

## **Mid Suffolk District Councillors' Annual Report (2024/25) for the Annual Parish Meeting**

### Local Government Reorganisation

Suffolk's councils submitted business cases for their preference on how local authorities will be re-structured in the county. The government has decided that there will be three unitary authorities in Suffolk. While detailed boundaries are being finalised, the three unitary councils, West Suffolk, Central & East Suffolk, and Ipswich and South Suffolk are planned to be in place from April 2028. Parishes within the current Battsford and Ringshall Ward, including Barking, Great Bricett, Offton and Willisham will be located within Central and East Suffolk.

Elections for the new shadow authorities are due in May 2027. Following this there will be a transition period until vesting day on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2028 when the new unitary authorities will take control. The transition period is to enable detailed work for reorganisation to take place, and services will be delivered as usual throughout the process. We are expecting Mayoral elections to also be held in May 2028.

### Budget 2026/27

Mid Suffolk District Council is increasing its share of Council Tax by 2.99%.

For a Band D property, this brings the yearly charge to £180.26—an increase of £5.23 per year (or approximately 10p per week). This follows a year of no increases. It is also important to note that Mid Suffolk receives only about 8% of your total Council Tax bill.

This increase is necessary because the Government now awards future grants based on the assumption that councils have already raised their tax share. Had we not implemented this modest increase now, the council would face a significant funding shortfall in the coming years.

In addition to the day-to-day provision of council services and activities, the 2026/27 budget includes funding for a wide range of programmes, including:

- Implementation of the new food waste collection scheme and waste depot improvements
- Further support for recycling education
- Biodiversity enhancements on council-owned land
- Two new community nature recovery grants
- Cost of living support and a Council Tax Support scheme
- Grants programmes for towns and rural communities outside of Stowmarket
- Investment in the Stowmarket Leisure Centre
- Stowmarket sports facilities delivered through the SHELF Project
- Support for wider Stowmarket regeneration
- Expanded 'Cosy Homes' insulation scheme to help residents obtain solar panels
- Support for active travel including new footpaths and cycle lanes
- Completion of the construction of the Stowmarket Innovation Gateway
- Expansion of temporary accommodation to help homeless residents

### Planning and Housing

In 2025 the Government introduced new housing targets increasing the number of dwellings from 535 to 734 per year. The council held a briefing for parishes following the government requirement to increase the number of dwellings in Mid Suffolk.

Work is ongoing to update the existing JLP Part 1 which included the planning policies, and to include new settlement hierarchy and allocated sites.

Officers sent out a 'Call for Sites' and the proposed sites are now being assessed against planning policy, constraints, evidence and deliverability criteria. Inclusion on the list does not grant planning status for a site. Further assessment will be published through the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) in Spring 2026. It is important to note that we are carrying out this work to ensure any future development is 'plan-led' and not 'developer led'.

This year MSDC introduced a £20,000 Neighbourhood Development Plan fund to support Parish Councils which seek to allocate sites for housing development. The neighbourhood plan has statutory weight and status in the plan and decision-making process.

### Waste and Recycling

Mid Suffolk District Council will start its Better Recycling scheme in June 2026. New bins have been delivered to all homes to help separate waste more effectively. Waste and recycling services include:

- Weekly food waste collection – use new kitchen caddy and larger outdoor food bin for all food scraps.
- Blue-lidded recycling bin – now for glass (bottles and jars), cartons (Tetra Paks), plastic bottles, bags, and wraps and metal cans.
- Green-lidded bin – used exclusively for paper and card to keep them clean and dry for better recycling.

More information can be found at [www.suffolkrecycles.org.uk](http://www.suffolkrecycles.org.uk)

### Nature Recovery

Following our successful launch event at The Mix in Stowmarket, Mid Suffolk District Council announced the new £525,000 Catchment and Landscape Nature Recovery Grant. This fund supports ambitious, collaborative projects (£50k–£200k) focused on river restoration and habitat connectivity.

Our Community Nature Recovery Grant was launched in January, offering up to £50,000 for grassroots biodiversity projects. We have currently had many enquires and 7 applications – the outcomes of which will be announced following the pre-election period. There will be two more application windows for 2026.

These funds are part of a landmark £1.8 million commitment to our new Biodiversity Action Plan (2025–2030).

#### 2025/2026 Achievements:

- Meadow management - we reached a milestone of 114,341m<sup>2</sup> of managed meadows, a 38% increase in the area of council-owned land under meadow management in 2024.
- Nearly 400 residents applied for our 'Tree for Life' scheme to mark for babies born or adopted in 2025/26
- Secured an eight-acre riverside habitat in Stowmarket for permanent conservation and public access
- Two Assistant Ecologists are now in post to support our planning team with the delivery and monitoring of Biodiversity Net Gain

Mid Suffolk District Council was also a partner and collaborator in the production of the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This groundbreaking work which was launched in November

2025. It is a blueprint for nature recovery across Suffolk and provides evidence-based maps that indicate where resources should be focused.

### Supporting the community

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spending of £918,000 was allocated by to communities across the district from the last round in 2025. Barking Village Hall received a Community Development Grant to install solar PV and battery system. Battisford Village Hall has also been offered £5,000 towards the costs of a solar installation scheme.

In the Battisford and Ringshall ward, the following organisations and projects were supported from the Locality Budget:

- Barking Village Hall – contribution towards solar photovoltaic panels and battery storage
- Punchbowl Inn CIC – support towards the refurbishment of men’s toilets
- Upper Gipping Farm Cluster – costs covered for new website design
- Orchard Barn CIC – first aid training for volunteers
- River Gipping Trust – contribution towards costs of river path improvement works
- Great Bricett – support towards the Community Woodland project
- Wattisham Army Cadet Group – signage replacement
- Ringshall Parochial Church Council – support towards restoration of church organ

Mid Suffolk District Council information is available via [www.midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk) or by phone **0300 123 4000**

I would like to thank the Parish Council for all their work done throughout the year.

**Dr Dan Pratt**

**Ward Member for Battisford and Ringshall**

**Mid Suffolk District Council**

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