

District Councillors' Report – March 2024

Badley, Baylham, Creting St Mary, Creting St Peter, Darmsden, Needham Market Town

Council Budget agreed	The first Green Administration budget was agreed by Council in February. There will be a 2% increase in Council Tax (lower than most authorities). The cost of services to residents and communities is expected to rise by £1.8M, and Core Government funding is not matching the inflationary pressures, so the modest council tax increase should help protect services and build on the new priorities of the Council. The Green Administration is putting environmental sustainability and social justice at the heart of all its activities.
Housing Revenue Budget	The housing revenue budget will have financial challenges ahead, most notably an increase of £1.1M in the cost to run the housing service. The housing revenue account and council general fund account are completely separate so there is no way to cross subsidise from one account to the other. There will be a 7.7% increase in housing rents this year just to keep pace with rising costs. There will also be increases in both service and utility charges for sheltered housing tenants. Advice and help for those struggling with finances is available from the Council.
Council of the Year Award	The councils of Mid Suffolk, with a Green Party administration, and Babergh, that is Independently led, have just been jointly awarded <i>Council of the Year</i> for their collaboration and focus on their communities. This was awarded by the iESE, a not-for-profit organisation created by local authorities as a shared resource to transform public services and retain experience within the sector.
Rural Transport grants	A new rural transport grants scheme has just been launched to help provide passenger transport options across the district. Existing community transport operators can apply for funding before 15 th April. More details are available here: https://midsuffolk.gov.uk/rural-transport-grants-scheme . The Vertas Bus project is hoping to gain help from this fund.
Joint local plan part 2	All parish and town councils across both districts have all been invited to complete a questionnaire about the services and facilities present in each area. This information is needed to prepare the next phase of the Joint Local Plan.
Energy efficiency grants	Funding is available to help residents with the cost of installing loft insulation, in partnership with Travis Perkins. There are four product options available and residents will receive a 50% discount off their purchase (up to £200), with free delivery. According to The Energy Saving Trust, it is estimated that an uninsulated home loses a quarter of its heat through its roof. Correctly installed insulation should pay for itself many times over in its 40-year lifetime. More details can be found at the Green Suffolk website https://www.greensuffolk.org/at-home/grants/ . A free event about making older properties more energy efficient is to take place at The Hold in Ipswich on 6 th March. More details available here: https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/safe-suffolk-renters-retrofit-solutions-conference-march-2024 .
Tree Cover	SCC has secured over £200K from the Government's local authority Treescapes Fund for over 1500 new trees in a bid on behalf of all Suffolk councils, including MSDC. The funding will go toward planting as well as maintaining the trees.

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