the National Landscape – and would require the landowner to pay for it.

Public behaviour on our side of the border in the field has been good with no anti-social behaviour reported to either Suffolk police or Babergh. There has been criminal activity in Dedham itself, with the perpetrators being known to Essex police. They have now been stopped from visiting. Essex police have logged a lower number of reports than previous years.

There is still major concern for the safety of children and young adults jumping off the bridge and lock, following the very serious injury to a young teenage girl. SCC Highways do have options for obstructing this on the bridge, but no budget. The National Trust has solution for the lock, which would cost £3,760 + VAT.

I have put constant pressure on Ipswich Borough Council to increase parking enforcement, with a great deal of success. The problems have been reduced considerably, but of course, not eliminated completely. Dedham parish council recognises that the extension of the double yellow lines and regular patrols have been very beneficial and the chairman has said that there has been a significant improvement in parking problems.

Summer Enforcement Data				
Month	**Visits**	**Observations**	**PCNs Issued**	**Time Spent Patrolling**
May	15	73	42	12hrs
June	55	179	64	38hrs
July	65	133	64	57hrs
August	24	77	34	26hrs
September	1	0	0	1hr
TOTAL	160	462	204	134hrs

I can also report that **ALL** PCNs have been paid!

Stratford St. Mary Primary School

The Junior Road Safety Officers at the primary school have sent several letters to parents this term. They reminded them of their responsibilities to the community when dropping off and picking up children, and they also notified parents of the World Car Free Day last month and Suffolk County Council's 'Always Let People Cross Before You Turn' campaign which is now running for six weeks. Finally, they have encouraged children and parents to participate in Cycle to School Week, which runs from Monday 5th – Friday 9th October.

Hopefully, all these initiatives will have an impact and improve the problems that residents of Strickmere have experienced. Please continue to let me know of problems as they arise and I will do my best to liaise with the school on your behalf.

The Mix

Stowmarket youth charity, The Mix, has a trading arm, 127 Trading Ltd., that operates four coffee shops. Unfortunately, this company has gone into administration and all four shops, including the one in the Hadleigh Co-op, have closed. The charity itself continues to operate and its youth work will carry on as normal.

Babergh funding summit: 5th October

In October, local voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise groups are being invited to attend one of two free funding summits to learn more about how our grant process works and how they can access crucial funding.

A flyer for the event is attached to this email.

Community Emergency Plans

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Leaders wrote to all town and parish councils earlier this month asking them to consider putting a plan in place or reviewing their current plan to make sure it's up to date.

Babergh recreation projects set to receive cash boost

Two outdoor recreation projects designed to keep people fit and healthy are to each receive a share of more than £100k from Babergh District Council following the latest round of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding.

Councils' e-bike partnership receives national recognition

A partnership between Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and e-bike provider Eezybike has been shortlisted for two national awards, recognising the innovative work done in the districts to create active and sustainable travel options.

Award recognition for councils' building control team

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' Building Control team has been recognised with a number of top awards and one highly commended project at regional industry awards.

Free classes to help older people improve their balance

Older people in Suffolk are being encouraged to take part in free exercise classes to help improve balance, fitness and flexibility.

Council scheme puts local residents on the set of award-winning drama

A council-funded scheme led to "an opportunity not to missed" for some Suffolk residents – connecting them with opportunities to work behind-the-scenes for a range of film and tv productions, including award-winning hit Slow Horses.

Feel Good Suffolk gets behind national Stoptober campaign

Feel Good Suffolk is raising awareness of this year's Stoptober campaign and the support it offers for any smokers in the county who want to stop.

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