

Locality award.

Awards during December were to Needham Market Phoenix under 9 for kit, and to the Chinwag Group by Ross and I. We look forward to receiving more requests for locality funding awards and have approached the Parish councils to encourage them to make applications. So far awards have been mainly Needham Market focused and we are keen that all parishes benefit. Unspent locality funding is not transferrable into the next budget year.

Flooding.

Needham Market is having a Section 19 Flood Investigation undertaken following the flooding from Storm Babet. The investigations will be undertaken in partnership with the local community and the resulting reports will highlight the probable causes of flooding (this includes all sources). Identify options to reduce future flood risk and increase property resilience. Make recommendations for actions by relevant responsible organisations, landowners or homeowners.

Latest information for those impacted by Storm Babet, covering planned flood investigations and grants can be found at the following <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/storm-babet>

Due to the number of investigations to be completed, SCC is currently recruiting additional staff and collaborating with the Environment Agency, who will act as the lead authority in locations where this is determined as the best use of available resources. The Environment Agency are the 'lead authority' for Needham Market and have to date and continue to, liaise with the local community and collect evidence and data to inform the report. SCC continue to work closely with the EA and the final report will be produced and published by Suffolk County Council LLFA.

Parking

In response to requests from residents I have made a request for parking restrictions in the High Street to be lifted to 2 hours from the current 1 hour and am awaiting a response. These restrictions are determined at SCC level.

Needham Lakes

Working with MSDC at an early stage for maps and signage from the lakes for a number of circular walking routes all involving the High Street to encourage footfall to our High Street business's. If this gathers momentum input from Town Council will be sort. Similarly I have a desire for a cycle path from Stowmarket through Needham along the Gipping to Ipswich as an alternative to alongside a busy road. While accepting that flooding may make it impassable at times. The desire is occupying some of my time and I hope to gather further support.

New Year in new homes – council housing boost for Babergh and Mid Suffolk

Tenants have picked up the keys to more than 120 new affordable, high-quality council homes over the last 12 months as Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils continue to deliver social housing across the districts.

Working with housing developers, as well as developing properties on council-owned land, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils added 128 new properties to its housing stock during 2023: with 42 new homes in Babergh and 86 in Mid Suffolk. This brings their total housing stock to almost 7,000 homes in the region; with 3,526 homes in Babergh and 3,373 homes in Mid Suffolk.

The new properties include several built on repurposed council land in Mid Suffolk. The former Stowmarket Middle School and Needham Market Middle School sites were bought from Suffolk County Council when the schools closed, with the brownfield sites then earmarked for social housing. During 2023, 17 homes have been completed in Needham Market, and the first four homes were also delivered in Stowmarket, with a further 38 homes on the site scheduled for completion during 2024.