

District Council Report November 2022

Retrofitting Motion

I recently, successfully, submitted a motion to Full Council asking the council to investigate working with other councils in Suffolk and Essex to help Retrofitting of Council Owned Properties.

By combining resources and finances it may be possible to increase the number of properties that can be retrofitted. Not only is this a good thing environmentally, but it could be good for the local economy as the economies of scale would allow local companies to target there business effectively and will help with training local people.

Council Property arm generates income

Babergh and Mid Suffolk's commercial property company CIFCO made a £6.7m profit last year and generated £3.7m in net income for the councils to plough back into services, councillors heard this week.

This means that since CIFCO Capital Ltd was established jointly by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils in 2017, it has not only maintained its debt repayments in full but also generated net income last year of £1.7m for Mid Suffolk and £2m for Babergh, bringing the total net income received by the councils by the end of the last financial year to £9.25m.

I did raise concerns regarding the potential risks that the cost of living crisis could bring, but these were largely dismissed as mitigation is in place.

Corks Lane

Work is ongoing at the former council offices in Hadleigh, which will see a regeneration of original buildings to preserve and enhance the original structure. The aim is to ensure the character and retain the features of the existing building, through sympathetic conversion.

Work onsite started in the summer and progress to date has included clearing the site, formatting the car park area, demolition of non-listed buildings (where necessary) and commencement of retaining wall structures.

The next steps will be installing drainage and associated ground works, completion of the retaining walls and boundary treatment alongside Hadleigh Cricket Club, and car park installation. Early in the new year work will begin on the development of the new build properties, which should be available early summer 2024.

Bird flu outbreak

The Animal Plant and Health Agency (APHA) has detected a number of cases of bird flu (avian influenza) in poultry, and wild and captive birds, across the east of England, including in Nedging in Babergh. The situation continues with outbreaks reported daily across the East and nationally.

This means there is now a legal requirement for all bird keepers in our districts, and further afield, to implement enhanced biosecurity measures to help protect their flocks. Our teams will be supporting APHA and Suffolk Trading Standards over coming days as required, with more information available on the Government's website including posters for town and parish noticeboards if required. We need to advise residents to report dead wild birds to the Defra helpline (03459 33 55 77) if they find:

- one or more dead bird of prey or owl
- 3 or more dead gulls or wild waterfowl (swans, geese and ducks)
- Five or more dead birds of any species

Otherwise, it is landowner's responsibility to safely arrange safe disposal of the carcasses.

Council Tax Reduction consultation

A public consultation is underway over a plan to cut council tax for the poorest households in Babergh and Mid Suffolk. The consultation, which runs from October 13 to November 24, asks for views on how the councils should run their Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2023/24, and whether bills should be reduced by up to 100% for working age adults with the lowest incomes.

Parking strategy

The councils' have now approved their first ever joint parking strategy. The strategy includes prioritised recommendations to improve all types of parking, from council-owned car parks to on-street parking.

The recommendations include updating signage and markings, increasing safety provisions, providing more EV charging, and cycling facilities, and introducing resident permit schemes to allow overnight parking.

Importantly, it also seeks to find the balance between supporting local trade across the districts and achieving climate change and sustainable travel goals, reflecting the councils recently approved Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.