

Cllr Isabelle Reece: General Report to Parishes February 2026

Council and Cabinet Meetings

The Full Council Meeting of 20th January, received the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, and debated Motions on Notice regarding the Ipswich Bid for City of Culture 2029 and Sewage Sludge Regulations received from Cllrs John Ward and Deborah Saw respectively, both of which were supported. At its Meeting on 6th January Babergh Cabinet voted to increase Parking Charges. The next Cabinet Meeting is scheduled for 10th February and Full Council for 24th February

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

At the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting of 29th January, Cllr Paul Clover and I challenged the Cabinet decision on 6th January to increase charges by 20 per cent. The sole grounds upon which we were permitted to argue were that the decision was not proportionate to the outcome the authority sought to achieve and was not taken based on due consultation. It came a year after free three-hour parking was scrapped and initial charges were introduced. Unfortunately the Committee voted that the decision be upheld and implemented immediately. For full details see Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting link: [29 Jan 2026 2.00 pm](#)

Meeting Sewage Sludge Regulations

Cllr Saw's Motion on Notice to urge reform to sewage sludge processing regulations was introduced following concern in Suffolk after independent testing late 2025 found water at a sewage sludge processing site near Wattisham air base contained more than 170 times the recommended safe levels of ammonia. The processing site is operated by contractors handling sludge from Thames Water.

A temporary stop notice was first issued by Suffolk County Council in December 2025. The Environment Agency also made at least two visits and found the operator in breach as the site had not been sealed to prevent leachate from running into ditches, soil and groundwater. Suffolk County Council returned to serve a permanent stop notice. If the operator does not appeal the order, it will have one month to clear the site.

Council will formally recognise the risks posed by unregulated contaminants in sewage sludge and to write to the Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), urging stronger regulation to guarantee public safety; for the government to prevent chemical producers and companies from offloading commercial effluent into sewage sludge and to increase research into sustainable and safe agricultural alternatives, with Defra warning farmers of the risks of accepting sludge from water company contractors in the meantime.

'We back the bid' – Councils support Ipswich ambition to be City of Culture

Following unanimous support at Full Council of Cllr Ward's motion, Babergh joined other Suffolk councils in giving full backing to Ipswich's bid for City of Culture 2029

Cllr John Ward, Babergh District Council leader, said: "The bid by Ipswich deserves the support of the whole county. The town already has an excellent and varied cultural offering, which could be further enhanced through this entry. I believe it would be a deserving winner, and a successful Ipswich brings benefits for the rest of Suffolk – including an additional spotlight on the superb cultural offer across the county.

The deadline for submission of Ipswich's 'Expression of Interest' for the 2029 City of Culture competition is 8th February, 2026. The government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport will then longlist up to eight bids, awarding each a grant of £60,000 to support them with developing and strengthening their full application over a three-to-four-month period from February until May/June 2026. The winning place gets a guaranteed £10 million of Government funding to help deliver its year-long programme of events.

People are being asked to go to www.ipswich2029.com and sign up to show their support.

Changes to Waste Bins

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.

Boxted Bridge

The latest developments regarding Essex County Councils position on Boxted Bridge is a cause of great concern across large parts of the District. Cllr John Ward and I are joining our voices with those of others on both sides of the River, including James Cartlidge MP, to express our grave concern over the continuing uncertainty over the future of the bridge.

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