

Cllr Isabelle Reece – Bures St Mary and Nayland Ward

District Council Report 2025 – An overview of some key areas

Annual Meeting of Babergh District Council - 12th May 2026

In accordance with the rolling coalition system, Cllr Deborah Saw, as Leader of the Greens, succeeded Cllr John Ward, as Leader of the Council. Cllr Ward is now Deputy Leader. Former Deputy Chairman, Cllr Lee Parker, has now assumed the Chair from Cllr Liz Malvisi, who has now been elected as Deputy Chairman.

I remain on the Planning Committee, the Community Governance Working Group and the Joint Advisory Committee & Partnership to Dedham Vale National Landscape (AONB)

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

Local government in Suffolk is going through its biggest change in 50 years.

Elections due this year for the Combined Mayoral Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk (Devolution) were halted by Central Government and will now not take place until 2028

From 2028, the government is replacing our current 'two-tier' council system, in which Suffolk County Council and the District councils deliver different services, with new 'unitary' councils, which will provide all local services. This is to streamline and simplify services.

After a series of debates, proposals and public consultations within all councils affected in Suffolk, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government decided to implement a Three Unitary system in Suffolk: the decision, as well as the process, has been controversial and somewhat divided along party political lines. The three unitary authorities in Suffolk will be:

- Western Suffolk
- Central & Eastern Suffolk
- Ipswich & Southern Suffolk

For more information on Devolution & LGR, there is a new website called Future Suffolk:
www.suffolklgrhub.gov.uk

Waste Collection & Recycling

The Council has been preparing for the changes to bin collections, including the purchase of new vehicles and the extra bins and food waste containers, which have now been delivered across our Ward, together with information packs. The new collection system starts the first week of June. Some residents have raised concerns about the changes, especially surrounding the reduced frequency of 'black bin' collections to every three weeks, as well as a perceived encouragement to waste food. For further informations see www.babergh.gov.uk/future-changes-to-bin-collections

Last August six electrical recycling banks were installed in Babergh striking new pink recycling bins can found in the two districts, where residents can dispose of their broken electrical items like coffee machines, kettles, mobile phones, tablets, and anything smaller than a 4-slice toaster. Unfortunately this service has had to be suspended, following a fire at the Thetford recycling facility, and the bins temporarily removed.

Babergh Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan

The Councils are continuing the full Joint Local Plan review and not a Part 2 Plan.

Following a second 'Call for Sites', a map has been published showing those offered

www.babergh.gov.uk/web/babergh/w/call-for-sites and during February and March the Councils invited comments on the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report to support the preparation Joint Local Plan. www.babergh.gov.uk/joint-local-plan

Local Listed Building Consent Orders

In October 2025 Babergh introduced a new Local Listed Building Consent Order – the first rural council in the country to achieve this. It makes sensitive improvements quicker and easier:

•**Secondary glazing on historic windows** - Grade II listed buildings can now have secondary glazing installed on historic windows without needing consent from the council, subject to certain conditions.

•**Replacement of windows in Grade II listed buildings** – Where original windows have already been replaced after receiving listed building consent, they can be replaced again, subject to conditions.

•**Replacement of an existing window in a modern extension to a listed building** - Windows in Grade II listed buildings can be replaced, or have secondary glazing installed, if they have previously received listed building consent, subject to conditions.

Guidance is available for homeowners www.babergh.gov.uk/llbco

Pylons

Babergh District Council has continued to voice its objections to the the “considerable and potentially devastating impacts” of National Grid’s Norwich to Tilbury project, with pylons proposed to cut through communities and countryside, including some of the districts’ most sensitive landscapes. At the Public Hearing of 11th February, Babergh Leader Cllr John Ward called for the project to be halted so that other options could be considered and costed. The Project is currently at the Examination Stage, which can take up to six months.

Parking Charges

The 20% increase in Parking Charges in Babergh Car Parks came into effect yesterday (18th May) Having previously stood against the introduction of charges my colleague Cllr Paul Clover and I had challenged the Cabinet decision on 6th January to increase charges at the January Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting. Many local business owner have provided evidence that their livelihoods were already being affected by the introduction of charges and now fear an even more significant downturn.

Biodiversity Action Plan

At the February meeting Cabinet approved its updated Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for 2026–2030 developed by a cross-party working group. The plan reaffirms its long term commitment to protect, restore, and enhance the district’s natural environment for generations to come and sets out how the council will continue to improve biodiversity on its own land, as well as the steps it will take to support communities, landowners and partners into the future with:

- creating healthier habitats and reversing habitat loss
- enhancing tree, hedgerow and wildflower planting
- expanding wildlife corridors and networks
- supporting wildlife recovery
- helping the district adapt to climate change
- increasing engagement and awareness of biodiversity and its importance

Cllr David Busby RIP

In July, we lost Cllr Dave Busby, who died on 27th, following a long illness. Together with then leader Cllr John Ward and co-deputy leader Cllr Deborah Saw, David was an integral part of Babergh’s coalition political leadership team. First elected in 2003, councillors described how he served his ward of Copdock and Washbrook with dedication and distinction. He continued to represent the Liberal Democrat party and serve as deputy leader and cabinet member without portfolio despite surgery and ongoing treatment as a result of a cancer diagnosis in 2023. Dave also served within the cabinet, on the joint constitution working group and represented Babergh on the Local Government Association Assembly. Cllr Ward said:

“Dave made an invaluable contribution to this council. He served his community and our district with distinction to the very end. He will be a huge loss to our council and his presence, wit and humour will be very much missed.”