

## Council agrees 'prudent but ambitious' budget which invests in town centres, sport and nature

Mid Suffolk District Council has agreed its 2026/2027 budget which will protect vital services and see further investment in town centres, sports facilities and boosting biodiversity and nature

At February's Full Council meeting, councillors agreed a 2.99% increase to its portion of the council tax bill. For Band D households, this means an increase of £5.23 per year towards district council services, meaning their annual contribution will rise from £175.03 to £180.26.

Mid Suffolk receives just 8% of the total council tax bill, but that small share funds a wide range of essential services that residents rely on every day, offering excellent value for money.

This includes weekly rubbish and recycling collections, maintenance of parks and green spaces, leisure facilities, planning services, regeneration projects, support for those at risk of homelessness, and much more. The rest of the bill goes to Suffolk County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and town or parish councils."

## Pylons project would 'devastate' special Suffolk landscapes warning.

National Grid's plan for more pylons in the Suffolk countryside should be halted, leading councillors from Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have told a public hearing today. National Grid proposes 159km of new overhead lines between Norwich to Tilbury, with the route cutting through the Suffolk countryside. It includes 21km of underground cabling, including some through the Dedham Vale national landscape, and up to seven new compounds to connect underground sections to overhead lines.

Public hearings of initial statements from interested parties are now being heard.

MSDC has for a delay to the project so other options can be considered and costed – such as an undersea route or undergrounding of the entire length of the project.

It cites serious concerns about the impact on the environment, communities and businesses, and that the transmission network is likely to be sufficient until 2035 – so there was time to explore other options. It was further informed that the project, in its current form, will threaten food production, devastate biodiversity, and will decimate local tourism and impoverish our unique heritage.

## Tech donation gives new life to old devices and gets rural communities online

A new initiative distributing refurbished laptops will help tackle digital exclusion and isolation in Suffolk. FCC Environment (FCC) has donated 10 refurbished laptops to the Rural Coffee Caravan, a local charity dedicated to tackling isolation and supporting residents across rural communities.

FCC, which runs the 11 recycling centres in Suffolk on behalf of Suffolk County Council, has worked in partnership with Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils - which play an active role in bringing together local organisations to improve digital access.

Together they identified opportunities to ensure the donated devices benefit residents in most need and improve access for those in rural areas.

The donated laptops will be distributed to residents who are not able to afford a device, helping to bridge the digital divide and improve access to vital online resources.

Volunteers at the Rural Coffee Caravan will also support recipients to feel more confident using devices and getting online safely, as part of their wider programme of digital support.

## Better Recycling updates



### **New bins begin arriving on doorsteps**

As part of the Better Recycling changes happening across Suffolk, households in Mid Suffolk have begun receiving their new bins this month.

## Call for Sites

Between 20 October and 9 January, MSDC held its latest 'call for sites' exercise - an essential early evidence gathering stage for the new Joint Local Plan.

This followed an earlier 'call for residential sites' exercise undertaken between **5 January and 2 February 2024**.

A map of all sites submitted during these exercises and they can be accessed on [Mid Suffolk websites](#).

This is not a list of preferred development locations. Publication promotes transparency and ensures communities have early visibility of **what has been suggested**.

- **No planning status** is granted by submission. Sites do not benefit from any presumption of development.
- Submissions will now be assessed against planning policy, constraints, evidence and deliverability criteria.
- Residential sites previously submitted in 2024 are still included in the assessment process.

Assessments will be published through the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment in spring 2026. Officer assessment does not determine allocations — that occurs at the draft plan stage, which will be subject to full public consultation.

## Former Office Council Site Sold

Hatch Homes has now been named as the purchaser of the remaining site of the former MSDC office in Needham Market. 48 homes for open market and the redevelopment of grade II listed Hurstlea House into apartments, with Hatch Homes now due to deliver the project in line with current planning consent. Work is expected to begin on site during March, with completion expected by 2029.

Completion of the deal will mean that, across both phases, the former council office site will have brought in a net total of more than £4.5m for Mid Suffolk District Council.

## Blue Badges

A call for help came in recently from a resident concerning renewal of their blue badge. Despite having applied 14 weeks earlier and it expired that day, they were getting no helpful response from Suffolk County Council other than applications are dealt with in the order they are received. This is also stated on the SCC website. It also states applications should be made at least 12 weeks in advance and not more than 18. If you know of anyone with requiring renewal of their Blue Badge please advise them to apply at the limit of 18 weeks to ensure continuity of use.

**Locality Awards 2026 Applications** Open May 11<sup>th</sup> after the County Council elections.

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