

Cllr Isabelle Reece : General Report to Parishes January 2025

Devolution White Paper

In December Babergh District Council Leader, Deborah Saw's response to the Starmer Government's White Paper on Devolution was decidedly reserved:

"Local government must remain genuinely local. I'm sure any new Combined Authority and Mayor would be seen as a positive step by many, as long as it brought with it the finances and power to deliver real change for our residents. But we need to ensure that services are delivered by those who are close to their communities, that understand their specific needs, and can respond quickly to address inequalities – particularly for those most in need."

"Bigger is not always better – and a 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to meet the diverse, and often complex, needs of our rural communities and market towns."

Cllr Saw has since indicated her support for Devolution. As has been widely publicised, and reported by my colleague Cllr James Finch, Suffolk County Council decided its response at a Full Council Meeting on Thursday 9th January. We Babergh District Councillors had a briefing via Teams on Friday 17th and have an Extraordinary Meeting of Full Council on 10th February.

Babergh Budget 2025-26

The Provisional 2025-26 Budget was discussed by Cabinet and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee during December. The sudden removal of the Rural Services Delivery Grant without notice, worth £308,000 to Babergh, is having a serious impact on next year's budget, with a 2.99% increase in the Babergh portion of Council Tax likely. Final budget proposals will go before Cabinet and Full Council in February.

Review of Joint Local Plan

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils say a huge rise in housebuilding requirements set by the Government has left no option but to review their Joint Local Plan. The districts' blueprint for the future until 2037, adopted in December 2023, will have to be reviewed following a huge increase imposed by central government to the annual housing requirement from 416 to 775 homes in Babergh (up 86%) and from 535 to 734 in Mid Suffolk (up 37%).

'Part One' of the Councils' Joint Local Plan, which identifies the overall housing requirement for the districts, was adopted in 2023. Since then, work has been continuing on 'Part Two', which was set to make housing allocations, and address other matters include open space designations and Gypsy and Traveller provision.

The Councils will now build on the work to date and start on a full review of the Joint Local Plan. A revised timetable will be brought forward to the council in February – setting out a period of further evidence gathering and consultation, before the plan itself is reviewed.

Parishes are urged to develop up-to-date Neighbourhood Development Plans, to give their communities statutory influence to shape how their local area develops.

Introduction of Parking Charges in Sudbury, Hadleigh and Lavenham

A reminder that from Monday 13th January there will no longer be any free parking in Babergh-owned car parks in Sudbury, Hadleigh and Lavenham. The charges have not yet been implemented in Sudbury because agreements with landowner Roys, have not been finalised.

For Further Information about Babergh District Council please see the Babergh District Council website: [Home - Babergh District Council – baberghmidsuffolk.com](https://www.baberghmidsuffolk.com)