

# CLr Isabelle Reece: General Report to Parishes March 2026

## Babergh Full Council Meeting

The Full Council Meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> February agreed a 2.99% increase to Babergh's share of council tax bills. It means a Band D household will pay Babergh £199.52 per year, a total annual increase of £5.79 - or 11p a week, the equivalent of £3.84 a week for all district council services.

**Table 1: General Fund Budget Summary for 2025/26 and 2026/27**

Budget Areas		Budget 2025/26 (£'000)	Budget 2026/27 (£'000)
Service Expenditure	Employees	12,456	11,562
	Premises Expenses	1,772	1,778
	Supplies & Services	5,363	5,089
	Transport Expenses	441	433
	Contracts	4,920	6,782
Grants & Income	Grants and Contributions	(1,592)	(2,739)
	Sales, Fees & Charges	(5,462)	(5,752)
	Savings from Savings Programme	(91)	-
	Rental & Other Income (incl. PV panels)	(2,348)	(2,017)
Housing Benefits	HB Transfer Payments	12,401	12,403
	HB Grants and Contributions	(12,398)	(12,398)
Reserves	Transfers to / (from) Reserves	(402)	(526)
<b>Net expenditure on services as above</b>		<b>15,059</b>	<b>14,614</b>
Recharges	Charge to HRA/Capital	(1,964)	(1,803)
Capital Financing Costs	Interest Payable - CIFCO (PWLB Only)	187	177
	Interest Payable - Short-Term Borrowings	2,084	1,952
	Less Item 8 Debit Recharge to HRA	(462)	(918)
	Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	1,771	2,097
Investment Income	Pooled Funds - Transfers to Reserves	1,000	-
	Interest Receivable - Pooled Funds	(420)	(336)
	Interest Receivable - Short-Term Investments	(178)	(208)
	Less Item 8 Credit Recharge from HRA	172	321
	Interest Receivable - (CIFCO)	(2,160)	(2,146)
<b>Total Net Cost of Services</b>		<b>15,090</b>	<b>13,750</b>
Government Grants	New Homes Bonus	(838)	-
	Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	(154)	(3,843)
	Transitional Protection Grant (100%)	-	(146)
	Employers National Insurance Compensation	(119)	-
	Funding Guarantee Grant	(219)	-
Business Rates	Baseline Business Rates	(10,305)	(13,945)
	Business Rates Current Year Levy	888	(51)
	Business Rate Tariff Payments	8,185	11,947
	Business Rates Pool share of Growth Benefit	(487)	-
	S31 Business Rates Grant	(3,135)	-
	Removal of Top Slicing	(233)	-
	Business Rates - Renewable Energy	(223)	(214)
	Enterprise Zone income	(318)	(403)
	Business Rates Prior Year Deficit / (Surplus)	(354)	(120)
	Business Rates Adjustment	-	125
Council Tax	Council Tax	(7,144)	(7,421)
<b>Total Funding</b>		<b>(14,457)</b>	<b>(14,071)</b>
<b>Net Balance from/(to) Reserves</b>		<b>633</b>	<b>(321)</b>

For further information, see the following link: [BC/25/37 2026/27 GENERAL FUND BUDGET & MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL POSITION \(MTFP\)](#)

The net cost of providing Babergh's services in 2026/27 will be £13.7m, down £1.3m from £15m in the current financial year. In Sudbury additional capital provision was included to enable completion of the Belle Vue Park café for work to the Kingfisher Leisure Centre." Just days before budget setting, the government changed the council's provisional finance settlement, resulting in a net funding cut of £717k for Babergh over the next three years. Babergh keeps only 9% of the total council tax bill, with the rest going to Suffolk County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and town and parish councils.

The Housing Revenue Account, 2026/27 Budget and 30 Year Business Plan, the Joint Capital, Investment and Treasury Management Strategies 2026/27, and the Strategic Asset Management Plan were also approved.

### **Battery Storage Energy Sites**

In the absence of my Group Leader, Michael Holt, I seconded a Motion on Notice, which highlighted the potential failure in adequate assessment of risk associated with large, so-called battery farms, and which called for more realistic 'worst-case scenarios' to be applied. For full text see the following link: [MOTIONS ON NOTICE](#)

### **Changes to Waste Bins**

A reminder that in the next few weeks residents will begin receiving through their doors information packs about the new waste and recycling systems that will come into effect later this year. There is still a great deal of concern across the District about how all our bins can be accommodated, and many more concerns about the reduction in frequency of the General Rubbish (Black) Bin collection to every three weeks. For further information, see the following link: [Find out about the changes to waste and recycling collections starting in June 2026](#)

### **Pylons**

National Grid proposes 159km of new overhead lines between Norwich to Tilbury, with the route cutting through the Suffolk countryside. It includes 21km of underground cabling, including some through the Dedham Vale national landscape, and up to seven new compounds to connect underground sections to overhead lines.

At a Public Hearing of 11<sup>th</sup> February, there were calls for National Grid's plan for more pylons in the Suffolk countryside to be halted, so that other options can be considered and costed – such as an undersea route or the under-grounding of the entire length of the project. With the transmission network likely to be sufficient until 2035 – there is time to explore other options.

There are serious concerns about the impact on the environment, communities and businesses. and the threat to food production, biodiversity, local tourism and heritage. The cumulative effects of energy infrastructure development were also highlighted.

Babergh District Council leader, Cllr John Ward, made many points: “The landscape of the district is highly valued, with the National Landscape designation, many cultural and historic associations, and sensitive views that contribute to the unique character of Babergh district and the wider region. These are views that have been immortalised by Constable and Gainsborough. The applicant states the project will have significant adverse landscape and visual impacts which are not considered to be adequately mitigated or compensated.” and “The impact on the Dedham Vale National Landscape will be particularly devastating with a wide swathe cut through one of the most beautiful and historic parts of the region. Of course, grid reinforcement is necessary and all options have impacts – residents do understand that. But we have never had a proper national debate about the trade-offs between costs and impacts of all the new energy projects.”

### **National Landscape**

On 19<sup>th</sup> February I attended The National Landscape Joint Advisory Committee meeting will at the Community Action Suffolk offices at 160 Hadleigh Road. There were updates on the following topics:

- The staff restructure
- Staff delivery over the past 4 months
- Draft 2026/27 budget
- Draft staff action plan 2026/27
- Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project compensation funds

The amount of work achieved by Simon Amstutz and his somewhat reduced but dedicated Team, along with volunteers is amazing. Please check out their website: [Dedham Vale National Landscape](#)

I will also be attending a meeting of the Dedham Vale National Landscape and Stour Valley Partnership 13th March

### **Boxted Bridge**

I sent a letter with Cllr John Ward, objecting to the TRO and urging a re-opening of the bridge to traffic. The item was on the Agenda of the Meeting of Essex County Council Development & Regulation Committee, on 27<sup>th</sup> February [Boxted Bridge, Boxted](#)

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