

**Report to Great Bricett Parish Council
for Full Council Meeting on Tuesday 22nd September 2015
from David Whybrow, Mid Suffolk District Councillor.**

1.0 Planning (since 28th July to date of report issue)

1.1 Validated – I'm not aware of any Applications validated within the parish

1.2 Decisions

1.2.1 4, Meadow Valley, Great Bricett
Reference 2134/15
Erection of single storey side extension to dwelling
Validated 18 June 2015
Consultation Expiry 22 July 2015
Target Determination 13 August 2015
Decision 12 August 2015
Planning Permission Granted

1.2.2 Base Garage, Lower Farm Road, Great Bricett IP7 7DR
Reference 2173/15
T1: Re-pollard Oak tree
Validated 22 June 2015
Target Determination 3 August 2015
Decision 3 August 2015
Planning Permission Granted

1.3 Permitted Developments – I'm not aware of any PD's within the parish

1.4 Appeals – I'm not aware of any appeals within the parish.

2.0 Proposed "one-off" Mid Suffolk Locality Award Programme.

I have received the following regarding the plans for a "one off" District Councillor locality budget of £5,000 which was agreed at the September Full Council meeting (subject to Scrutiny call-in). It is scheduled to commence from 1st October with a deadline for submissions of the 8th January 2016.

Any grant awarded would be "one off" and there should be no expectation that this would signal any on-going and long term financial commitment to any supported scheme. The award scheme will not exclude any groups, projects and organisations that are or have been receiving funding from the Council's Grants Programme from applying for an award. The Locality Awards Programme has been created for the direct benefit of Mid Suffolk communities and projects which meet one or more of the Councils Strategic Priorities. The previous Council allocated £200,000 of New Homes Bonus funding in 2012 for the budget year 2013/14 to support transformation in our communities. This funding was allocated during a period of significant change and the programme implementation was postponed to provide time to develop a system which ensured best use of the fund for both the Council and the communities. With 40 councillors each has a budget of £5,000.

It is vitally important any applicant to the Award Programme meets one or more of these Strategic Priorities and the outcome of the Award results in a positive impact on the community.

These priorities with their supporting outcomes are documented in the Mid Suffolk Member Locality Award Programme – both within the Guidance Notes and the Application Form. The Award scheme will ensure opportunities to apply are open and inclusive and could include funding support for a range of project types such as: public realm projects, village halls, sports development and young people's groups (the above examples are intended as a guide only and should not be considered an exhaustive list). The Award could also be used to start up a new activity or event or enhance an existing provision. The Award could also tackle a range of areas of need including: social and rural isolation, mental health issues and disability, and support the health and wellbeing of Mid Suffolk residents through the provision of preventative work.

Let me know of any schemes you would wish to put forward so we can put the application together. Please feel free to pass this onto other groups you know of who may wish to take advantage of this scheme.

(See attached The Joint Strategic Plan, Locality Award Guidance Notes and Locality Award Application Form in this reports Appendices.)

3.0 Devolution in Suffolk

What is the context? The Government is currently piloting the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill through Parliament. The Bill makes provision for local authorities and other parts of the public sector to 'bid' to run functions currently delivered centrally in return for certain agreed outcomes. Whilst most attention has been given to the so-called Northern Powerhouse, other councils in other parts of the country have also been talking with Government. Most of these are metropolitan or unitary councils. In all cases, there is a requirement of those councils which 'bid' for devolved powers both to satisfy the requirements of the Treasury that any new approaches are at least fiscally neutral (they don't cost more than they are currently projected to) and by the Department for Communities and Local Government to do this in an innovative and accountable way.

Where is Suffolk in all of this? We have a track record of collaborative and efficient working together in Suffolk (recognised by Government in its grant of the £3.3 million Transformation Challenge Award) and strong working relationships with national politicians and officials. This background means we are very well-placed to start having a conversation with ministers and civil servants that may result in us assuming devolved powers from them. The Government recognises that what works in the big cities and unitaries is not appropriate for every part of the country and is looking to find solutions. Suffolk are one of just four initial bids in two-tier areas that are seeking to work with Government as to the devolution of powers and responsibilities.

This is a politically-led process. The Suffolk Public Sector Leaders' (SPSL) group, chaired by Babergh Leader Cllr. Jennie Jenkins, has set up a Devolution Working Group to investigate the level of interest about devolution among public sector organisations. The aim is to start formulating some broad principles and ideas that all can support in opening up this conversation with Government. This group is chaired by Forest Heath Deputy Leader, Cllr. Robin Millar, with Ipswich Leader Cllr. David Ellesmere as deputy chairman.

The Working Group is working closely with representatives from the health and police sectors as well as the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP).

Officers from the eight Suffolk councils are pulling together information requested by the Working Group to help develop ideas that may be of interest to Government.

So what could be the main benefits to Suffolk from devolution? Suffolk is already a great place in which to live and work and that our communities are largely cohesive and work well are great foundations for our future productivity and progress. Ultimately, it is thought that by having more local control over what goes on in the county we can help to deliver even better outcomes for all of Suffolk's communities, both in our urban and rural areas. It is considered that locally-made decisions are likely to be better and more directly accountable to the communities where they're made. It is hoped that conversations with the Government will lead to the local knowledge and expertise of councillors being better recognised, leading to greater and more effective decision-making on issues that affect you and your communities.

What progress has the Devolution Working Group made? Over the last couple of months, the Working Group has begun to sketch out a broad framework that identifies four possible areas where there may be benefits to our communities from devolving powers from Government. These are: education & skills, health, housing and productivity & growth. These are all areas where councils at borough, county and district level have direct interests and responsibilities, with strong input from other public sector partners as well. As part of their investigations, they are looking at the challenges and what they believe can be achieved in each of these four areas. Crucially, they need to begin to produce evidence for Government as to the possible local and national benefits that can be delivered by having more powers and responsibilities delivered in a devolved way. They will look to fully develop these ideas as they get into detailed conversations with Government. At the moment, the focus of the Working Group has been to ensure that there is broad support for these areas and that all partners can sign up to these as the starting point for future discussions with Government.

The Working Group has now reported to the SPSL and the SPSL met on 4th September to 'sign off' Suffolk's interest to Government. This is in effect a statement of interest and a starting point for future and more detailed discussions with ministers and civil servants, subject to approval by all eight councils.

So what happens next? The paper outlining the broad ideas of the Devolution Working Group and seeking the backing of each of the eight council partners is now due to be considered by our councils over the three weeks or so.

In the case of the borough/district councils, this paper will be considered by each full council. In the case of Suffolk County Council, the paper will be considered and resolved at its cabinet on 15th September.

The Council report papers will be published a week ahead of the next MSDC Full Council Meeting taking place on 24th September.

Councillors will be asked to support in principle the devolution 'bid' and to allow the Devolution Working Group to submit that to Government to start the dialogue. So, the 'bid' is not the end of the process; rather it is the beginning of what may well be a detailed and lengthy effort to get the right balance to allow us to do more for those in our communities in most need and to help others to do more for themselves.

What happens after 24th September? A wide range of conversations with ministers and civil servants will start to flesh out the framework ideas in much more detail. This will take time

to evolve and it is not expected that the process of shaping and implementing devolution in Suffolk would be fully completed for another 18-24 months or so, giving time to engage councillors and partners further.

How will the public know what is going on? At this stage there is very little detail that anyone can tell the public. The SPSL Group have already engaged with the EADT and BBC Radio Suffolk so they have an informed background. They will also be engaging the wider media when the cabinet and council papers start going into the public domain, giving the message that this is the start of an ongoing conversation with the Government. It is also hoped that briefings will be sent to Councillors to help keep our local communities up to date.

What about working with Norfolk, or other neighbouring counties?

At this stage the concentration is on the 'Suffolk deal' that is wanted from Government. There may be a time when it makes sense to work outside our county boundary and this will be considered, if appropriate, but in the context of what's best for Suffolk.

Summary

The vision and plans for devolution have been guided by the following principles:

- What's right for Suffolk – locally appropriate, not a single imposed solution
- Integration and whole system thinking across public services, not just local government
- Letting go of organisational boundaries while respecting individual identities
- Efficient and effective approaches, simpler and joined up working
- Subsidiarity – devolution of powers and decisions to the most appropriate level and area
- Better accountability and transparency

The aspiration is to deliver the following economic and social dividends – raising revenues and reducing costs:

- 70, 000 homes by 2031
- Improved educational provision and outcomes, for example: at least 65% A*-C GCSE passes by 2017
- Working with districts, boroughs, public, private and voluntary and community partners there will be stronger communities and families, with greater democratic participation
- Improved health, with reduced demand for health, care and safety services – with better supported families and less child poverty
- Significant reduction in the £430 million spent on DWP and work related benefits in Suffolk (2013-14) through better paid jobs
- A more skilled workforce including at least 5, 000 new apprenticeships by 2020 and a further 2, 500 in Suffolk by 2025
- Greater productivity and growth of £25-30 billion total GVA pa by 2025.

(See attached SPSL Group Devolution Proposal 2015-09-04 in this reports Appendices).

4.0 Building Leadership and Management Capacity – “Smaller, Smarter, Swifter”.

Over the last four years, both Mid Suffolk and Babergh have changed significantly. The workforce has been fully integrated across the two Councils and the senior management team, corporate management cohort and every operational delivery team has been

restructured. This structural re-design has been paralleled by change in the Councils approach to leadership and management to enable the workforce to function effectively with less management capacity, to adapt to a rapidly changing agenda, to be more flexible and able to work in new ways.

Alongside this change, Councillors have worked with officers to develop a clear strategic focus on outcomes they wish to achieve with their communities in both Districts. There is a joint strategic plan and a significant delivery programme of work is underway. Following the elections in May the Joint Strategic Plan will be refreshed over coming months, and the budget and our resources will be better aligned to the priorities in the plan as the Council progress through the planning for the budget for 2016-17 and beyond. It is clear that the pace of delivery needs to increase, efficiencies still need to be achieved and resources need to be optimised to maximise our impact on outcomes for communities. This is a big challenge.

The capacity and capability of the leadership and management team at all levels has developed significantly since 2011. The context is now changing again with a newly elected Conservative Government and its devolution agenda as well as the stated Suffolk Leaders' ambition to make the whole public service in Suffolk work as one. With the relentless focus on achieving what's best for Suffolk people and its places - the demands on managers and leaders is changing yet again.

As a consequence, it is apparent that the Councils current management arrangements need to be looked at again. It is proposed that the Chief Executive carries out a focused review. As with previous reviews, all obligations as a fair and reasonable employer will be met. The Council will work closely with Union colleagues and will be engaging with all staff to secure a full understanding and commitment to make any proposed changes work effectively.

5.0 Annual Canvass of Electors 2015

Each year Mid Suffolk is required to write to every residential property in the district to collect the details of people who are entitled to be included on the electoral register. During August 2015, they sent a letter, known as a "household enquiry form" (HEF), to every household in the district. The letter was addressed to "the occupier" and contained the details of all those in the household who are registered to vote.

The letter asked for confirmation that the details of those living at that address and registered to vote were correct. Anyone in the household can respond to the letter.

If the details are correct simply follow the instructions on the letter.

Choose only one of the following options to respond:

Go online to complete the form to confirm that there are no changes. The two security numbers printed on the letter are needed to complete the online form. Or phone 0800 197 9871 to confirm that there are no changes. Again, the two security numbers printed on the letter will be needed to confirm by phone. Alternatively, text NOCHANGE and the security codes to 80212. Finally, one could simply complete the paper form and return it using the pre-paid envelope.

If details are incorrect or missing - for example, someone has moved away or moved in - follow the instructions on the letter to let the Council know.

Again, choose only one of the two options:

Go online to complete the form to tell MSDC what has changed (the two security numbers will be needed), or, complete the paper form and return using the pre-paid envelope as above.

If you confirm that there are no changes, MSDC won't write to you again as part of the 2015 canvass.

If you tell them there are new people eligible to be registered, they will send each person an "invitation to register". This form invites that person to apply to register to vote. If they prefer they can register online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

If you tell them someone has moved away, they may need to write again to confirm that that person has moved away. This is because they're required to have two pieces of evidence to remove someone from the electoral register.

By law, they are required to send a reminder where they don't get a reply from a household. It helps to save money by replying promptly to the first letter.

If there is no response after these reminders, they are legally required to send one of their canvassing staff to your property to ask for information.

The law says that you must provide them information as part of the annual canvass. Failure to respond could result in you being unable to vote at future elections and being fined.

6.0 Licensing and Gambling Policies

I note that these consultations are on the Agenda for discussion at the September Full Parish Council Meeting. However, the following may assist by way of background and context.

Mid Suffolk and Babergh are now simultaneously consulting on updated (statutory) policy documents in respect of Licensing Act 2003 (alcohol, entertainment, late night refreshment – including events/festivals) and Gambling Act 2005 (betting, bingo, gaming in pubs and clubs, arcades, machines, lotteries etc.)

These are key documents to supporting both sets of functions setting the decision-making framework that the Council's licensing and regulatory team work to. This round of revision aims to focus on the following areas.

- How to balance business needs (including new and diversifying businesses) with proportionate community protections.
- Increased alignment between the two Councils work – especially around the business support offered.
- Promoting well-managed premises - and the Regulators' Code.
- Closer integration of these functions with the Council's strategic priorities.
- Recognising the importance of SMEs and events in the leisure sector to our local economies and the wellbeing/self-sufficiency of our communities.

There are over 800 licensed premises in the districts, several thousand individual licence holders and many more licensable events and activities that take place.

This consultation will run until 19th October 2015. The public consultation documents are available on the websites, as below:

<http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/business/licensing/latest-licensing-news/>

7.0 Joint Annual Monitoring Report

This document contains key statistics and information gathered for the 2014/15 financial year including the position on 5 year land supply, housing completions delivery, town centre information and Local Plan policy usage. It is available on the Councils' website.

By way of background the following is relevant to the context of the Report.

- Mid Suffolk is predominantly a rural district covering the centre of Suffolk and is predominantly characterised by undulating plateau claylands dissected by rolling river valleys
- 335 square miles (858 km²)
- There is an approximate population of 96,700 in 40,300 households (ONS 2011).
- Population growth between 2001 and 2011 was 11%. A similar level of growth is expected up to 2020.
- Main centres of population Stowmarket, Needham Market and Eye
- Heritage assets include the following
 - 3,500 listed buildings (approx.)
 - 31 Conservation Areas
 - 35 Scheduled Ancient Monuments
 - 2 registered Historic Parks & Gardens Landscape
- The District has a demography with fewer younger people and an increasing proportion of aging population. The 45 - 64 year old age group represents the single largest age group at present. A significant percentage, 20.13%, of the population are aged 65 years or older. (Suffolk Observatory 2012, Census 2011)

The Babergh & Mid-Suffolk Joint Annual Monitoring Report 2014 - 2015 provides information on the key areas where Planning has a role. The objectives of the Joint Annual Monitoring Report are to:

- Report on the progress made in producing the key Joint Local Plan documents (a complete list of documents can be found in the Councils Joint Local Plan Programme – March 2015 and at <http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/>).
- Report on Key Indicators and the progress made towards delivery against the targets set out in the Local Plan documents.
- Report on the use and implementation of the adopted Local Plans and Saved Policies
- Report on any financial receipts obtained via implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Key Headlines from the Report:

- Mid Suffolk and Babergh have jointly begun a new Joint Local Plan through the publication of an Issues and Options (Reg18) consultation, in January to March 2015.
- 416 new dwellings were built in Mid Suffolk district last year.
- Mid Suffolk District Council cannot identify a sufficient supply of deliverable sites for development, based upon the targets as set out in the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy.

8.0 Landlords and homeowners grants and government backed loans.

The Council runs a grant scheme that funds landlords, up to 50 per cent of the total cost, in order that they can provide efficient heating systems and insulation in tenanted homes, as well as grants of up to £5,000 for home owners to help them ensure their properties meet the Decent Homes Standard.

Homeowners can also apply for a loan of up to £15,000 to help bring their properties in line with the guideline standards.

These grants and loans bolster the councils' current strategic priorities to improve the quality and use of existing private sector housing, as well as helping to foster the right conditions for private landlords to work with our communities to deliver local housing need.

These grants and loans can also be used to help homeowners to fund work to bring long-term empty properties back into use and to fund the conversion of empty buildings into residential dwellings. Across Mid Suffolk and Babergh there are 1,100 properties that have been empty for six months or more.

Both councils have a pot of £200,000 each for the grants and loans.

For further information and application advice call Private Sector Housing on 01473 826639.

Note - All loans are means tested. All loans are interest free and repayable upon sale or transfer of a property. A local Land Charge will be applied.

9.0 Conclusion

I trust the forgoing is informative and relevant.

Finally, if there are specific matters that you would like me to investigate or report on – just ask.

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10.0 Appendices

The Joint Strategic Plan; Locality Award Guidance Notes; Locality Award Application Form; SPSL Group Devolution Proposal 2015-09-04