

## **District Councillor's Report to Bildeston Parish Council Annual Meeting**

**11<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

### **Bildeston Issues**

I have dealt with several issues relating to the development site at Weavers' Grove from contravening the working hours laid out in the planning conditions to asking for Ipswich Road to be cleaned more regularly to concerns about ditches and the construction of a temporary footpath by the side of Artiss Close.

The latter is still being investigated by Planning Enforcement.

There have been questions about planning issues, complaints about council contractors' inconsiderate parking in Brookfield and various complaints of anti-social behaviour.

### **Local Government Reform**

An enormous amount of time was spent in responding to the Government's desire to unitarise councils in England, and discarding county and district councils. The preparation of the Suffolk to the Power of Three business case was a huge task last summer, involving all the county's districts, but the hard work has paid off. The leaders of the districts and Ipswich borough are delighted that our proposal was selected and we firmly believe that the government has made the right choice for Suffolk. There is a huge amount of work to be done before the new councils take over, but this is underway.

The key to success is to ensure that we take the opportunity to transform all public services in Suffolk and ensure they work more effectively for our residents.

### **Council Finance**

Councils have been asking successive governments for clarity over the level of funding they can expect over the medium term rather than waiting for the week before Christmas to receive notification of the funding level for the financial year ahead. This December the Labour government gave Babergh a three year settlement.

This would have been good news however like many rural councils across the country Babergh received a net funding cut of £717k for the next three years and our proportion of business rates will decline in addition.

Urban councils will receive 32% more per head than rural councils. By 2028/9 urban councils will have received a 20% increase in government funding compared to only 2% in rural areas.

We do not want to give our successor councils a poor financial position so we will have to take radical action to balance the budget. The net cost of providing Babergh's services in 2026/27 will be £13.7m, down £1.3m from £15m in the current financial year. We had to make difficult decisions to identify savings and additional income.

When the Government communicated the settlement to councils it stated that its expectation was that district councils would have to increase council tax by 2.99% to balance their budgets which means a Band D household in Babergh will pay £199.52 per year, a total annual increase of £5.79 - or 11p a week.

It is important to stress that Babergh only takes nine per cent of your total council tax bill. The majority goes to the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

### **Joint Local Plan**

With a new plan-making system as well as our greatly increased housing targets, we have made the prudent decision to start the JLP again, rather than to press ahead with part 2 of the current plan. The government's regulations have said we will have to commence formal plan making by 31<sup>st</sup> October. The Notice to Commence will be going to a special council meeting next week.

We are aligning timetables and methodologies with the other districts and Ipswich borough.

### **Neighbourhood Plans**

Following the government's withdrawal of financial and technical support for Neighbourhood Plans, Cabinet has now agreed alternative funding of up to £20,000 to support groups to prepare Neighbourhood Plans which help to meet housing need in the area. There isn't a lot available so it will be first come, first served. To qualify, plans must allocate sites that will make an agreed contribution to meeting the district-wide housing number.

### **LLBCO**

After two years work, we approved our Local Listed Building Consent Order for double and secondary glazing, making it easier and quicker to complete these energy efficiency improvements to some grade 2 listed buildings. We are the first rural councils in the country to successfully achieve this. The first property to achieve this was Dukes Hall in Bildeston.

### **HRA Business Plan**

In January, we approved the new HRA Business Plan. This sets out our economic plans for repairs, maintenance, capital works and spending on council housing management over the next 30 years. We now have a plan that is sustainable over the long term: it maintains the minimum revenue balance of £1m in the early years and shows a substantial surplus by the end of the plan period. A great legacy to hand over to the successor councils.

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