

Monthly Report - Jul/Aug'24 - Sproughton & Pinewood Ward

GENERAL UPDATES

The General Election: After several weeks pounding the pavements and knocking on doors we arrived at 04Jul24. I spent the night at Endeavour House as a counting agent watching boxes come in, votes being verified, sorted and counted and recounted. Eventually got home at 05:50am shortly after the result was announced. It was quite exciting watching the results come through. Hundreds of Babergh and Mid Suffolk staff helped by manning polling stations, counting ballot papers overnight and everything in between (some of the messages on the rejected ballot papers were quite funny). In South Suffolk James Cartlidge was re-elected with half the number of votes he received in 2019 - Cons 16,082, Lab 13,035, Ref 9,253, Lib Dem 6,424, Green 4,008

The 'First Time Fix' project: Building services has embarked on a project to improve how repairs, maintenance, servicing and compliance are delivered to our tenants, as well as the way our housing stock is managed. Its aim is to:-

- increase first time fix rates
- enable appointment booking at the first point of contact
- ensure that customer commitments are fulfilled
- reduce the need for customers to chase repairs
- improve customer satisfaction

The previous dismal figures on outstanding inspections, repairs are steadily improving and should continue to move in the right direction.

Additional Funding for Vulnerable Residents: Additional funding has been approved by Babergh cabinet to allow vulnerable residents to stay in their own homes. It was agreed to increase grants to carry out home adaptations for some of the most vulnerable residents - helping them to retain their independence in their own homes for as long as possible. The increased levels of support, with grants available from £1K up to £15K will allow more residents to carry out the home adaptations needed to help them remain in their home and, in some cases, speed up hospital discharges. The 2024 Housing Assistance Policy takes into consideration the growing cost of carrying out minor adaptations in the home and supports the councils' aspirations to support residents to live as healthily, safely, and independently as possible within sustainable communities.

Recycling: The Environment Act requires councils implement new services by April 2026 to ensure consistency of collections, to make producers responsible for recycling their packaging, to drive up recycling rates & to reduce emissions. In 2026 it will be possible to include glass bottles & tetrapaks in the recycling bins and from 2027 plastic film & bags. Residents will need to split their recycling into two different recycling bins i) paper & card and ii) bottles, metal, soft plastics, tetrapaks. A new food waste bin (collected weekly) will be supplied for residents into which should go, leftovers, meat, fish & bones, tea bags & coffee grounds, bread, pasta & rice, eggshells & dairy products, fruit & veg peelings. This reduced amount of general rubbish, in particular

Monthly Report - Jul/Aug'24 - Sproughton & Pinewood Ward

food items which are most likely to cause bins to smell, means the councils can also explore moving to more cost-effective three-weekly rubbish bin collections from 2026 as the most 'aromatic' parts of our general rubbish bin is food which will be collected weekly. The councils' waste team would be sympathetic to those with exceptional needs on a case-by-case basis, such as those with larger families, with medical needs or without available space for the new bins.

Planning: Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils are clearing the way for thousands of listed building owners to make sensitive energy efficiency upgrades - in a new approach which is the first of its kind in the country. The districts have thousands of listed properties, but these often suffer from poor energy performance due to factors such as poorly fitting windows and single glazing. This leads to higher bills for owners and is costly for the environment. Historic England has stated that retrofitting historic buildings will be fundamental in achieving net zero. The UK has the oldest housing stock in Europe, which is a huge contributor to carbon emissions. Owners who want to make upgrades must currently apply to the councils for Listed Building Consent (lengthy & painful). But Babergh and Mid Suffolk, working closely with Historic England, are the first councils in the country to introduce an ambitious package of measures to make sensitive improvements quicker and easier. The first is a Local Listed Building Consent Order, allowing Grade II listed property owners to upgrade or replace windows without having to make individual applications, subject to conditions. The second is a Local Development Order, allowing solar PV and other renewable technologies to be installed on unlisted buildings within the curtilage of a Grade II listed property, also subject to conditions.

The new Labour government has upped its housing targets. It is currently revising the NPPF to make it easier to build the extra 1.5m houses it wants. Babergh is expecting to start reviewing the revised version of the NPPF in September. We are expecting to have to update the JLP as a result of this. With such a large majority any changes are likely to go through without much scrutiny. I'm not certain that all the changes will be palatable to rural Suffolk.

Carparking: Babergh Cabinet agreed in April to stop subsidising three hours of free parking in Sudbury, Hadleigh and Lavenham to help address a £6.7million budget gap over the next four years. After the decision was 'called in', the Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked for it to be reviewed on a number of grounds - including further consideration of a one-hour free tariff option and assessing the economic impact. We have now agreed revised carparking charges - £1 for short stay parking for the first hour, or £1 for two hours in long stay. There are no plans to introduce charges for parking on Sundays or Bank Holidays, and Blue Badge holders would continue to be allowed to park for free for up to three hours in all council car parks.

Monthly Report - Jul/Aug'24 - Sproughton & Pinewood Ward

PORTFOLIO

Electric Vehicles: Suffolk residents will be able to access electric vehicles on a short-term basis, from next summer. A trial of electric community vehicles is set to launch next summer in Suffolk, with the tender process beginning this month. Plug In Suffolk Car Clubs will be placing sixteen electric vehicles across eight locations in Suffolk which local residents can book by the minute, hour or day. Planned locations include Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, Sudbury, Needham Market, Stowmarket, Lowestoft and Woodbridge. Residents interested in this project should sign up to the mailing list to receive updates - [Plug in Suffolk Car Clubs - Mailing List \(office.com\)](https://www.office.com).

Climate Change: The climate change team supported the Suffolk Youth Climate Conference recently. The event was put on by the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, which our councils form part of, to engage with schools, charities, and community groups to bring about positive change for Suffolk's environment. Our climate change manager, Sarah Wilding, also ran a session for local teachers on how they can support their students with learning more and taking actions to tackle climate change.

Call for Land Summit: The biodiversity team will be holding a 'Call 4 Land' Summit in September with the objective of helping local landowners or those with large gardens to consider how they can improve the biodiversity of their land by working with the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust or Forestry Commission to plant trees, hedges, orchards etc. Some of these organisations can help with funding such activity or at minimum point the landowner in the direction of funding pots. A large number of tickets have been sold so a good turnout is expected which can hopefully be turned into concrete (no pun intended) action plans.

PINEWOOD

Flooding on Belmont Road: Finally, the drain under Belmont Road near the somewhat damp green space & pond ,between this road & Sprites Lane ,has been jettied. Here's hoping that's the end of the matter although time will tell.

Parking at Suffolk One: So far I have had some positive discussions on rerouting the Park n Ride bus to go past Suffolk One so that students have less far to walk. Luckily a new round of funding has opened up covered by the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) managed by SCC. I hope to work with First Buses to write this application for funding.

SPROUGHTON

Traffic A14 Diversion: The planned diversion by Highways along the High Street to allow for resurfacing has been put back to 16Sep for 6-8weeks. SPC and myself met with Highways to explore other options and to understand and make requests about how the diversion would be handled. There will be traffic lights at each end of the High Street

Monthly Report - Jul/Aug'24 - Sproughton & Pinewood Ward

plus speed cameras to ensure people keep their speed down. This arrangement was implemented during the last diversion and was an improvement on the previous occasion. Next step is to see if there is any funding available to fix any problems this additional traffic may generate.

30 Sep Traffic Exhibition: We (SPC & myself) have spent some time recently talking to Highways about the problems on the High Street with respect to resident parking and the heavy traffic along the street. We have mentioned previously that a new road layout may be possible (comes with a cost). We hope you can be part of the solution by helping to design it by working with Highways on 30 Sep in the Tithe Barn - please come along.

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:-

Category	Open	Closed	Open	Closed
	BDC		SCC	
CiL	1			
Climate Change	1			
Environmental Health	3	1		
Flooding			1	2
Grants		3		
Health Care	1			
Housing	1	2		
Lighting			1	
Planning	1			
Policy		1		
Public Realm	2	1	1	
Public Nuisance		1		
Roads	1		9	1
Transport	1			
TOTALS	12	9	12	3

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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