

## DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT APRIL 25

### **Local government reorganisation**

Jim McMahon MP, Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution has confirmed receipt of our interim plan for local government reorganisation in which we had confirmed our support for two or three unitary councils within Suffolk. The five district and borough councils of Suffolk had collaborated to align on a vision for local government reorganisation tailored to residents' needs. The final version where the five councils will commit to one of these models is to be submitted by September this year.

### **£500K boost for community projects thanks to developer funding**

On 5 March, the government launched a survey to young people about which support services, facilities and opportunities they need. In the latest round of CIL funding £181,861 has been allocated to five projects in Mid Suffolk. £75,000 is to be awarded for a rebuild of Little Blakenham Village Hall. Other grants will be made to upgrade the Gipping Valley River Path, for additional solar PV and onsite battery storage at Blackbourne Community Centre, Elmswell, for a community courtyard and social space at Badwell Village Hall and for the installation of a new sewage system at Battisford and District Cricket Club.

### **Covid 19 Day of Reflection**

On 9th March special memorial trees were planted in Green's Meadow, Stowmarket for the national Covid-19 Day of Reflection, marking five years since the pandemic and its impact on families, businesses and communities.

## **2.9m boost to make council homes warmer and lower bills**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils have provisionally been awarded 2.9m by the Warm Homes Social Housing Fund which will be added to the £8 million already committed by the Councils to install energy-saving measures in social housing. Work has begun on upgrading 100 council properties with the lowest EPC ratings with improvements such as cavity and loft insulation, new windows, PV Panels and air source heat pumps. Another 150 homes are to be added to the list as a further step towards achieving a good standard of energy efficiency by 2027.

## **Reminder: Notification – Planning Statement of Community Involvement Consultation Monday 17 March to Monday 12 May 2025**

Parish Councils have recently received an email from John Mawdsley of MSDC Planning saying that we will shortly be going live with our consultation on the proposed changes to the Planning Statement of Community Involvement. This concerns a proposal to stop sending neighbour letters for certain types of planning applications, as most neighbour comments are received electronically. There is a statutory requirement that we notify neighbouring residents about a planning application by sending a letter, or by placing a site notice on display in the relevant location. Currently, we do both.

The consultation will run for 8 weeks until 23:59 on Monday 12 May 2025. The Comms team will also be notifying the public of this consultation on our social media channels.

Consultation webpages:

- <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/w/planning-consultations>
- <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/planning-consultations>

The proposal is to keep sending letters where the planning application involves 10 or more homes (Major applications) but not for other types. These are: • Minor applications which are developments of between 1

and 9 homes • Householder applications, which include extensions, loft conversions, doors and windows, fences, gates and garden walls or outbuildings • Others, which include Listed Building Consents, changes of use, advertisements.

Whilst the Council say they receive little feedback in response to the letters that they send out, e.g. to neighbours I feel that many people would miss out on finding out about developments near to and potentially affecting them if the letters concerning minor applications were to be stopped.

## **Expansion of Port One Logistics Park**

Port One's plan to expand into the abandoned SnOasis site in Great Blakenham was reported in Bury Free Press on 31<sup>st</sup> March. It is reported very favourably in terms of thousands of jobs and billions of economic growth. Curzon de Vere Ltd. And Valley Ridge Holdings Ltd. had submitted a scoping report of Mid Suffolk District Council earlier this month. The new site would comprise another 304 acres and would house a vertical farm, a technology hub, a farm shop and café plus a permanent market. A concrete production facility would be built at Port One created from the recycled by-products of the waste-to-energy plant opposite.

Also included in the proposal is a reworking of Junction 52 of the A14 to include a new lorry lane. Formal plans for the expansion should be lodged in October this year. Andrew Mellen, MSDC Leader said that this district was "an attractive place to do business". This was interpreted by the paper as "excitement for the plans".

Port One had described plans to revamp Great Blakenham Riverside Park in 2023. Now the park is to include 50 hectares of solar panels plus a charging station for the electric truck fleets of Suffolk-based haulage firms.

## **Encourage young people to help develop National Youth Strategy**

On 5 March, the government launched a survey to young people about which support services, facilities and opportunities they need.

[tps://www.iwill.org.uk/NYS-Deliver-You/?](https://www.iwill.org.uk/NYS-Deliver-You/)

Young people aged 10-21 and those with special educational needs up to 25 years old will be able to submit their views on a range of topics. They will be asked what issues matter to them in their local area, what services they think should be available to young people, and how money should be spent in their area.

A communications toolkit has been launched by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to support this survey.

The survey closes on 16 April.

## **‘Warm and Fuzzy’ heat pump campaign launched**

On 6th March the government launched its new ‘Warm and Fuzzy’ heat pump campaign to encourage people to upgrade their existing boiler or heating system to a heat pump, with the help of the £7,500 government grant.

The campaign also aims to help homeowners better understand the benefits of heat pumps and the next steps they can take to start their journey towards low carbon heating.

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero has produced a campaign toolkit to help councils promote the message in their area.

<https://beis.frontify.com/d/Y8rE9qXZPCv7/warm-and-fuzzy-heat-pump-campaign?#/overview/background-information>

The toolkit contains suggested messaging and social media materials to help cascade the information on social media, in newsletters and on websites.

## **Government announces employment support for sick and disabled people**

On 6<sup>th</sup> March the Department for work and Pensions announced plans to see 1,000 existing Work Coaches deployed in 2025/26 to deliver tailored and personalised employment to around 65,000 sick and disabled people on health-related benefits.

The coaches will help claimants access other support such as writing CVs and interview techniques as part of the Government's Plan for Change.

## **Further reforms to overhaul the planning system**

On 10<sup>th</sup> March the government set out further reforms to the planning system which they say will help deliver 1.5 million new homes.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bureaucratic-burden-lifted-to-speed-up-building-in-growth-agenda>

Under the new plans, organisations such as Sport England, Theatres Trust and The Gardens Trust will no longer be required to input on planning decisions. The scope of other 'statutory consultees' will be narrowed to focus on heritage, safety and environmental protection making much better use of standing guidance in place of case-by-case responses. Councils should now only consult statutory consultees where necessary and decisions should not be delayed beyond the 21-day statutory deadline unless a decision cannot otherwise be reached.

## **Allocations made to deliver the ‘Warm Homes Plan’**

On 11th March the government announced the first steps to delivering the ‘Warm Homes Plan’ with the allocation of £1.8 billion of government funding for councils and social housing providers in England.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/up-to-170000-homes-to-get-energy-saving-upgrades>

Up to £1.29 billion is available for the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 3 for councils and registered providers of social housing.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/up-to-170000-homes-to-get-energy-saving-upgrades>

In addition up to £500m is available for the Warm Homes: Local Grant for councils to be delivered from April 2025 to March 2028.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/warm-homes-social-housing-fund-wave-3-successful-social-housing-landlords-including-local-authorities-and-housing-associations>

The schemes will provide energy performance measures and low-carbon heating solutions to help tackle fuel poverty.

Up to 170,000 homes in England will benefit from energy efficiency upgrades, helping to deliver warmer, more energy efficient homes in local communities in England.

## **Celebrations to mark VE and VJ Day – Tip Top Towns**

On 13 March the government announced further details of plans to engage communities in the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of Victory in Europe (VE <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-theatre-film-and->

imperial-war-museums-bring-second-world-war-stories-to-a-new-generation-as-part-of-ve-day-80-plans) and Victory over Japan (VJ) Days.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-theatre-film-and-imperial-war-museums-bring-second-world-war-stories-to-a-new-generation-as-part-of-ve-day-80-plans>

The government is inviting the public, volunteer networks and community groups to come together and get in the community spirit for VE Day 80 by taking part in Tip Top Towns. Whether in a town, village or city, communities are encouraged to get their postcode ready for Monday 5 May, whether that be preparing community gardens, hosting craft events to create street party decorations, sprucing up their local areas or encouraging children to draw pictures to put in their windows.

The public are invited to share their pictures of activity on the government's [VE and VJ Day webpage: https://ve-vjday80.gov.uk/tiptoptowns/e](https://ve-vjday80.gov.uk/tiptoptowns/e)

and across social media using the #VE80 hashtag, with VE Day certificates available to all who participate.

Councils are asked to help promote participation in Tip Top Towns ahead of 5 May.

## **Planning guidance: letters to chief planning officers**

On 20 March MHCLG issued a planning update newsletter to chief planning officers of local planning authorities in England about the latest announcements relating to planning practices and policy:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67dbfe98db5bf0deba4b4f87/2\\_Chief\\_Planners\\_Newsletter\\_March\\_25.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67dbfe98db5bf0deba4b4f87/2_Chief_Planners_Newsletter_March_25.pdf)

The newsletter highlights the Planning and Infrastructure Bill that was introduced to Parliament on 11th March, to help streamline the delivery of new homes and critical infrastructure, supporting delivery of the government's Plan for Change milestones.

Under the terms of this bill people living near new electricity transmission infrastructure will receive up to £2,500 over ten years off their energy bills, The Bill comes alongside wider planning reforms including the new National Planning Policy Framework and is at the heart of the government's 'Plan for Change' missions to deliver the 1.5 million homes alongside 150 major projects.

## **Funding to improve local sports facilities**

On 21<sup>st</sup> March the Department for Culture, Media and Sport announced that there will be £100 million in government funding to enable people in the UK to benefit from upgraded sports facilities in their local area.

The funding is expected to support new and improved pitches, changing rooms, goalposts and floodlights to improve access to sport and physical activity for local communities. The funding will be targeted at deprived areas and support greater access and participation levels among under-represented people including women and girls, ethnic minority groups and disabled players.

Clubs and organisations in the UK are now being urged to come forward and apply for funding. Applications can be made in England via the Football Foundation <https://footballfoundation.org.uk> on an ongoing basis. The first tranche of beneficiaries are expected to be confirmed in summer 2025.

Councils are encouraged to share this information as appropriate.

# UK Pesticides National Action Plan launched

On 21 March the government launched the UK Pesticides National Action Plan:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-pesticides-national-action-plan-2025>

setting out how it will work collaboratively with farmers to minimise the impacts of pesticides on people and the environment.

The Plan sets out how all four UK governments will support farmers, growers, and other land managers to voluntarily increase their use of nature friendly farming techniques and embrace alternative measures to reduce the potential harm from pesticides by 10% by 2030, while controlling pests and pesticide resistance effectively.

The core goals of the National Action Plan are to:

- Set clear targets and measures to monitor the use of pesticides
- Encourage uptake of Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Strengthen compliance and promote good practice

The government has also published an IPM guidance page:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/integrated-pest-management-ipm-in-farming>

which provides clear and practical information about IPM tools to support planning and decision making.

Councils are encouraged to share this information as appropriate.

## Public health updates

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### **COVID-19 vaccination: spring 2025 campaign resources**

On 19 March, the UK Health Security Agency published a new leaflet for the spring 2025 vaccination programme:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-spring-booster-resources>

People aged 75 years and older, residents in care homes for older people, and those aged 6 months and over with a weakened immune system will be offered a dose of COVID-19 vaccine this spring.

### **Influenza of avian origin confirmed in a sheep**

The UK's Chief Veterinary Officer has today (24 March) confirmed a case of influenza of avian origin in a single sheep in Yorkshire:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/influenza-of-avian-origin-confirmed-in-a-sheep-in-yorkshire>

While this is the first time this virus has been reported in a sheep, it is not the first time influenza of avian origin has been detected in livestock in other countries. There is no evidence to suggest an increased risk to the nation's livestock population.

However, the UK Chief Veterinary Officer is urging all livestock keepers to remain vigilant to the clinical signs of avian influenza following recent outbreaks.

## **Funding to support social and affordable housebuilding announced**

On 25<sup>th</sup> March the government announced that up to 18,000 new social and affordable homes will be built backed by £2 billion of government funding:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-billion-new-investment-to-support-biggest-boost-in-social-and-affordable-housebuilding-in-a-generation>

The funding comes as a down payment from HM Treasury ahead of more long-term investment in social and affordable housing planned later this year, which will provide additional funding for 2026-27 as well as for future years.

New affordable homes will start construction by March 2027 and will complete by the end of this Parliament. The government is encouraging providers to come forward as soon as possible with projects and bids to help increase the delivery of new housing supply.

## **New rules simplifying recycling for workplaces in England come into effect**

The government has announced that new rules on how workplaces in England sort their recycling and waste have now come into effect.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-rules-simplifying-recycling-for-workplaces-in-england-come-into-force>

From 31st March, workplaces with 10 or more employees will need to arrange for the collection of the following:

- **dry recyclable materials – including plastic, metal, glass, and paper and card**
- **food waste**
- **residual (non-recyclable) waste**

**Workplaces will need to separate paper and card from the other dry** recyclables unless their waste collector collects them together. They will also have the freedom to decide on the size of containers and frequency of collections based on the volume of waste they produce.

*Adrienne Marriott  
Blakenham District Councillor  
01/04/25*