

District Councillor Report: Bacton Ward

(Bacton, Cotton, Finningham, Westhorpe & Wyverstone)

Cllr Andy Mellen – April 2026

Local Government Reform	<p>The government has decided that Suffolk's current two-tier councils (1 County + 5 borough and districts) will be reorganised into 3 unitary authorities. The three unitary councils, Western Suffolk, Central & Eastern Suffolk, and South Suffolk & Ipswich are planned to be in place from April 2028. Elections for the new shadow authorities will take place in May 2027, with the new councils formally taking over responsibilities 11 months later. The idea of the transition period is to enable detailed work for reorganisation to take place, and services will be delivered as usual throughout the process.</p>
Funding for Neighbourhood Plans	<p>MSDC has now 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. Letters are expected to be sent out to parish councils week commencing 13th April</p>
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 at Tot Hill and Stowmarket during planned overnight road closures. We are grateful to volunteers who have been picking litter and all the community litter picks organised but we continue to urge people to only do this where it is safe and not on fast roads.</p>
Riverside land purchased for future legacy	<p>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. The council's investment is further to the 62 acres of public access and biodiversity land recently purchased in Thorndon, and forms part of work 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 speculative development.</p>
Locality Awards	<p>The next round of grants will begin in May this year after the election period.</p>
Nature Recovery Grant	<p>This new grant launched in January offers small grants up to £2K and larger grants up to £50k for projects that protect and expand wildlife corridors and habitats within the district – including tree planting, wildflower meadow creation, or other environmental initiatives to safeguard natural spaces for future generations. Organisations such as environmental groups, schools and town and parish councils can apply. One application can be made per project, per year.</p> <p>MSDC has also announced a new £525,000 fund to support ambitious nature recovery, flood mitigation and water management projects across Mid Suffolk. The fund opens for applications next week. The Catchment and Landscape Nature Recovery Grant promotes larger-scale collaborative initiatives which could span multiple sites and landowners. With a focus on river catchments, it</p>

	<p>will support projects that benefit communities as they address biodiversity loss, with a particular emphasis on priority habitats and species. It will also support natural flood management, as well as projects to improve water quality and security</p> <p>Funding opportunities and support - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk</p>
<p>Help for heating oil purchase</p>	<p>As a rural district, we have a large number of homes using heating oil, which as we know is not covered by any price cap. The government has set aside £53 million to support households falling into fuel poverty, that funding will go to the county council's crisis and resilience fund but we expect to work alongside the county council to help target this help at the most vulnerable households. To find support for heating your home visit:</p> <p>Energy, fuel and utilities - Mid Suffolk District Council - babergh.gov.uk / midsuffolk.gov.uk</p>

Cllr Andy Mellen
andrew.mellen@midsuffolk.gov.uk
07790 992619