

News and information from Jane Gould, Babergh District Councillor, to the Parish Councils and residents in Orwell Ward
September 2021

Ward News

I'm pleased that some parishes in Orwell Ward have already asked for some of my locality fund for this year, I'm willing to consider all requests and to point you in the direction of other District Council grants if they are more appropriate for your parish projects. It was good to have a site visit in Belstead this month to see for myself some of the issues on the ground, thanks to David and Richard for giving their time to facilitate this.

Babergh agrees funding to identify wildlife corridors

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have given the green light for £72k, £32,849 and £38,678 respectively, to go towards biodiversity mapping and a tree canopy survey across both districts. The work is based on outline costs agreed as part of the councils' Biodiversity Action Plan. The mapping will determine suitable locations for tree and hedge planting, and identify wildlife habitats and local green spaces.

Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan approved without targets

In June the Suffolk public sector leaders group agreed to provide £1.5m from business rates to help fund the implementation of its climate emergency plan to get the county of Suffolk to zero emissions by 2030. The list of measures in the newly published plan includes:

- A minimum sustainability standard for workers carrying out public sector contracts
- Retrofit energy efficiency options in homes and public buildings
- Develop incentives for people to adopt heat pumps in their homes
- Upgrade walking and cycling infrastructure on key routes
- Prioritise low-emission freight
- Develop means to utilise waste heat

But other than 2030, there are no timescales or targets set for any of these important actions and the plan has so far been very lightly promoted. The full plan can be seen here www.greensuffolk.org/about/suffolk-climate-change-partnership

Devolution

Public sector leaders in Suffolk have written to the Secretary of State responsible for local government to say they welcome early discussions with

Ministers about a possible devolution deal for Suffolk. In a joint letter sent to Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Babergh's Cllr John Ward and Mid Suffolk's Cllr Suzie Morley, joined leaders of all of Suffolk's six councils and Police and Crime Commissioner Tim Passmore, seeking early discussion over devolved decision-making powers and public funding for the county.

Housing

The former Angel Court care home in Angel Street, Hadleigh has been converted into 21 new homes, all available as social housing, helping lower income house-hunters find a home of their own. The development, funded by Babergh District Council and Homes England, is a mix of one and two-bedroom flats offering affordable rent, that is, rent that is below market rate, and shared ownership options to residents as well as adding a further nine homes to Babergh's council housing stock.

An update on Covid-19 in Suffolk

August saw us reach the end of the Government's roadmap out of lockdown, however our work to support the district's recovery continues. Regular bulletins continue to be produced to give a snapshot of the current Covid-19 situation in Suffolk along with updates on the work being carried out as part of Suffolk's Local Outbreak Control Plan. You can find the bulletins via the Suffolk County Council website. An update on the vaccine rollout can be found on the SNEE NHS COVID-19 Vaccination Service website. We continue to play our part in response to the pandemic, alongside public sector colleagues within the Suffolk Resilience Forum, supporting in the event of local outbreaks as well as continuing to offer support to our communities and businesses. Please see the council website for more details.

Statement regarding Afghan refugees

August also saw the Government announce its new resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees. Whilst the full details are yet to be confirmed, it is clear that the Government needs local authorities everywhere to step up and support this national effort. A Suffolk County Council webpage has been created in the event of offers of help from towns and parishes.

Local Energy Showcase will champion green businesses

Businesses and community organisations are being urged to tackle climate change by joining Suffolk's first ever showcase event celebrating sustainability and green energy. Anyone who is interested is encouraged to take part, more details on the websites.

2021 Annual Canvass continues

To help streamline the annual canvass process we are continuing to encourage residents to update their household details online.

Districts to play crucial role in international cycling event

Babergh and Mid Suffolk will host the thrilling Sprints and challenging Queen of the Mountains climb in stage six of the Women's Tour.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any issues that you think I can help with and all the very best to you all.

Jane Gould

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Orwell ward

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Some additional narrative around the biodiversity action plan work.

Surveying County Wildlife Sites, Public Realm sites and Local Nature Reserves

- Suffolk Wildlife Trust employed to carry out survey work
- All the Babergh public realm sites and LNR sites have been surveyed and about two thirds of the CWSs (SWT are having difficulty locating owners for some areas)
- Draft reports back in September
- Next phase is to begin digitising and mapping the data, working in partnership with Suffolk Biological Information Service, work completed end of October.
- I will produce full report for Cabinet as soon as data collection is completed and maps available.

Tree canopy surveying:

- Tree Canopy Survey being carried out by Treeconomics Ltd
- Satellite data currently being processed
- Draft reports due at the end of September
- Completed project by end of October which includes publicly accessible web maps showing tree canopy and ecosystem services data
- Report compiled for Cabinet before mapping system goes live to the public.

Parish Tree planting:

- 32 applications from parishes in Babergh received
- Public realm team are processing applications and sending responses back to applicants
- Tree planting scheduled for November onwards
- Scheme remains open for applications, no planned closing date. We paused promotion due to the volume of applications and the amount of work the team need to do to process applications (checking right tree, right place, land suitability etc.)
- Further promotion will be done once this round of trees is planted and we have some images for comms work.

Parish wildflower planting:

- Lots of interest in leaving more areas un-mown or changing mowing regimes to allow grass growth longer to promote wildflowers.
- Public realm team mapping locations and assessing suitability for mowing regime changes (particularly for safety and road visibility)
- Working with Walnes Seeds in Woodbridge to develop a Suffolk grasses and wildflower mix. Full species list available from Will
- Seeds available free to Parishes, many have already expressed interest as part of the tree and hedge application process. Seed packs sent in the post later this year to parishes wishing to do their own planting.
- Public realm team planning areas to sow with grasses and wildflowers across Babergh, seeding to be done in Spring.