

District Councillor's Report to Bildeston Parish Council

7th April 2026

Bildeston Issues

I recognise the level of concern residents of Artiss Close have about the temporary footpath running along the side of their properties from the development at Weavers' Grove. Orbit should have contacted residents and explained why there was a need for such a footpath before constructing it without informing them. As soon as I was informed, I asked the site manager to go and speak with the resident most directly impacted,

Since then I have been in contact with Orbit on several occasions, as well as Planning Enforcement and Environmental Protection. The Senior Planning Enforcement Officer is going to visit the site this week.

The temporary path was constructed because Orbit has not received Section 278 approval as yet from the County Council to make alterations to the highway to construct a permanent footpath down Ipswich Road.

The initial assessment I have received from Planning Enforcement, and as I stated he has yet to visit the site, is that he does not consider the temporary footpath a "full-fledged Breach of Condition and there are some Permitted Development rights afforded to temporarily use land for purposes related to the development, which may be applicable."

I understand residents' concern about the proximity of the footpath to the top of the LPG tanks. A representative from Calor visited the site of the footpath on 3rd February and did state that as long as the path was at least two metres from the tank tops he was satisfied. If that is not the case residents should contact the Health and Safety Executive. I am also following up with the Council's Environmental Protection Team and Building Control.,

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/ask-us-about-health-and-safety.htm>.

Local Government Reorganisation

The Government confirmed that there would be three unitary councils for Suffolk.

The new authorities will cover Western Suffolk, Central & Eastern Suffolk, and Ipswich & Southern Suffolk. Bildeston would be in Western Suffolk, click the link for boundaries. <https://threecouncilsforsuffolk.org/proposed-council-boundaries/>

We would expect each unitary to have between 60 and 66 councillors. We would prefer the highest level of representation possible.

You can [read the letter from the Secretary of State to council leaders in full](#), here. He noted "the strong, consistent local support from residents, named consultees and organisations for the three unitary proposals, in particular in relation to local democratic representation in new authorities."

Under the new arrangements, the new councils will come into operation on 1st April 2028, with elections scheduled next May to establish the shadow authorities responsible for shaping and overseeing the transition. Councillors elected to the shadow unitary will continue as councillors

when the new unitary comes into full operation.

The Council's Budget

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, which is likely to be less than inflation. Resulting in an actual reduction. We do not want to give our successor councils or council 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. To balance the budget in 2026/2 we had to increase council tax by 2.99% which means a Band D household will pay Babergh £199.52 per year, a total annual increase of £5.79 - or 11p a week.

It is important to stress that Babergh only takes 9 per cent of your total council tax bill. The majority goes to the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Heating oil

I joined with the council leaders of Mid and East Suffolk and wrote to the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero to demand immediate action to help our 30,000 plus residents reliant on oil to heat their homes.

Unlike gas and electricity heating oil is a completely unregulated market with little protection from unfair treatment such as the cancellation of orders, massive price hikes and suppliers demanding money upfront before delivery. Prices have risen by over 100%.

We laid out six actions they want the government to take **now** including immediate hardship payments and suppliers to publish their prices in real time to ensure transparent pricing.

[Letter-to-Chancellor-1.pdf](#)

We will also report any uncompetitive behaviour by heating oil companies to the CMA. If residents experience difficulties with heating oil suppliers such as existing orders being cancelled and then being offered new quotes at significantly increased prices, paying in advance, and not receiving oil or suppliers colluding to match prices please let me know.

There is a page on the council website with some helpful advice for residents facing difficulties.

[Emergency support call for households hit by soaring heating oil costs - Babergh District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk](#)

The Government announced on 16th March a £53 million fund which will be "targeted" to help low-income households in rural communities. £27 million will be assigned to English councils.

According to the Government Suffolk has the third highest off-grid dependency in England and will receive £1.717m . The money will be available to applicants through the new Crisis and Resilience Fund which came into operation on 1st April and is administered by the County Council. Here is a link to the site:

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/community-and-safety/communities/healthier/suffolk-local-welfare-assistance-scheme>

The fund is experiencing a high volume of applications which is affecting the time it takes to process and pay out.

Neighbourhood Development Plan Support

At the recent meeting of Cabinet, it was agreed that the Council would offer individual grants to Towns and Parishes which did not have any Neighbourhood CIL to support the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans and Reviews which seek to allocate sites for housing development that meet Babergh's housing need up to a limit of £20,000.

I should also point out that funds are limited and will be on a 'first come, first served,' basis. Parishes should receive documentation this month.

Better Recycling

A little more information about the changes to your waste and recycling service.

The Government requirement for households and workplaces will be four containers for:

- residual (non-recyclable) waste, (the black bin you have now)
- food waste, (new 23 litre bin which will be collected weekly) plus a 5 litre caddy to keep in your kitchen to collect food, peelings etc and take to the food waste bin. You will also receive a supply of recyclable cellulose liners for the caddy)
- paper and cardboard, (a new green lidded bin. Paper and card have to have their own separate bin to ensure it all stays dry. Paper mills won't take damp paper)
- all other dry recyclable materials (plastic, metal, and glass in the blue bin)

You will receive the green lidded bin, the food waste bin and caddy in the week commencing 18th May but please don't use them until 1st June when the new service starts.

The Council wants to keep your collection day the same and will be sending out further information after the County elections in May.

[Future changes to bin collections - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk](https://www.babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk)