

## Mid Suffolk District Councillor's Annual Report 2025/6

### Gislingham Ward

Mellis, Gislingham, Thornham Parva, Thornham Magna, Wortham & Burgate,  
Wickham Skeith.

April 2026

Local Government Reorganisation	<p>This year the County Council and the District and Borough Council submitted business cases for their different proposal for unitary authorities. The government has decided that the District and Borough Councils' proposal is the best fit for Suffolk and there will be 3 unitary authorities in Suffolk. (Complimented by three in Norfolk)</p> <p>While detailed boundaries are still being finalised, the three unitary councils, West Suffolk, Central &amp; East Suffolk, and South Suffolk and Ipswich are planned to be in place from April 2028.</p> <p>Elections for the new shadow authorities are due in May 2027. Following this there will be a transition period until vesting day on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2028 when the new unitary authorities will take over.</p> <p>The transition period is to enable detailed work for reorganisation to take place, and services will be delivered as usual throughout the process.</p> <p>Mayoral elections for the combined authority of Norfolk and Suffolk will be held in May 2028.</p>
Planning and Housing	<p>This year MSDC introduced funding of up to £20,000 to support Parish Councils in the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans/Reviews which seek to allocate sites for housing development that make an agreed contribution to meeting the district-wide housing needs. The neighbourhood plan has statutory weight and status in the planning process – and are used to help guide and decide planning applications in conjunction with the Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan.</p> <p>The council held a briefing session for parishes following the government requirement to increase the number of dwellings in Mid Suffolk. The increase is from the previous 535 dwellings per year up to 734.</p> <p>As a result Mid Suffolk has embarked on a new Joint Local plan to keep policies up to date, this has involved a “call for sites” to help identify any land that may be required for future development as our plans progress.</p> <p><a href="https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/web/babergh/w/call-for-sites">https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/web/babergh/w/call-for-sites</a> No planning status is granted by including a site on this list. Rather, sites will now be assessed against planning policy, constraints, evidence and deliverability criteria.</p> <p>Further assessment will be published through the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) in Spring 2026. It is important to note that we are carrying out this work to ensure any future development is plan lead and not developer lead.</p>
Budget	<p>The District Council's share of Council Tax is to be raised by 2.99%. For context, for a Band D property annual charge attributable to Mid Suffolk is £180.26, an increase of £5.23 per year or 10p per week. The previous years rise was 0% (Of the overall Council Tax, about 8% goes to Mid Suffolk District Council.)</p> <p>This rise is unavoidable as the government has now linked future grant monies to the assumption that the share of council tax has risen, so if we had not taken</p>

	<p>a small increase this year we would be facing a “cliff edge” of funding in the near future.</p> <p>In addition to the day-to-day provision of council services and activities, the 2026/27 budget includes funding for a wide range of programmes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of the new food waste collection scheme</li> <li>• Enhancements to our current waste depot in readiness for this, plus further support for recycling education</li> <li>• Cost of living support</li> <li>• Council Tax Support scheme</li> <li>• Grants programmes for towns and rural communities outside of Stowmarket</li> <li>• Investment in leisure centre maintenance</li> <li>• Stowmarket sports facilities delivered through the SHELF Project, plus support for wider Stowmarket regeneration</li> <li>• Support for the Cosy Homes insulation scheme which has been expanded to help residents obtain solar panels</li> <li>• Grant funding for nature recovery and community biodiversity groups</li> <li>• Support for new footpaths and cycle ways</li> <li>• Completing the build of the Stowmarket Innovation Gateway</li> <li>• Expansion of the area’s temporary accommodation (which avoids homeless residents being put into bed and breakfast accommodation and saves on costs going to private providers.)</li> </ul>
A14 and litter	<p>Work has started on a clear up of the A14. Two trucks of rubbish were cleared from the side of the A14 between junctions 49 and 50 for Tot Hill and Stowmarket during planned overnight road closures. We are grateful to volunteers who have been picking litter and all the community and parish litter picks organised but we continue to urge people to only do this where it is safe and not on fast roads.</p>
Recycling and waste	<p>This year has seen the district council working on the Better Recycling scheme which is starting in June. This will see the collection of food waste and additional items for recycling, with more frequent collections overall. Every home across Mid Suffolk will be receiving a new blue-lidded bin and a smaller food-waste bin and food waste caddy. Information packs are being sent out with more detail.</p> <p>The blue-lidded bin will be for glass bottles, jars, tetra pak, plastic bags, cans and plastic bottles. Paper and card will go in the existing green-lidded bin. <a href="http://www.suffolkrecycles.org.uk">www.suffolkrecycles.org.uk</a></p>
Nature Recovery	<p>Following our successful launch event at The Mix in Stowmarket, Mid Suffolk District Council announced the new £525,000 Catchment and Landscape Nature Recovery Grant. This fund supports ambitious, collaborative projects (£50k–£200k) focused on river restoration and habitat connectivity.</p> <p>Our Community Nature Recovery Grant was launched in January, offering up to £50,000 for grassroots biodiversity projects. We have currently had many enquires and 7 applications – the outcomes of which</p>

will be announced following the pre-election period. There will be two more application windows for 2026.

These funds are part of a landmark £1.8 million commitment to our new Biodiversity Action Plan (2025–2030).

2025/2026 Achievements:

- Meadow management - we reached a milestone of 114,341m<sup>2</sup> of managed meadows, a 38% increase in the area of council-owned land under meadow management in 2024.
- Nearly 400 residents applied for our 'Tree for Life' scheme to mark for babies born or adopted in 2025/26
- Secured an eight-acre riverside habitat in Stowmarket for permanent conservation and public access
- Two Assistant Ecologists are now in post to support our planning team with the delivery and monitoring of Biodiversity Net Gain

Mid Suffolk District Council was also a partner and collaborator in the production of the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This groundbreaking work which was launched in November 2025. It is a blueprint for nature recovery across Suffolk and provides evidence-based maps that indicate where resources should be focused. Organisations such as environmental groups, schools and town and parish councils can apply. One application can be made per project, per year.

[Funding opportunities and support - Mid Suffolk District Council -  
babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk](https://www.babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk)

Mid Suffolk District Council has purchased almost eight acres of land in the heart of Stowmarket to preserve it as a future riverside haven for nature and wildlife for future generations.

The land, between Takers Lane and the River Rat, adjoins the council's existing open space at Pikes Meadow – unlocking potential for a new riverside walk, connecting Combs Ford and Gipping Way.

Mid Suffolk District Council has also secured a 62-acre site at Thorndon and will now work with the local community to protect and enhance the area.

The pastureland is just north of the village and contains meadows rich in flora and fauna. It also is an important flood plain for the River Dovelit was previously owned by the Kerrison Trust, a charity supporting young people, but recently put up for sale. Mid Suffolk has just completed the site's purchase - recognising the potential to enhance the land, increase its biodiversity value and improve flood resilience in the area. This plan could include habitat improvements – such as enhancing wet grassland and grazing marshes, pond habitats, lowland meadows and pastures, and deciduous woodland. There will be no change to public access arrangements while this plan is developed, with existing permissive paths being preserved.

	<p>The council's investments are a further step to enhance biodiversity and nature – protecting and strengthening the district's wildlife and habitat diversity – and providing public green space, as well as safeguarding the land from future development.</p>
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Mid Suffolk District Council information is available via [www.midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk) or by phone **0300 123 400**

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