

District Council Report

Things are slowly starting to return to normal after the elections two months ago. Most of the new, and old, councillors have completed the key training requirements needed for committees and the first planning committee of the new council was completed last week. Despite meeting regularly since the start of June the new cabinet met earlier this week (Mon 10th) for their first public meeting and Full Council meet next week for the first time since the AGM.

It will be interesting to see what difference the new council will make to the existing issues that remain.

Social Housing Referral

Following an in-depth review on Compliance, which was started in 2020, a referral was made to the Regulator of Social Housing in November last year regarding concerns about compliance. This resulted in a regulatory judgement.

Following the subsequent referral to the Regulator, significant progress has been made, including the following:

- Recruitment of a specialist to support the Council in carrying out procurement.
- Ensuring the Council has more robust data across all compliance areas, helping better management of properties.
- Reduction in outstanding compliance actions.
- Relocated the damp and mould work to the compliance team and agreed to outsource to a special contractor so urgent cases can be actioned promptly.
- Interim structural changes, resources, and new processes.
- Appointment of external IT housing specialists.
- Recruitment of new roles to help lead the transition to excellence.

However, there is still a lot of work to do, particularly around smoke detector installation where there are still 958 to complete. Meetings will continue with the Regulator until they are confident of the Councils return to compliance.

Overview and Scrutiny Workplan

Overview & Scrutiny committee have agreed a workplan going forward for the coming years. There are a number of statutory things that the committee have to review, such as the budget, and there are always cabinet decisions and member call-ins that need to be looked at. However, this time around the committee wants to look at things of its own choice.

After an initial meeting it has been agreed that the committee will scrutinise aspects of planning, housing, town regeneration and access to online services. Going forward the committee may also look at areas that the public want scrutinised, even areas that Babergh does not control such as health.

Council Car Park EV points

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are set to install 28 new electric vehicle chargers across their car park network this year, to help tackle climate change.

Starting last month, work to install 28 new 22kW EV charging points began in several council car parks in Babergh and Mid Suffolk thanks to a £300K grant from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV). Each charging point will be able to charge two vehicles at the same time, significantly improving access to chargers for local residents and visitors.

Babergh car parks benefitting are -

The Cock Horse Inn, Lavenham; Magdalen Road (long stay), Hadleigh; Girling Street and North Street, Sudbury.

Tour Of Britain

The route for the UK's biggest professional cycle race, the Tour of Britain, has been revealed, with riders set to speed through Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

On Thursday 7 September, the fifth stage of the race will head to our county for the first time since 2017. It starts and finishes in Felixstowe, but the race will pass through a number of towns and villages in the districts, including Wattisham, Bildeston, Hadleigh, East Bergholt and Holbrook, in Babergh.