

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT DECEMBER – SOMERSHAM

‘Warmer homes, lower bills’ – Free insulation upgrades in £2m Mid Suffolk initiative

Hundreds of people could qualify for free insulation upgrades at their home under a new £2million initiative launched by Mid Suffolk District Council.

The money will be invested in homes across the district as part of the council’s new Mid Suffolk Cosy Homes initiative (see <https://midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/housingee>), funding the likes of loft insulation, cavity wall insulation and draft proofing works.

This will improve the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of hundreds of homes, making them more efficient, cutting carbon emissions and lowering energy bills.

To qualify, properties need:

- an EPC rating below a C. You can find out more about energy ratings [here](#).
- an annual household income under £60k.
- savings of no more than £16k.
- to be in Council Tax bands A-D
- Insulation options must be viable in the property.

The Mid Suffolk Cosy Homes initiative is aimed at private homeowners in the district that meet the criteria and landlords with less than five properties. A maximum spend has been allocated for each property.

People are encouraged to express their interest in the Mid Suffolk Cosy Homes initiative early, with the £2million campaign expected to prove popular.

Rough Sleeping

If you or anyone within your local community spots someone sleeping in their car, empty buildings or anywhere that is open to the elements please let MSDC's rough sleeper outreach team know via www.streetlink.org.uk so that they can be offered support or assistance.

Cost of Living Help and Fuel Support

Mid Suffolk District Council are running a social media campaign directing residents to useful resources and raising awareness of support that they may be entitled to. Topics covered in December will be: prepayment meters, energy efficiency, help for off-gas homes, dealing with energy debt, and benefit entitlement. See <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/i-need-help>. There are links to Suffolk County Council and to Government resources.

Councils launch new winter grant to tackle social isolation

The councils have launched a new grant to help communities this winter.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have launched a new grant to help communities tackle issues like social isolation and the need for 'warm spaces' this winter.

The 'Living Well in Winter' grant has been set up to help local VCFSE (voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise) organisations provide new, accessible spaces and activities for people to enjoy, or expand upon existing projects.

The funding means that the councils can help communities tackle social isolation and address the choice for some residents of whether to heat or eat this winter - as the cost-of-living crisis continues to take its toll.

Eligible projects might include after-school clubs, the continuation of warm spaces, subsidised family sports sessions, multi-generational activities, lunch clubs and sessions to help people discover new hobbies.

Parish councils, uniformed groups, sports clubs, preschools, parent-teacher associations, village halls and faith settings are among the list of organisations that can apply for the grant under the VCFSE banner, and those that submit an application must already be providing a service to residents of the district.

Groups can apply for a minimum of £500 and a maximum of £2,000. Applications are now open and can be submitted until Sunday, 17 December.

The application process is competitive and will be assessed via a scoring matrix method. Applicants are required to develop one outcome and associated indicators for monitoring purposes.

The application form and scoring matrix used to assess applications are available on our website. Visit the grants and funding page for [Babergh](#) or [Mid Suffolk](#).

Awarded funding must be spent within six months of a grant offer being accepted.

Locality Awards Application

I'd sent an application form to Leah Chinnery, Head of Somersham Primary with regard to funding for small, front-accessible, child-friendly outdoor storage sheds. These are planned to be used for subject-based resources, e.g. for maths and writing resources as well as a shed for building and construction projects and a sand and water shed. Leah has asked for £2,500 from my locality budget. She has just sent me her completed locality form and I will shortly be completing my half and sending the form to Sarah-Jane Hatt in Community Funding.

National Grid's Norwich to Tilbury community newsletter, December 2023.

Whilst many sources, including Mid Suffolk District Council have called for offshore wind generation from Norwich to Tilbury in this newsletter National Grid reject this option on the grounds that too much extra infrastructure would be required compared with the land option of pylons, i.e.

"It is technically possible to connect the offshore wind generation to Tilbury. However, subsea links have a maximum capacity of 2000 MW, so to match the 6000 MW that the overhead lines can carry, there would need to be three new offshore cable links. An offshore connection would also need new infrastructure on land, including cables from Norwich out to the coast, as well as convertor stations at each end of the cables. When we assess options, there are times

when we feel a subsea connection is the most appropriate proposal, but this is not the case for Norwich to Tilbury.

We are also planning to build a sea connection, Sea Link, to carry power out of East Anglia. Sea Link would carry 2,000 MW between Kent and Suffolk and, in this instance, a subsea option was assessed as the most cost-efficient option.”

Of course, there would be extra expenses linked to the offshore option which would be factored into National Grid’s reasoning.

Rural Affordable Housing

On Tuesday night, the CPRE (The Campaign for the Protection of rural England) launched their latest report into rural affordable housing at a Parliamentary reception. Speakers included the new Housing Minister Lee Rowley MP.

The findings of the report, ‘Unravelling a crisis: the state of rural affordable housing in England’ show that:

- It would take 89 years to clear the social housing waiting list under the current build rate in rural areas
- The definition of affordable housing in national planning policy does not enable the delivery of genuinely affordable homes
- Rural homelessness has increased 40% since 2018/2019
- As many as half of all Parish Councils in rural England are not covered by Section 157 regulations which generally prevent resale of affordable housing units at market prices or as second homes

Roger Mortlock, the Chief Executive of the CPRE said at the event, they are keen to see the 'right houses, built in the right places' to support rural communities.

Recommendations include the need for Government to redefine the term 'affordable housing' so that the cost of new affordable homes for sale or rent are directly linked to average local incomes.

Government should also show greater support for rural communities using neighbourhood planning and rural exception sites to deliver small scale or housing on the edge of villages in line with locally assessed need.

Adrienne Marriott
Blakenham District Councillor
05/12/23