

MID SUFFOLK Your Council

Inside
Win
A family
swim

Multi-million pound boost for Stowmarket

Page 2

Have you
got your **free**
Tree for Life?

Page 7

Supporting our **Communities**

We've been working
with community groups
across Mid Suffolk

Pages 5-6

What we've done for you

2015-2019

Improving our area | New homes | Supporting communities | Cleaner environment

Welcome

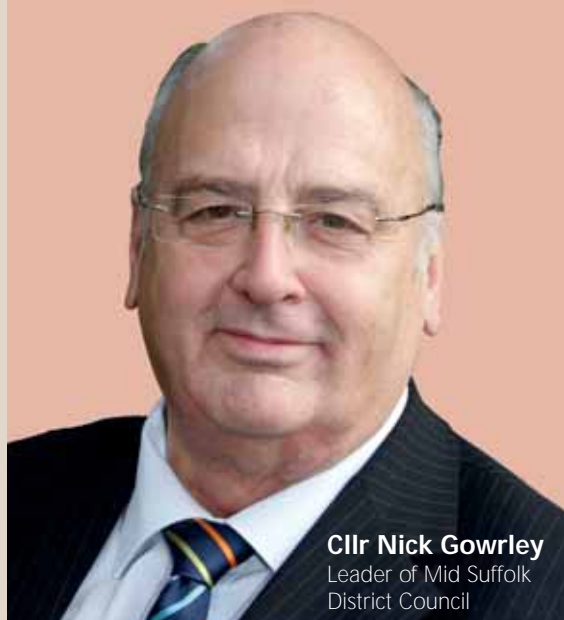
“There’s a lot for us to be proud of in Mid Suffolk. Not only have we delivered on our plans to create more affordable homes, we have taken full advantage of funding opportunities to improve our environment for you, our residents.

We’ve invested heavily in the future of our towns and have seen real growth in our District. This means more jobs, better skills and successful business expansion.

We’ve transformed the way we work so that we save money and do things in the best way possible, delivering the services that mean the most to you.

Through neighbourhood plans and community activities, we’ve given you the opportunity to play an active role in making Mid Suffolk a better place to live and work.

I’m proud that we’ve delivered so much good work and I do not doubt that we will continue to play our part in Mid Suffolk remaining one of the top places to live in the UK.”



Cllr Nick Gowrley
Leader of Mid Suffolk
District Council



Lights, camera, action!

We’ve committed over £2.5 million to the Regal Theatre in Stowmarket so the main auditorium can be improved, two new cinema screens can be added and the front of house area can be renovated.

Working with Stowmarket Town Council, this will mean 45,000 more people can enjoy the theatre each year, helping to regenerate the town centre.

Work on this is planned to start in 2019 and be completed by 2020.

 1,219

Families helped since 2015
with our homes for let scheme

Homes matter

We are developing our first ever Joint Homes Strategy, and our aim is to make sure that the right type of good quality homes are available for those who need it. We are committed to ensuring there are enough affordable homes in the right places.

A home in Mid Suffolk costs

10 times

the average salary, but we're helping to provide more affordable solutions. We've worked hard to increase the number and types of housing and in partnership we've made it possible.

Together with landlords we've helped return

174

previously empty homes back into use

Our partnership with Orbit Housing Association and Lovell Partnership saw 86 post-war 'temporary' Unity houses transformed into 167 energy efficient, modern and affordable homes for local communities in Stowmarket, Woolpit and Haughley.



Funding for this huge four year regeneration project came from the Homes and Communities Agency, together with investment from Orbit and us, to a total sum of £23 million. With it, we were able to provide a mix of homes for social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership and outright sale.

The last homes were completed in Kingsmead Close in Stowmarket at the end of 2017.



Home grown, green homes

For the first time in 30 years, we are building our own homes again. Over the past four years, we have purchased 44 properties, and built 46 new homes for people who need affordable rental properties.

The first homes we built were in Acton Close in Bramford using a pocket of unused land to create two new homes available for those with a local connection to the village. We invested in green technology such as air source heat pump central heating and hot water systems, as well as solar PV panels.

"In the past financial year, we let out 278 properties across the districts, but on average they lay empty for 51 days between lets. This wasn't good enough.

By improving our processes and giving our maintenance teams better mobile technology to see jobs whilst out and

about, we can plan jobs better to do repairs whilst in the area.

Today, the turnaround is just 24 days, so those most in need wait less time for a much-needed home."

CIlr Jill Wilshaw
Cabinet Member for Housing



Helping you build for the future

It's important to us that we help communities build the homes they want and need.

In 2016, we received £225,476 from the Government to help in places where homes are most unaffordable for local people.

The funding has been used to help parishes with

business planning and reviewing local housing need.

We have contributed directly to three community-housebuilding projects in Henley, Mendlesham and Redgrave, and advised more than 22 parishes on how they can provide new homes for their communities.

A step in the right direction



For the first time in 25 years, we offered our first Shared Ownership Scheme to enable local people to buy one of 11 newly built properties in Great Blakenham.

This has given people the opportunity to buy a share of their home whilst paying rent on the remaining share, making it a more affordable way to become a home owner.

These homes were part of a wider development on an area of wasteland we owned. Twelve other new builds were offered for affordable rent.

Delivered in partnership with Havebury Housing Partnership, the scheme was part of our New Build Affordable Housing Programme and was paid for with Homes and Community Agency and Mid Suffolk funding.

Where families have taken the opportunity to buy their council homes from us under the Right to Buy scheme, we have reinvested that money in other homes to provide for other families in need.

As part of a three-year programme to invest in more council housing, we have bought 43 homes.

We've dealt with more than

4,500

planning applications over the past four years.

Accessible homes

The first new build council home we built in 2015 was specially adapted for wheelchair users.

It was in Thurston and we worked with the family and architects to design a home that was right for them. We want to build more homes like this in the future.



Over the past four years, our grants of £1.3 million have supported nearly 100 projects and organisations across Mid Suffolk



Picture credit: EADT

This included funding village hall refurbishments in Stonham Aspal, Creeting St Mary, Stradbroke and Westhorpe, support for Citizens Advice, the John Peel Centre and The Mix. We've also backed projects

to develop access to the arts, supported community transport and reducing rural isolation.

Ann Osborn from the Rural Coffee Caravan says "The support we have received from

the Council has meant that we can continue our work to tackle loneliness by providing a social space in a rural place, particularly for those without access to the internet."

Making a difference

All our Councillors have access to a Locality Fund to inject money in to well-deserved projects in their areas. During the past four years, £700,000 has made a huge difference right across the district including improvements to local village halls, support to youth groups and enhancing the environment.

Not spending a penny

We know that many people find it difficult to spend time away from home due to anxiety over access to the nearest public conveniences. We've worked with local businesses and have a pilot running in Stowmarket to encourage establishments with facilities to display a sticker to allow residents to use their toilets for free.



Believing in your community

When communities come together to save buildings that are important to them, they often look to us for expertise. We're on hand to help make a difference. Three closed pubs were secured as Assets of Community Value by the community and successfully re-opened for everyone to enjoy and support.

This includes the Cross Keys in Redgrave which was bought by local people through £50 shares. The pub is run by the community society, with people volunteering in the pub and restaurant to keep it the social hub of the village.

Thank you for making such a difference

"Many of the organisations we fund wouldn't exist without volunteers giving their precious time. More than half a million hours of volunteer time has been donated to these groups in the past four years, making a tremendous difference to our communities."

Cllr Julie Flatman
Cabinet Member for Communities





Everybody needs good neighbours

“Neighbourhood Plans help local towns and villages to have more control over planning their area and guide what is important and needed for their communities.

We’ve supported many parishes in taking ownership in their future housing need and advised them of the processes in creating their own Neighbourhood Plans.”

Cllr Glen Horn
Cabinet Member for
Planning



Our Let’s Walk Project organised 18 volunteer led walks in Stowmarket for those living with low level mental health issues. Over 6 weeks, the project helped improve wellbeing by connecting to the outdoors and spending time with others in similar situations. Maps of the walks are available for anyone to use from the Stow Health GP scheme.

Eye became the first Suffolk town with ‘Walkers are Welcome’ status in 2018. Regular group walks, new self-guided walk maps and hospitable businesses make sure that all walkers receive a warm welcome.

We brought 12 award-winning Lullaby concerts to Mid Suffolk to give a first experience of live orchestral music to under 7s. Working with Orchestras Live and the City of London Sinfonia, audiences of 2,500 enjoyed the award-winning programme.

We supported the Suffolk stages of the Men’s Cycle Tour 2017 and the Women’s Tour last year. The economic impact of hosting these large sporting events is significant, and they build our reputation as a great tourist destination.

Residents in Claydon were keen to take over the open space next to their homes which we managed in Station Road. Our rangers shared their practical knowledge of maintaining the green area to give confidence to the group to manage the area for future residents.

A successful £500,000 Suffolk-wide bid in April 2017 has meant that we’ve been able to improve our support to local victims of domestic abuse. For the first time, we’re able to provide accommodation specifically for victims of domestic abuse, working with Bury St Edmunds refuge to provide extra support to the victims.

Community Cash

We’re one of the first councils in the country to share with residents how and where money received from developers is spent locally. 44 community facilities, such as village halls and sports pavillions, have benefited from almost £220,000 of developer contributions. See which projects have been funded at:

www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/contributions

Wellbeing matters

“We’re proud to support activities which improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in our district.

Many of these use our wonderful natural environment, such as the popular weekly Great Run Local at Needham Lake and a range of walks as part of Suffolk’s annual Walking Festival.”

Cllr Diana Kearsley
Lead Member for Health
& Wellbeing





Improving home heating

In March 2018, Babergh and Mid Suffolk secured £475,200 from the Warm Homes Fund, a National Grid-funded organisation to help residents improve their home heating and tackle fuel poverty. We've installed 180 Air Source Heat Pumps to council properties providing heating and hot water. This lowers fuel bills and carbon emissions and requires little maintenance and no fuel deliveries.

In 2017, we secured £2.8 million to bring central heating systems and gas connections to around 500 households and help residents improve their home heating and tackle fuel poverty. The fund also supports extra insulation such as cavity wall and loft insulation in these homes to bring even more benefit.

Rapid vehicle charging points coming soon

As more drivers buy electric cars, we've supported the change by leading a project installing rapid electric vehicle charging points along the A12, A14 and A11. Funded by the Highways Agency, the points mean you can charge an electric vehicle in under an hour. They will be finished in 2019.



Making businesses greener

Through our membership of the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership securing £6.5 million of European funding, local businesses have received free advice and grants to help them become more energy efficient.

Since the launch in 2016, 35 businesses have had free audits which have identified measures that would save over £82,000 on energy bills and carbon dioxide emissions.



With over 246 families applying for a free tree for their newborn child, our scheme to green up the district and leave a growing legacy for future generations definitely left a positive impact on our environment. The idea was suggested by the Green Party and whole-heartedly supported by the council. Request yours here:

www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/treeforlife

"I am very proud of our efforts in creating the largest social solar scheme by a council in the UK. This has meant fitting more than 2,000 Solar panels to our council homes will save our tenants around £300,000 in energy bills in total a year. So far, we've generated enough energy to run an astounding 13,680 washing machines a year."

Cllr David Burn
Cabinet Member for Environment



Since July 2017, we've replaced 250-car park and street lights with energy saving LED lights, reducing annual running costs by a staggering...

75%

and lowering our carbon footprint by 43.2 tonnes of CO₂

FOOD HYGIENE RATING

0 1 2 **3** 4 5

GENERALLY SATISFACTORY

Taking food standards seriously

Almost 97% of food businesses in our area meet generally satisfactory food hygiene standards, rating three or above.

Over four years, seven local businesses have been convicted of serious food hygiene offences. This included the operator of a mobile food business, who repeatedly ignored advice from officers to improve food hygiene standards and was found guilty of eight food hygiene offences in 2016, fined £1,300 and also banned from managing a food business for three years.



With an average of one out of six meals eaten away from home, having local outlets with high quality healthy options is something we want to celebrate.

Together with Suffolk Public Health, we launched the Eat Out Eat Well award two years ago to encourage food businesses to promote their healthy alternative offers.

We're proud of the 14 gold awards across Mid Suffolk and Babergh, including Manor Farm Coffee Shop, Barham and Tickety Boo café in Thurston.



We've bin innovative

When it costs £300,000 every year to clear our main roads of abandoned litter, it's clear there is a problem.

The Government's Litter Innovation fund gave us the opportunity to test new bin designs in laybys to reduce littering from vehicles. Brightly coloured bins and solar powered signage make it harder for drivers to excuse night littering.

This saw litter drop by nearly 37% at sites with the new bins.

"You continue to rate our waste service highly. Our survey in 2018 shows 76.9% of residents are satisfied with our service."

Cllr Roy Barker
Lead Member for Waste



More of us recycling garden waste

Brown bin use has increased by

34%

in Mid Suffolk since 2015.

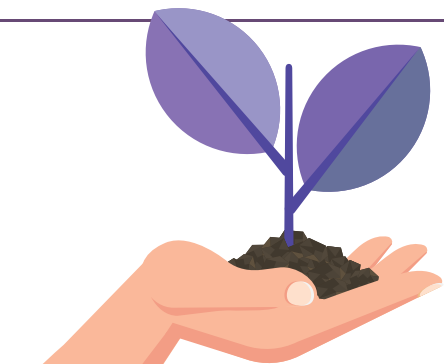
You can order yours here:

www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/mybin

Cleaning up anti-social behaviour

In the past four years, we have cleaned up over 850 incidents of fly tipping, prosecuting and fining offenders where possible. Fines of £8,500 have been imposed.

19 people have received fixed penalty notices with fines of £1,500 for littering and other waste offences. This includes the successful prosecution of an individual who dumped waste in two locations over the course of a month. In both instances, the fly-tipped waste included documents with address details of the offender within it.



Our five year plan

We know you want to see our market towns return to the hustle and bustle of days gone by and really thrive.

You told us what you thought was important to invest in Stowmarket in Our Vision for Prosperity to make it a destination town.

Our five year action plan has the backing of other partners who will work with us to deliver change in the town.

This year will see a major upgrade at The Regal, creating a new state of the art High School facility replacing the existing school and investment in a technology hub to attract IT businesses to the area.

5,000
jobs to be created
by 2021

Nationally, all business properties had their rates re-evaluated in 2017. For some, this meant a huge increase and threatened their viability. We have supported local businesses with over £200,000 to lessen the impact for our most affected businesses.

“Supporting our wide range of businesses to thrive and grow is vital to our economy. From improving skills and local job opportunities through to attracting significant investment, we’re committed to providing a place of growth for the future.

We’re proud to have supported large commercial developments in the past four years at Eye Business Park and Port One Logistics Park in Great Blakenham that have created local jobs.”

Cllr Gerard Brewster
Cabinet Member for Economy

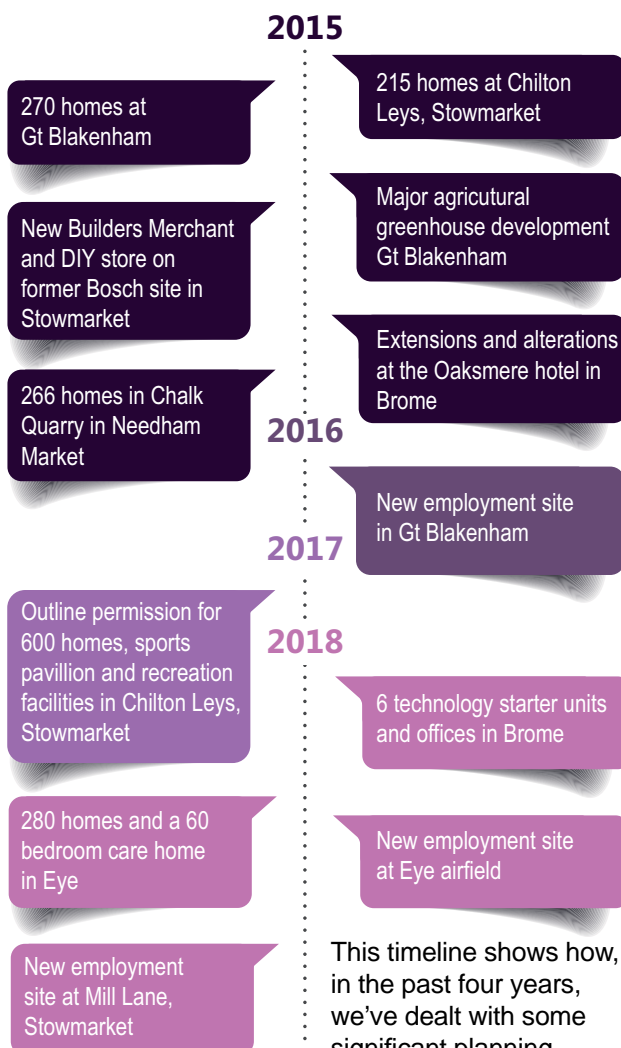


Open for business

We work hard with partners such as the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce and New Anglia Growth Hub to give the best support to our local businesses.

Our Open for Business strategy has enabled us to simplify the planning process to support expanding businesses, opened up grants for companies to grow successfully and boosted jobs growth in the district.

During the past four years, we’ve approved some significant planning applications that will improve our local area for jobs and growth in the economy.



This timeline shows how, in the past four years, we’ve dealt with some significant planning applications that will shape the future of our local area.

Looking after the pennies

Local government finance has been changing over the past few years. With reductions in funding from the Government, we have had to look elsewhere to fund vital public services. This includes investing in property to generate rental income which we invest back into services.



“Where other councils are struggling, Mid Suffolk is proud to be financially secure and less reliant on government support. As well as generating income through council tax and business rates, we bring in income from the properties we own and charging for commercial services.”

Cllr John Whitehead
Cabinet Member for Finance



Move to Endeavour House

“After consultation, Mid Suffolk and Babergh agreed to stop the huge expense of running two old buildings as our main offices and come together in one modern building in Ipswich.

This public service hub with Suffolk County Council and two Clinical Commissioning Groups has improved our partnership working and reduced unnecessary travel.

With Babergh, we expect to save £5.8 million from this move over the next decade, which we can then reinvest in the services you value the most.

Our previous offices in Needham Market will become much needed local housing and retail space.”

Cllr Nick Gowrley
Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Assets and Investments



Mix it up

There’s no tomorrow without investment today, and we know that equipping our young people with life skills and creating local job opportunities is vital.

The Mix in Stowmarket develops those skills in our 16-24 year olds through their support workers and career programmes and we’re proud to fund this work.

Planning ahead

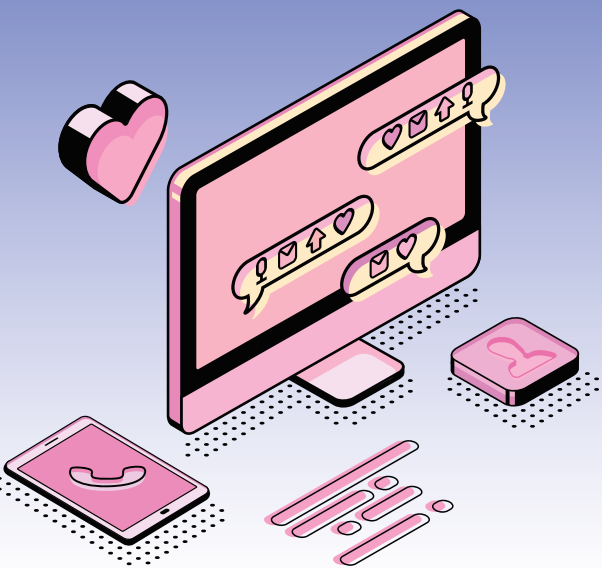
Your view matters

Together with Babergh District Council, we are developing a draft Joint Local Plan setting out the future of the district for the next 30 years. In 2017, we ran a consultation to get your first views on what matters to you and we received over 14,000 comments. You’ll be able to have a further say later this year.

Once the plan is complete, there will be an Examination in Public led by the Planning Inspectorate.

We passionately believe in investing in places and in 2018 we bought the former Natwest Bank and Aldi building in Stowmarket to help with the town’s regeneration.

We continue to consider the properties for a longer term arrangement.



Here for you

We're here when you need us and we've been busy making improvements to the ways you can get in touch with us.



@MidSuffolkDistrictCouncil



@MidSuffolk

More than
1.5 million
website
visitors over
four years

623,180
calls answered
in the past
four years

2,828
visits to our
new face to face
customer access
point in Stowmarket

81%
rated us as
excellent in our
customer service
at Stowmarket

Did you know?

In one year, we
process more than
**1.1 million
payments**

91%
of payments are made
online or automated

We collected
£57 million
in Council Tax in
2017-18 on behalf of
SCC, the Police, Town
and Parish councils
and ourselves

78%
of these
payments were
by Direct Debit



We now have one telephone number to replace the many we had before. Our average time to answer has reduced significantly, and our phones now open earlier in the morning to reflect when you need us most.

Our new and improved joint website, was launched in 2017 and makes it quicker and easier for you to find the information you need. We have created simple online forms so that you can do business with us 24/7, whenever is convenient for you.

All change!

The Boundary Commission for England has reviewed the electoral wards in Mid Suffolk to reflect the changes in populations in our towns and villages.

As a result, the number of Councillors representing Mid Suffolk will reduce from 40 to 34 from this May's elections, bringing fairer representation of your community.

Are you registered to vote?

www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/myvote

'Making sure our officers have the right tools for their jobs has a real impact on how we deliver services to you. We have saved money from working differently in the past four years, investing in technology to make it easier for staff to do their job wherever they are in the district. This means we have more time to help those that really need support.'

Cllr Suzie Morley

Cabinet Member
for Organisational
Delivery





Win

a family swim

We're proud of our community swimming pools in Mid Suffolk, and want to share them with you.

We're giving away 10 free family swims, and all you have to do to enter is give us your feedback on this edition of Your Council magazine using the link below.

It only takes five minutes to complete the survey, and in no time at all you could be getting active with the whole family.

Your Council

Useful Contacts



Our website enables residents to pay, report, and apply for things 24 hours a day.

www.midsuffolk.gov.uk



0300 123 4000

Mon - Fri: 08.45 to 17.00



Drop in to see us in Stowmarket (54 Ipswich Street, IP14 1AD), Monday - Thursday 09.00 to 17.00 or Friday 09.00 to 16.30.



For out of hours emergency repairs to council properties or to report dangerous structures:

0808 168 7794



To make a payment:

0845 372 4112

This will cost you 3p per minute plus your phone company's access charge

Other formats available

Please contact us if you would like a copy of this document in another format or language.

Feedback

Let us know what you think...

We're keen to know what you think about **Your Council magazine** as a way of keeping you informed.

Please give us your views by completing the short survey at:

www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/yourcouncil

It has cost 32p per household...

to print and send you this information, just over half the price of a second class stamp.

We have used a local printer and 50% recycled paper.

