

District Councillor Report: Andy Mellen – Bacton ward

(Bacton, Cotton, Finningham, Westhorpe and Wyverstone)

February 2025

Council meeting	A full council meeting took place on 23 rd January. The meeting's key points of discussion included the Housing Revenue Account business plan, and the adoption of the provisions of the Gambling Act. There was also cross-party support for a motion reiterating council support for farmers as changes to the Agricultural Property Relief are proposed. The council will write to all 3 of Mid Suffolk's MPs and meet up with representatives from the National Farmers Union for discussions on how farmers can be supported.
Devolution and Postponement of County Elections	In January, Suffolk County Council was among one of many County Councils across the country to apply for postponing its elections due to be held on 1 st May 2025. The government has now confirmed that Suffolk is in the devolution priority programme. As a result, there is likely to be an election of a mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk in May 2026, and also reorganisation of our current 2-tier council system into unitary councils, on a very ambitious timetable. This is a massive shake up in local government, which will see district and county councils being abolished. I am very concerned about the loss of local democratic accountability if the 'local' in local government is lost, so I am advocating for smaller unitary councils rather than one mega council for Suffolk. The elections for Suffolk County Council planned for May will not now go ahead.
Council Housing Rent updates	At the January cabinet meeting, the cabinet updated and amended the rent and service charges for council housing. This process included feedback from Tenant survey results that were received in the previous two months. A full list of changes can be found on MSDC's website
Joint Local Plan Review	The joint local plan across Babergh and Mid Suffolk, previously adopted in November 2023, was reviewed earlier in the month, in response to new government targets for housebuilding. Whilst BMSDC have previously exceeded the government's housebuilding targets, the new national housebuilding guidelines mean we need to now review our local plan so that it is in line with national policy. We do still have a healthy housing land supply so there is no need for large speculative development to be approved.
Elmswell Services Breach of Condition Notice	Safety Concerns have been raised over Elmswell Service Station, after it opened without completing required safety works. As a result, the council has issued the service station with a Breach of Condition Notice, but this has not yet been adhered to. This could potentially lead to MSDC taking legal action, next steps are to be decided in the near future. Safety is the main concern.

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