

Monthly Report - Sep'24 - Sproughton & Pinewood Ward

GENERAL UPDATES

Social Housing

Both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have called for urgent government action to address the financial crisis in council housing. Both councils have written to Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner and local MPs, highlighting the need for changes to the current financial model governing council housing in England. Key points include:-

- **Financial Struggles:** Many councils face financial difficulties due to inconsistent national policies. In 2012, councils took loans to buy properties, creating debt to be repaid through rental income. However, government restrictions on rent increases have limited income for housing authorities.
- **Current Crisis:** By the 2023/24 financial year, Mid Suffolk faced a £3.7 million shortfall in its Housing Revenue Account, requiring the use of reserves.
- **Call for Action:** Over 100 council landlords have signed a report urging the government to restore lost income and enhance local authority capacity.
- **Council Statements:** Council members emphasize the critical need for policy changes to continue improving services, investing in new properties, and maintaining existing homes.

Both councils are committed to lobbying the government and working with housing associations to increase affordable housing supply.

Half Term Activities

Children in Babergh and Mid Suffolk will be able to get involved in a wide range of activities during the October half term. From swimming to soft play, soccer schools to arts and crafts, there's plenty on offer for families across the districts - see

<https://eequ.org/baberghandmidsuffolkholidayactivities> for more details.

Devolution

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have added their voices to a joint statement following the news that a proposed Suffolk devolution deal has been scrapped by the Government. A joint statement on behalf of all of the district and borough councils in Suffolk was issued by Ipswich Borough Council this morning urging the Government to work with all councils in Suffolk to develop a new devolution deal. We will wait & see.....

Solar Together

Solar Together has now launched in Suffolk - offering residents affordable renewable energy sources Suffolk residents will boost local renewable energy generation, cut carbon emissions, and save on energy bills with a community-led solar panel initiative. Residents of Suffolk can come together to invest in renewable energy sources through a group-buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage. Solar Together Suffolk will help homeowners feel confident that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from qualified installers. Suffolk residents can join the group-buying scheme, which offers:-

- solar panels with optional battery storage and EV charge points
- retrofit battery storage for residents who have already invested in solar panels & are looking to get more from the renewable energy they generate

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The scheme allows homeowners to increase their independence from the national grid. It's free to register, and there is no obligation to go ahead with an installation. Suffolk's councils, including Babergh and Mid Suffolk, are working in partnership with iChoosr, experts in sustainable energy transition, to make the transition to clean energy as cost-effective and hassle-free as possible.

PORTFOLIO

The Climate Change Team are focussing on a number of things such as reducing Babergh's greenhouse gas emissions, retrofitting our social housing so they are more sustainable - think increased insulation, double-glazing, PV panels, heat pumps. This is slow going as we have to apply for funding from the government each time, which means waiting for a new funding round to open.

We are looking to install more EV chargers around Babergh, there is funding for this and we are working with Suffolk County Council to progress this. Parish & town councils can still apply if they have a suitable site.

I have setup a Sustainable Travel Working Group and an action plan is being created - the more people see other options to getting into a car the better. That's not to say we don't need cars - in a rural parish without a bus service coming along at the time you need it cars are essential. If you ever here the term 'LCWIP' it means Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan. There is a very long list of improvements to Public Rights of Way & cycling paths - this also includes improvements to the River Gipping path between Sproughton & Ipswich, I am working on this one as it would be nicer to cycle alongside the river than go on the roads into Ipswich!

We have just begun to setup a Biodiversity Action Working Group. This needs to be ratified by the full council before we can hold the first meeting. I am hoping to leverage what Mid Suffolk have thought about so far - should save time & money, but I'm sure the some challenges are unique to Babergh.

Call for Land Summit: The 'Call 4 Land' Summit has now been held. The room was packed with landowners interested in seeing what they can do with some of their land. One pair of attendees had sold the majority of their farmland and wanted to improve the biodiversity of their remaining land. A number of 'expressions of interest' have been received and our biodiversity officer is now working with them to develop ideas and see what can be done.

PINEWOOD

Ward Tour

Officers from Babergh attended a walking tour of Pinewood having previously attended one in Sproughton They were taken around various parts of Pinewood to get an understanding of what the parish is like and familiarise themselves with the area. The Housing Director was

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particularly interested in the social housing in Pinewood. There are a significant number of social housing units in Pinewood although not all fall under the remit of Babergh' housing team.

Parking at Suffolk One: This one continues to move in the right direction. I've now talked to S1 again to agree the best times for the bus diversions. Now need to write the bid. I have just realised that the additional bus stop by Wolsey Grange needs to be activated as do the traffic lights - another task..... Assuming this does get implemented I suspect it won't stop all the students parking in nearby residential roads so I am also planning to canvass nearby residents to see if they would like additional parking measures - I anticipate this will take some time!

Speeding

A couple of local residents have approached me about speeding on Hawthorne Drive so I have asked that a speed camera be employed to track behaviour. I did stand at the end of Sprites Lane recently and noticed that people come down Hawthorne Drive at a fair lick and also like to speed up coming off the roundabout. I am hoping this won't take too long.

SPROUGHTON

Traffic A14 Diversion: Work on the A14 continues. Complaints have died down a bit recently which may be down to reportedly lower levels of traffic. Any issues please contact our parish clerk or myself.

30 Sep Traffic Exhibition: The traffic exhibition was held on 30Sep. A number of residents attended and drew out their ideas onto a map of the village centre. There seemed to be two schools of thought - 1) a combination of parking zones and passing places along the High Street & 2) Four-way traffic lights similar to configuration currently implemented. '1' will be cheaper than '2'. The results of the traffic exhibition will be published as soon as they have been collated.

Casework: Work continues..... I do feel have made some progress in that I have managed to close a couple of pieces of work however a few new pieces have appeared. I can't go into details as residents info is confidential but the stats are below:-

OPEN	BDC			SCC	
Category	Both	Spr	Pine	Spr	Pine
CiL	1				
Climate Change					
Environmental Health			2		
Flooding				1	1
Grants					
Health Care					
Housing		1	1		
Lighting					
Planning		1			
Policy					
Public Realm			2	1	
Public Nuisance					
Roads			1	5	3
Transport					
TOTALS	1	2	6	7	4

CLOSED	BDC			SCC	
Category	Both	Spr	Pine	Spr	Pine
CiL					
Climate Change					
Environmental Health		1			
Flooding				1	1
Grants		2	1		
Health Care		1			
Housing		1	1		
Lighting					
Planning					
Policy	1				
Public Realm		1			
Public Nuisance		1			
Roads				2	
Transport					
TOTALS	1	7	2	3	1

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If you ever have an issue to raise with me please use the contact details below. I look forward to hearing from you.

Helen Davies

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