

# What have we done for you?



**Babergh District Council**  
2019 - 2022 report



# Contents

<b>A message from our Leader and Chief Executive</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Our changing district</b>	<b>4-5</b>
<b>Real impact in our communities</b>	<b>6-7</b>
<b>We've helped make communities stronger, healthier</b>	<b>8-9</b>
<b>The environment and tackling climate change</b>	<b>10-11</b>
<b>Supporting business and our high streets</b>	<b>12-13</b>
<b>Celebrating innovation in our district</b>	<b>14-15</b>
<b>Our grants to the community</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Conversations with our customers</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Hundreds more homes for our district</b>	<b>18-19</b>
<b>During Covid-19, we were there with you</b>	<b>20-21</b>
<b>Helping during the cost-of-living crisis</b>	<b>22</b>

**Keep in touch**

[www.babergh.gov.uk](http://www.babergh.gov.uk)



**Babergh District Council**



**@BaberghDistrict**



**Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils**



**0300 1234000** to connect to any council service. Our phone lines are open from 8.45am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday. On Tuesdays, lines open at the slightly later time of 10.00am.



**Write to us** – Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX

We also have customer access points in Shotley and Sudbury, with face-to-face enquiries available by appointment only. Visit: [www.babergh.gov.uk](http://www.babergh.gov.uk) for more details.



# A message from our Council Leader and Chief Executive

Since 2011, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have answered the challenges facing local government by developing a new way of delivering council services.

In the last 11 years, we have saved £2million each year across the two councils by delivering our services under a joint Chief Executive and fully shared staff structure.

Over the last four years, Babergh District Council, working with our Mid Suffolk colleagues, has been on a journey to improve the way we do things.

This report aims to provide the opportunity to reflect on Babergh's performance, successes and awards since 2019. During this time, we have continued to deliver vital services for you despite the impact caused by the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic.

We are now focused on resetting following the pandemic and responding to the impact of global challenges on our communities such as the cost-of-living crisis and climate change.

We are buoyed by the fantastic support of local community groups, businesses, volunteers and partners with whom we work, and we could not be prouder of our dedicated councillors and staff, who work tirelessly to support our communities.



Cllr John Ward,  
Babergh District  
Council leader



Arthur Charvonia,  
Chief Executive,  
Babergh and Mid  
Suffolk Councils

**Find out who your  
local Councillor  
is on our website**





# Our changing district

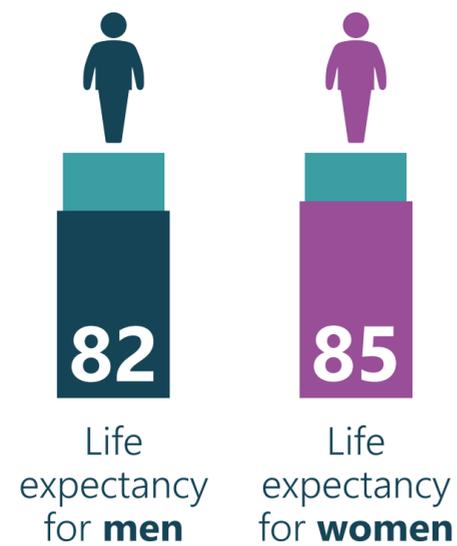
What changes have we seen in the Babergh district in the last decade? The 2021 census indicates some of the key trends, and helps identify some of the challenges faced.

Compared to data from a decade earlier, it shows the population is rising, albeit slower than the national average, and there has been a significant rise in over-65s.



Population up from 87,700 to 92,300 - a 5.2% rise, but that's lower than the England average of 6.6%.

## 2011 to 2021



By **2040**, the number of over-65s is expected to rise by **34%**, and over-75s up by **45%**

Number of local businesses has gone up from **4,280** in 2018 to **4,705** in 2021

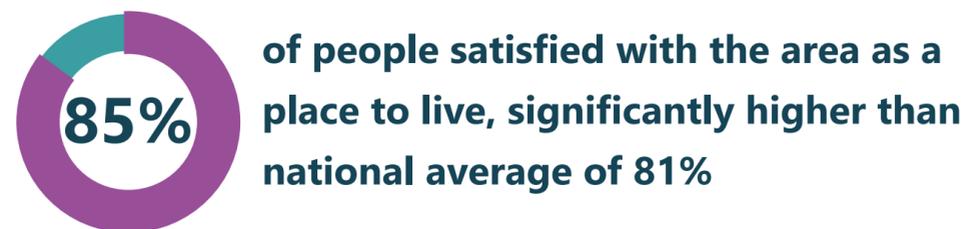


**Babergh is the seventh least densely populated of East Anglia's 45 local authority areas, with the equivalent of one person living on each football pitch-sized area of land**

## The outcomes we want for you

- All our customers are able to access high quality services and support.
- Families lead active, healthy, safe and independent lives, with children having the best start in life and adults managing their own health and wellbeing.
- We enjoy, value, enhance and protect our environment.
- Our places are known for strong growth in innovation and creativity, for being highly connected and sustainable with the best skilled workforce in the East.
- All our communities are attractive, successful and connected places for people to live and work.
- All our residents live in affordable and high-quality homes that enable them to build settled, safe and healthy lives.

## What you told us\*

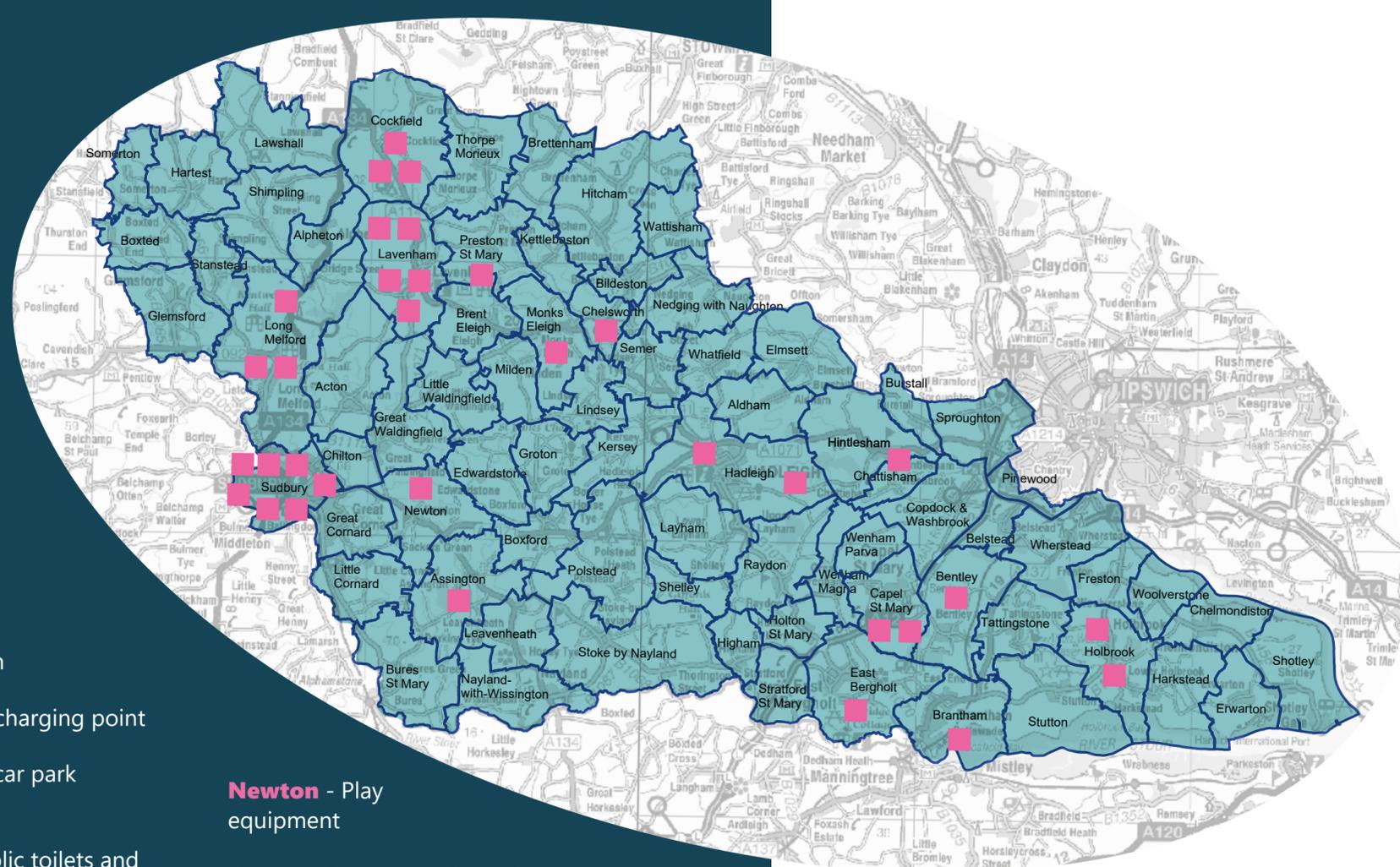


\*Residents' Survey, Summer 2022



# Real impact in our communities

These are the projects in our district supported by Community Infrastructure Levy funds since 2019. The levy is paid by developers of residential sites, with communities invited to make bids for funding.



**Assington** - Befriending scheme, providing toilets and disabled ramps

**Bentley** - Playing field, play and gym equipment

**Brantham** - Brooklands Primary extension

**Capel St Mary** - Bus shelter

**Capel St Mary** - Play area and additional parking

**Chattisham and Hintlesham** - Play area and adult fitness equipment

**Chelsworth** - Community facility, All Saints Church

**Cockfield** - Great Green open space

**Cockfield** - Bus shelter

**Cockfield** - Green Ridge Howe Lane open space

**East Bergholt** - Constable Memorial Hall improvements

**Hadleigh** - CCTV

**Hadleigh** - Health centre improvements

**Holbrook** - Village hall improvements

**Holbrook** - School extension

**Lavenham** - Electric vehicle charging point

**Lavenham** - Prentice Street car park improvements

**Lavenham** - Upgrade to public toilets and new room for parish office

**Lavenham** - Water Street car park

**Lavenham** - Community space at Tenter Piece Sheltered Accommodation

**Long Melford** - Old School car park upgrade

**Long Melford** - Village hall improvements

**Long Melford** - Village hall new car park

**Monks Eleigh** - Village hall new car park

**Newton** - Play equipment

**Preston St Mary** - Village hall extension

**Sudbury** - St Peters, community facility

**Sudbury** - CCTV

**Sudbury** - Gainsborough's House improvements

**Sudbury** - HVO fuel tank

**Sudbury** - Go Start Community Transport

**Sudbury** - Leisure centre CCTV

**Sudbury** - Community facilities at Gainsborough's House

Want to know how to bid for a Community Infrastructure Levy grant?



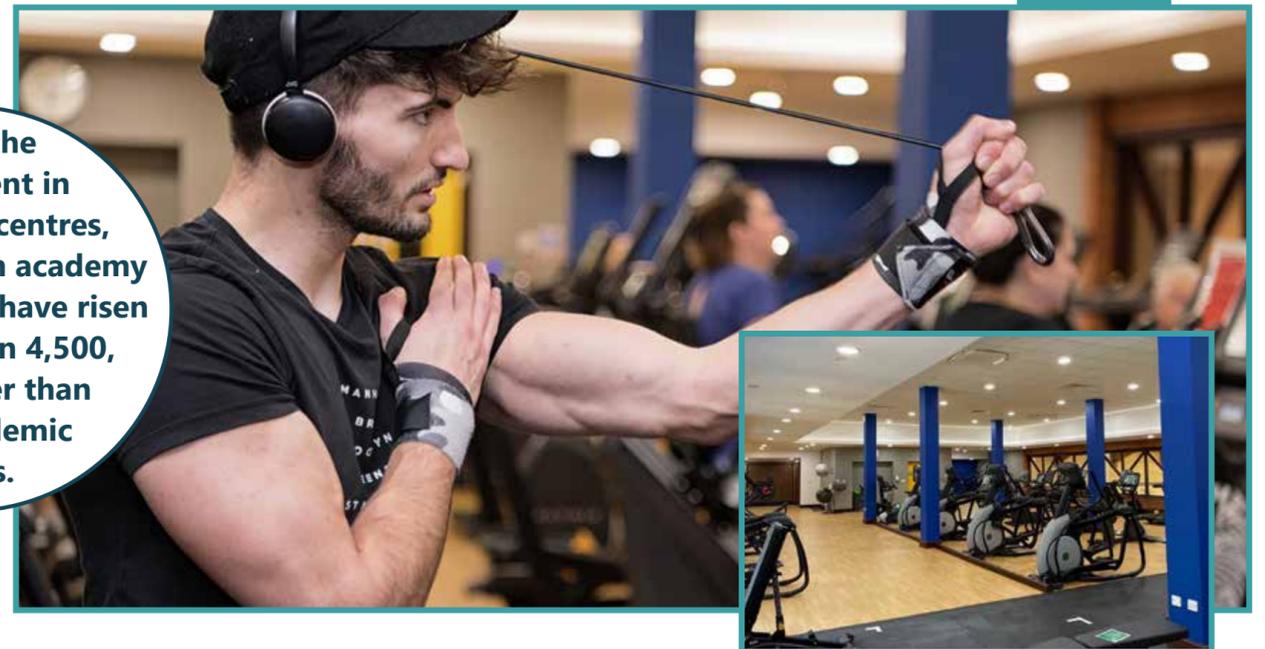
Total value of grants allocated 2019-2022 - **£2,301,350**

Neighbourhood CIL distributed to parishes in the last four years - **£2,211,023.41**

# Big investment in our leisure centres



Since the investment in our leisure centres, gym and swim academy memberships have risen to more than 4,500, 11% higher than pre-pandemic levels.



## Case Study #1

Hadleigh Pool and Leisure enjoyed a £2million investment, resulting in an impressive new 25-metre pool, sauna, improved changing, spectator seating and better disabled access.

The state-of-the-art facility, run by the council's partner Abbeycroft Leisure, has been warmly welcomed by the community since reopening in 2021.

Babergh District Council and Abbeycroft's investment was supported by Hadleigh Town Council (£200,000) and Sport England (£150,000).

Some of the design elements involved community input, including the sunshade at the front of the new pool, created by local artist Jo Chapman.

Hadleigh Pool and Leisure

## Case Study #2

Kingfisher Leisure Centre in Sudbury has also been transformed thanks to a major £2.4million revamp.

A new extension, with a fully refurbished gym and fitness studios, alongside better changing and toilet facilities were opened in 2020.

Babergh District Council and Abbeycroft Leisure made the investment which saw gym capacity increased to 100 stations from 40. There is also improved lighting and décor in the centre.

The modernisation programme included money provided through Community Infrastructure Levy fund.

Kingfisher Leisure Centre

# We've helped make communities stronger and healthier

We know the importance of digital inclusion, which is why we started a scheme for residents to borrow iPads from Suffolk libraries, and offer training.

We know loneliness can be debilitating, so commissioned Active Suffolk to deliver a project **addressing social isolation and inactivity** in Long Melford, Lavenham, Bildeston, Capel St Mary, East Bergholt, Glemsford, Holbrook and Shotley.

We know the value of a healthy start in life, so joint-funded work with **20 schools** across Babergh and Mid Suffolk with a higher prevalence of childhood excess weight at reception and year six.

We know the power of sport to inspire, so got behind the elite Women's Tour cycle race as it passed through our district in June 2022 - helping get schools involved, and showcasing the area. **45,000 people** watched, an estimated **71% said the event made them feel prouder of the area**, with 61% inspired to cycle more.

## 'I've improved my strength and balance'

We're working with Abbeycroft Leisure to grow the number of GP referral programmes at their leisure centres. These are helping people get healthier, tackle medical conditions and rehabilitate. People like Nigel Westwell, who was referred to Hadleigh Pool and Leisure due to his Parkinson's disease.



Photo Credit: SWpix



He said: "I was very concerned about my body strength, as most people with Parkinson's are susceptible to trips and falls.

'Before I joined the scheme I would often stagger when I walked, but now I have improved my strength and balance.'

## Cycling & Walking Friendly

Babergh published its first Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, alongside Mid Suffolk District Council.

The 10-year strategy identified and prioritised around 80 schemes or routes across all parts of Babergh to improve the safety, comfort and appeal of walking and cycling.

This list was developed through extensive public consultation, with over

1,800 contributions, about where and how infrastructure could be improved.

The district council continues to work with the highways authority and public rights of way teams at the county council to deliver on the plan.

# We've been there for families

In summer 2022 alone, children were booked onto nearly 2,000 activity sessions as part of the council's Holiday Activity Fund programme.

These inclusive, friendly sessions help children feel safe, relaxed and able to be themselves. They have proved successful for several years, including this Family Fun Day in Sudbury in summer 2021, where activities included archery, rock climbing, bread making, skateboarding and face painting. Dozens of youngsters were provided with lunch, too.

One parent said: *"It was so well organised. Everyone was so friendly and helpful, including the ice-cream man who made me feel okay to be handing over a voucher when others had to pay - he wasn't judgemental at all. The food inside our packed lunches was more than expected so we enjoyed a filling healthy lunch with some nice treats too."*

## 2021-22 in numbers

**124** families attended park cooking sessions

**186** children attended the 'Adventure Days' programme

**105** people attended 'Our Parks' programme

**289** children attended free swimming sessions





# Bee kind

Babergh District Council also started trialling wildflower verges. Grass cutting in specific council-maintained areas is reduced to give existing wildflowers a chance to thrive. Crucially, the flowers provide food for bees and other wildlife.

Initially, grass is left to grow to see which wildflowers already exist. The council then cuts and seeds the areas with flower mixes as needed.

## Terrific for trees - our pioneering study

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils became the first rural authorities in the UK to commission a full tree canopy survey in the districts.

Specialists identified and mapped existing tree coverage and habitat networks across the districts - the work forming part of our Biodiversity Action Plan.

The aim was to identify and protect existing places where biodiversity is thriving, while also locating areas with low coverage or gaps where it could be strengthened.

Carried out by Treeconomics, it found that just over 10% of Babergh is covered by trees, ranging from 5.5% in the Lavenham ward, to 19% in the Orwell ward.

## 2019-22



**Recycling increased 12% from our 'bring' sites - mainly glass, but also textiles.**



**Green waste subscribers increased 17% to 16,789.**



**More than 100 trees planted as part of the Queen's Green Canopy and our biodiversity action plan, and 780 metres of hedgerows.**



**Since 2021, we have given out nearly 3,000 bags of compost to residents.**



## Cutting our carbon emissions through innovation

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils became the first rural councils in the UK to start the switch from diesel to hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) to fuel its fleet of bin lorries.

Working with waste collection provider Serco, this decision has delivered a CO<sub>2</sub> reduction of 467,000kg - an **89% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction per kilometre**. The fleet had previously represented the biggest proportion of the councils' CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

**More than 500 solar panels have also been installed** on the roofs of Kingfisher Leisure Centre in Sudbury, and Hadleigh Pool and Leisure.

Combined with similar work at leisure centres and swimming pools in neighbouring Mid Suffolk, the £2.8 million measures are expected to **save 269.9 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e**, while also reducing the amount of energy needed to run the leisure centres.

There are also **40 solar covered parking bays** being installed at Kingfisher Leisure Centre. We are among the first rural UK councils to trial the technology, and hope that by championing innovation it will encourage others to follow suit.

## A 'Tree for Life' for all new parents

Since 2019, we have offered parents with a newborn or newly-adopted child the chance to plant a tree. The scheme is also available to parents who may have lost a child in the same period. Plant pot-grown trees are also available for those without access to a garden.

The initiative aims to boost tree coverage across the district, and in the last three years **471 trees** have been planted.

Through the gifting of trees, we are helping families give back to their communities as well as supporting the councils' commitment to tackle climate change and strengthening biodiversity.



Find out how to get involved



# Supporting business and our high streets

High streets connect communities, but they have faced unprecedented challenges during and since the pandemic.

To support them, we've launched several initiatives.

Our **Innovate Local scheme** was launched to create new business opportunities, increase visitor numbers and give start-ups a great place to trade.

It has three types of support:

- **Pilot market stalls for start-ups**
- **Creating permanent innovation hot desk spaces in rural market towns**
- **Creating pop-up innovation space in vacant units**

For example, the council offered free market stalls in Hadleigh for six months during 2021. We provided start-up business owners with the infrastructure - like gazebos, business support and advice - to start trading.

This work has been carried out with support from the Suffolk Inclusive Growth Investment Fund.

We also piloted **Virtual High Streets** in Sudbury in October 2020, connecting shoppers with 176 local traders through an online platform.

It has since been rolled out to other towns in Babergh and Mid Suffolk:

- **Hadleigh (65 businesses)**
- **Needham Market (39)**
- **Eye (19)**
- **Stowmarket (109)**

There were **52,000 online views** of businesses on the platform and to date we have generated more than **£500,000** of additional value for local, small businesses.

More than **40 businesses** have also accessed free digital support and training through a programme delivered in partnership with business support agency MENTA.



## Helping the local economy

- **£43,865,548** in Covid-19 business grants, including £15.2m to small businesses and £7.5m to retail, hospitality and leisure.
- **£1,718,500** of external funding secured for growth and climate change projects, including £750,000 to public sector decarbonisations and £400,000 to solar carports.
- **£1,964,216** in external government grants, with £1m used in shared prosperity fund and £621,369 in the Rural Development Fund.
- **137** young people aged 13-24 attended free Careeriosity events to connect with local employers.

# Driving economic growth across our district

## Sudbury Vision

We outlined ambitious plans for Sudbury at a public exhibition in June 2022, inviting residents and businesses to have their say.

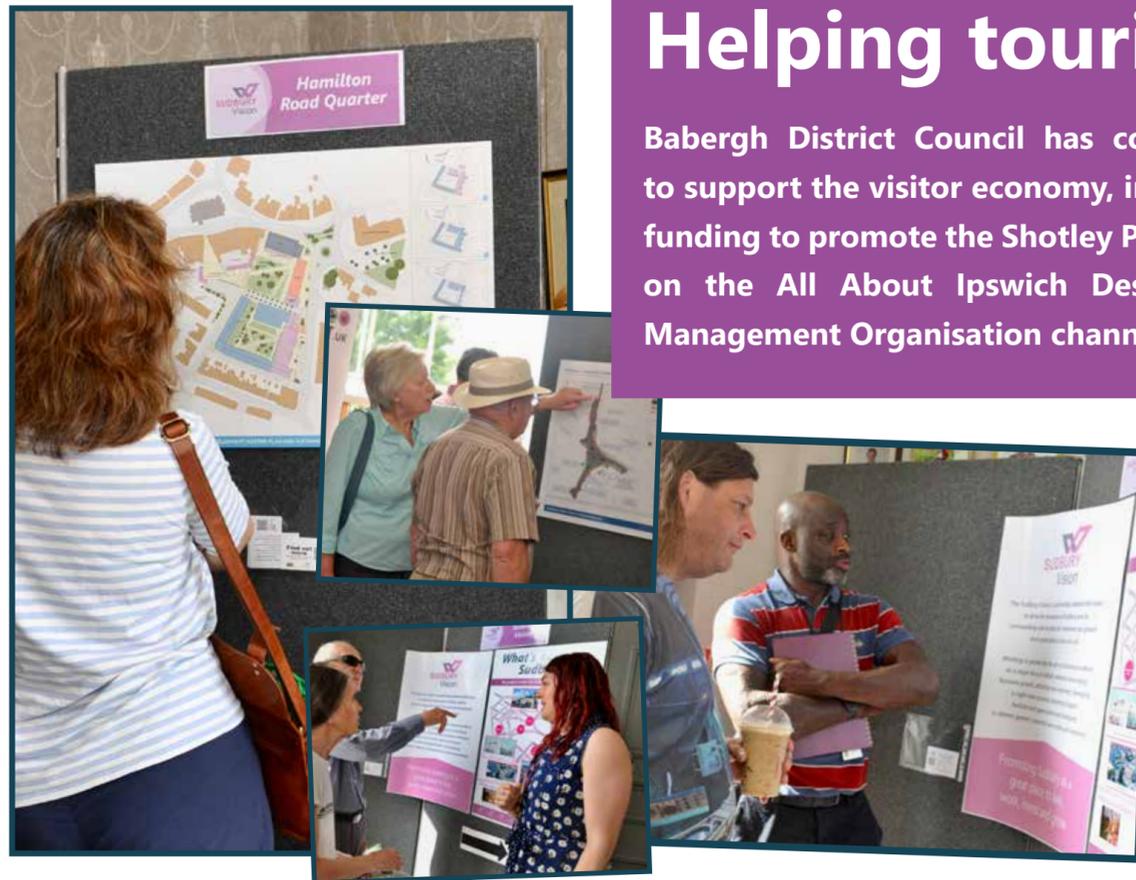
The Sudbury Vision programme, developed by the council and key town partners, is delivering key projects to enhance and support the economic growth and viability of the town.

These include development of Gainsborough's House, St Peter's Church, solar car ports at Kingfisher Leisure Centre as well as supporting the Sudbury Culture Group's work promoting the town's attractions and heritage.

Other proposals include plans for the future of Market Hill and new initiatives from the Bridge Project.

The latest plans for development of the Hamilton Road Quarter

Opportunities are being explored to create a leisure-led scheme featuring a cinema, hotel, retail and residential uses.



## Helping tourism

Babergh District Council has continued to support the visitor economy, including funding to promote the Shotley Peninsula on the All About Ipswich Destination Management Organisation channels.



## Babergh's got talent

We have started a youth enterprise challenge in some of our schools – including East Bergholt and Ormiston Sudbury.

## Bringing investment to Glemsford

We worked with key partners to help bring major investment to the former Philips Avent site in Glemsford.

The baby bottle production plant closed in July 2020, but in November 2020, Malaysian-owned chocolate company GCB Cocoa pledged to invest £62.2million into the plant, restoring 220 jobs.

The council worked with New Anglia LEP and South Suffolk MP James Cartledge on the project.



## Hadleigh Workspace

We plan to create new workspaces in Hadleigh, generating around 50 full-time jobs.

The site, on the A1071 at Ipswich Road, will support approximately 10 light industrial or workspace units for a range of uses - including by micro and start-up businesses.

The scheme follows a Menta report commissioned by Babergh District Council which identified the need for grow-on spaces for smaller firms.



# Celebrating *innovation* in our district

**Our Innovation Awards celebrate some of the trailblazing businesses in the district.**

**We held the awards in 2020, and most recently in October 2022.**

**On both occasions the finalists were a fantastic showcase for the talent helping to drive economic prosperity in Babergh.**

**The awards particularly look to identify businesses using innovative solutions, approaches and technologies to reach new customers, become more sustainable or grow their business.**

**The most recent awards were held at Wherstead Park, with**

**the 'Business Innovator of the Year' award going to Long Melford-based Queue Technology.**

**Headline sponsor Babergh-based LDH (La Doria), which selected the winner, said the firm not only demonstrated innovation throughout the pandemic but also made a real impact to local communities.**

**Queue Technology also scooped the gold Shooting Star award for demonstrating successful innovation with the development of a range of solutions such as the Virtual High Street, Queue Link and Queue Pay.**

**The award for Customer Service Innovation was presented to Events Under Canvas based in Capel St Mary for their digital first approach for customers including online floor**

**plan designs - allowing each customer to create their own bespoke glamping experience.**

**The High Street Innovation award went to Breakout Long Melford for the creation of a business and community hub supporting firms and cultural activities in the town.**

**The Innovation Awards were compered by Tim Robinson from Tech East.**

**Barry Fine, CEO of headline sponsor, LDH (La Doria), said: "The standard of entries to the Innovation Awards was incredibly high. It is inspiring to see businesses from many different industries making positive steps to embed innovation into how they work."**

*"The standard of entries to the Innovation Awards was incredibly high. It is inspiring to see businesses from many different industries making positive steps to embed innovation into how they work."*

2022

# INNOVATION Awards



## Winners & Finalists

### 2020 Awards

**Shooting Star Award**  
**Winner:** Halo Service Solutions  
**Finalists:**  
 Dough&Co Woodfired Pizza  
 Personal Training Centre

**Rising Star Award**  
**Winner:** Chloe Davis and Sophie Tapscott At The Mix  
**Finalists:**  
 Ellis Heighes Queue Technology Ltd,  
 Piers Brady, Orbital Media

**Tomorrow's World Award**  
**Winner:** Acorn Bots Ltd  
**Finalists:**  
 CAP Certified Ltd  
 Halo Service Solutions

**Innovation in Customer Service Award**  
**Winner:** West View IT Limited  
**Finalists:**  
 Andrew's Quality Butchers  
 Shotley Premier Stores and Post Office

**High Street Innovation Award**  
**Winner:** Ferguson's Deli  
**Finalists:**  
 Battleburys at the Kings Head  
 Duck In Boots

**Innovation in Sustainability Award**  
**Winner:** Modece Architects Ltd  
**Finalists:**  
 Carbon Charter - Groundwork East  
 Challs International Ltd

**Innovation in Healthcare Award**  
**Winner:** Personal Training Centre  
**Finalists:**  
 Guided Innovation  
 Gymphobics, Sudbury

**Future Food Award**  
**Winner:** Yum Yum Tree Fudge  
**Finalists:**  
 Acorn bots Ltd,  
 Applewood Acres Market Garden

**Innovation in Construction Award**  
**Winner:** Modece Architects Ltd  
**Finalists:**  
 Gorniak & Mckechnie Ltd Architects and Designers

**Most Innovative Micro Business Award**  
**Winner:** Modece Architects Ltd  
**Finalists:**  
 AVW Controls Ltd,  
 EO Escape Rooms Ltd

**Most Innovative SME Award**  
**Winner:** Challs International Ltd  
**Finalists:**  
 Halo Service Solutions  
 Orbital Media

### 2022 Awards

**Business Innovator of the Year Award**  
**Winner:** Queue Technology

**Shooting Star Award**  
**Winner:** Queue Technology  
**Finalists:**  
 Events under Canvas  
 Sniffe & Likkit Ltd  
 Softwood Self-Publishing

**Rising Star Award**  
**Winner:** Helen Su - Modece Architects  
**Finalists:**  
 Ella Gill - Fox Yard bar Ltd  
 Josh Partridge - Sell Beyond

**Tomorrow's World Award**  
**Winner:** Natural Building Systems Ltd  
**Finalists:**  
 Aquagrains Ltd  
 Queue Technology

**Customer Service Innovation Award**  
**Winner:** Events Under Canvas  
**Finalists:**  
 Breakout Long Melford  
 West View IT

**High Street Innovation Award**  
**Winner:** Breakout Long Melford  
**Finalists:**  
 Baked by Humphries  
 Queue Technology

**Sustainability Innovation Award**  
**Winner:** DXB Pump & Power Ltd  
**Finalists:**  
 Aquagrains Ltd  
 Burland Technology Solutions Ltd

**Healthcare Innovation Award**  
**Winner:** Virtually There Studio CIC  
**Finalists:**  
 Therapy Gyms Ltd  
 James White Drinks Ltd

**Construction Innovation Award**  
**Winner:** Natural Building Systems Ltd  
**Finalists:**  
 Caribbean Blinds UK Ltd  
 Modece Property Ltd  
 Obee CIC (Orchard Barn Environmental Education)



# How our grants help local organisations and the places you love

Babergh District Council provides funding to scores of community groups and organisations each year, with a range of different grants available for projects of clear community benefit.

And we provide funding to some of the best-known organisations in the district. They include:

- Citizens Advice
- Community Action Suffolk
- HomeStart in Suffolk
- Kernos Centre
- Quay Theatre
- The Bridge Project
- Rural Coffee Caravan
- Eden's Project

## 2019-22



£350,662 in capital grants allocated to 37 projects



261 grants to voluntary, community and social enterprise groups



33 projects receive minor grants totalling £27,509



£226,962 in Section 106 funds to support 18 projects



## Case study

Preston St Mary Village Hall received a £25,000 capital grant towards an extension containing toilets and an expanded kitchen.

It was a £200,000 project and also received funding from our Community Infrastructure Levy, the ACRE Village Hall Improvement Fund and the Co-op Community Fund.

# Conversations with our customers

Our customer services team has responded to more than 67,000 emails and answered nearly 400,000 calls in the last four years.

In January 2021, we also launched a chatbot and automated telephone service to help customers gain access to our services at a time that suits them. Since then, it has seen 36,272 interactions.

In 2019, we met with 146 customers to discuss the changes they want to see to our website - and those changes will be made in 2023.

We joined the Suffolk Information Partnership in 2021 to ensure our customer service and housing team could link people up with over 90 voluntary and statutory organisations. This has helped customers access services around skills, debt, and wellbeing.

In our customer satisfaction survey, we have scored an average of 4 out of 5 rating. We will continue to learn and improve.

Our teams make sure bins are collected, grass is cut, our tenants' homes are well maintained and the districts are kept clean.



# Tackling anti-social behaviour

Between 2021 and 2022, the council dealt with **173 anti-social behaviour cases**.

We've improved our systems to make it easier to report incidents, including a new online referral mechanism, greater profiling and communications.

In June 2022, our Community Safety Team took part in the National Anti-Social Behaviour Awareness Week, focusing on the impact on young people and engaging with the wider public about their vital role in tackling anti-social behaviour.

Alongside Suffolk Constabulary, we held three community engagement days in Sudbury, Stowmarket, and Eye.





Photo Credit: Simon Watson

# Hundreds more homes for our district

In the last four years **333 affordable homes** were delivered of which **165 were new council homes**. Of the new council homes, 99 were for affordable rent and 23 for social rent. We also sold and delivered **43 new homes** for shared ownership and 54 existing council homes through the right to buy scheme, with this boost to the housing supply helping many residents to find a place to call home.

One scheme, at Angel Court in Hadleigh (pictured above), **delivered 21 flats** for social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership.

But the work doesn't stop. We have a scheme under way in Corks Lane, Hadleigh, due for completion in 2024. The buildings are being sympathetically restored to deliver **57 new homes**.

## Expertise in creating award-winning homes

The council's Building Control Team won awards for its work on property schemes in the district in 2022.

The team ensures home improvements and developments are in line with the UK's building regulations - it can advise planning applicants on all parts of their builds to make sure they are to the highest professional and environmental standards.

This work was recognised at the regional final of the Local Authority Building Control Building Excellence Awards in September 2022.

Angel Court, in Hadleigh, was named best small development, while Low Street in Glemsford took the best small new housing development title.

The winning schemes will move onto the national finals in London in January 2023.

### 2019-22



**1,187 homes approved via planning applications.**



**Only 1.4% of Babergh planning decisions have been overturned on appeal in a two-year period - well below the Government's 10% threshold.**



**We are judged against the Government's 'Housing Delivery Test', which looks at the number of homes delivered compared to the number required.**



**We continuously overperformed - from 123% in 2019 to 141% in 2021.**

# Central Suffolk Lettings



We developed Central Suffolk Lettings (CSL) to increase access to good quality homes in the private rented sector for eligible residents.

We've formed partnerships with **50 private letting agents and 50 private landlords**, and supported hundreds of people.

Since its inception in 2020 up to October 2021, we housed more than **90 homeless households**.

In November 2021, we were **assisting 131 homeless households** to secure private accommodation across Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

But the help goes far beyond just a home.

The case of one domestic violence victim illustrates the extent of support

'Miss N' had been a victim of domestic violence from her husband since the start of their arranged marriage when she was 14.

CSL matched her to a one-bedroom house with a garden, but also:

- Worked alongside health partners to help her.
- Assisted her in furnishing the new home.
- Supported her to open a bank account, apply for Universal Credit, and learn how to save.
- Set up her rent account and showed her how to pay.
- Made weekly visits to support her to be independent once again.

## 'I lost everything I owned - but the council changed my life'

*Mr P said: "I was street homeless. I had lost everything I owned. I am now disabled due to spinal surgery and suffer with mental health issues. I was taken off the streets and housed by Babergh and Mid Suffolk in emergency accommodation and was then moved to Sudbury in shared accommodation under the care of Alannah and Carrie. This is when my life changed dramatically.*

*'Their professionalism, passion and honesty have been a huge factor in my current situation. I have now moved into a bungalow of my own through the Gateway to Homechoice system, my mental health is stable, and I feel now that having them in my corner, anything is possible. Without them and the accommodation, I have no doubt I would not be here now. You have two ladies who have changed my life completely.'*

## 2019-22



**24 homeless households accommodated under the 'Everyone In' government scheme at the start of the pandemic.**



**180 households helped via Disabled Facilities or Minor Adaptation grants totalling £799,596.**



**587 cases of homelessness supported.**



**£61,556 of welfare benefits secured by our Tenancy Support Team, boosting the incomes of those struggling financially.**



# During Covid-19, we were there with you...

We gave financial help to foodbanks in Sudbury, and Hadleigh.

Our grants supported new and existing groups to cover staff costs, volunteer expenses, utility bills and food purchasing.

We worked in partnership with other Suffolk councils to offer an app and phonenumber to connect volunteers to those who needed help.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils provided £1.6m to local community organisations assisting with the pandemic response.

Our Communities Team also led a 'Knock and Check' campaign over Christmas 2020 to ensure people stayed connected, warm and with enough food. We linked up with parish councils and local partners.

Across 2020 and 2021, the council helped businesses by providing nearly 8,500 Covid-19 grants, amounting to £43,865,040 in financial support.

This ranged from people who had difficulties getting groceries, medication, and essential household goods, to those affected by isolation, loneliness or bereavement. By the end of September 2021, the helpline had received 14,850 calls.



# VIRTUAL HIGHSTREET.UK



## What we learned from the pandemic

We showed how we can respond at pace to extraordinary challenges, while lockdown also accelerated our digital development.

It meant, for example, we could provide platforms such as the ['Virtual High Street'](#) to support business and use digital resources to reduce isolation in communities.

[Watch our video explaining more about the initiative.](#)



Most of our services successfully moved online. We also developed our empowering approach to our staff, using more online wellbeing sessions to give them freedom to act and the opportunity to be heard.

We also saw our local communities step up magnificently, and this showed what can be achieved when people are empowered. Our grants helped many local groups carry out important work.

## Our Covid-19 related housing support

During the first lockdown, we supported **106 rough sleepers** and allocated **348 properties** across Babergh and Mid Suffolk districts, working hard to ensure properties were ready to let.

We visited former rough sleepers who had recently moved or were about to move to a permanent accommodation, to ensure they could maintain their tenancies.

We also assisted **561 households** who were faced with financial difficulties by securing **310 food parcels**, **120 furniture items** and **£15,913 in charitable grants** and supported **352 tenants** as they faced furlough, redundancy, and financial uncertainty, helping to secure **£67,302 in benefit support**.

In summer 2021, Suffolk Public Sector Leaders earmarked **£1million** towards housing, homelessness, rough sleeping, and addressing inequalities.



# In the cost-of-living crisis, we're here with you

We live in extraordinary economic times, and the cost-of-living crisis will impact on everyone in different ways.

In response, we developed a five-point action plan in May 2022.

We want to ensure people get the help they are entitled to, work with our partners in Suffolk to provide targeted support, give advice, and do what we can to prevent people falling into crisis.

For example, we successfully supported 31,983 households using the government's Council Tax Energy Rebate - a total of £4,797,450 spent under the main scheme, and £29,700 in discretionary payments.

And we are working with partners and community groups to set up 'Warm Spaces' where people can go if they are concerned about heating costs at home.

We've been offering one-off grants to organisations so they can keep buildings open without passing on increased costs to the community, or provide activities/entertainment.



## Our five-point action plan

# Influencing the Suffolk system

We don't work in isolation. We help lead Suffolk-wide action which makes a difference to people's lives.

Babergh, for example, is part of the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders Group.

This coordinated countywide support through Covid-19, has helped the most vulnerable, improved community safety, tackled climate change, and fought for fairer funding for Suffolk.

Here are some of the things it has achieved:

- **Helped fund a new literacy project to get young people reading in Suffolk.**
- **Invested funds into Screen Suffolk to bring more TV and film shoots to the county, boosting the economy.**
- **In May 2022, committed £1million to help Suffolk's hardest-hit families during the cost-of-living crisis.**
- **Pledged millions helping Suffolk recover from the pandemic.**
- **Helped fund the Domestic Abuse Champions project, with 870 people signing up.**
- **Funded a three-year program to tackle criminal exploitation, with 20 'County Lines' removed from Suffolk in first year.**
- **Helped fund a new Fuel Poverty Retrofit Delivery Team to make thousands of Suffolk homes more energy efficient.**

Babergh is a member of the Suffolk Growth Partnership, which discusses key economic issues, and the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership. This supports residents and businesses to reduce carbon emissions, and realise the economic benefits of cutting energy use.

Our chief officers and leadership team also work with partners in the health, housing and children's safeguarding sectors.

In 2022, the Local Government Association commended Babergh for punching above its weight in influencing the wider Suffolk system and this partnership working.

It said the council was well respected in the region, with partners saying there had been a noticeable step change in Babergh's aspirations in the last three years.



## Our awards

### 2021

- **iESE Gold award for our Virtual High Street initiative**
- **iESE Silver award for Service Improvements**
- **iESE Bronze award for Council of the Year**
- **Highly commended at the MJ Awards for our housing services**

### 2020

- **iESE Silver award for the best use of digital and technology**

### 2019

- **iESE Bronze award in the Intelligent Council category for work on the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 agreements, making them more transparent and accessible for residents.**