**Parish Report – November 2024**

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**Instilling community pride and celebrating the heritage of each town and village within its district is the focus of a £50k scheme from Mid Suffolk District Council, making its return this winter.**

The Pride in Your Place grant will award funding for a variety of projects which seek to promote local identity, explore the district’s heritage and history, tidy up the environment and help people be proud of where they live.

The grant, which was first launched last year, is open for town councils, parish councils and local voluntary, community, faith and social enterprises (VCFSE) organisations to apply for.

Grants of between £250 and £5,000 may be applied for, allowing for more significant projects to take place across the district.

Eligible projects include, but are not limited to, the following:

• Planting

• The development of local history, heritage culture

• The purchasing of village signs

• The purchasing of seating and benches for community spaces

• Maintenance or enhancement of open public spaces

• The purchase of equipment to enable the maintenance of open public spaces, including community litter picks

<https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/community-funding>

**Winter fuel payments cut / Cosy Homes**

The main concern for pensioners living in rural areas is that many will not be on mains gas and are, therefore, exposed to extra costs. Historically, the winter fuel payments have helped these residents to keep up with their outgoings, but now many are having to face the reality that heating their homes is becoming unaffordable.

Pension Credit is open to those over pension age who find it difficult to manage their household costs. It is worth (on average) £3,900 per year and unlocks additional support, including winter fuel payments, full Housing Benefit, council tax reduction and more.

Additionally, Pension Credit claims can be backdated by up to three months, as long as there is entitlement during that time. This means that the latest date to qualify and apply for a winter fuel payment is 21 December, 2024.

Another way that residents in Mid Suffolk can receive support is through the council’s ‘Cosy Homes’ scheme, which helps eligible applicants improve the energy efficiency of their home and subsequently save on their bills.

The scheme has been designed to raise the EPC rating of properties that currently have a grade of D or below up to a C, using measures such as loft insulation, cavity wall insulation or mechanical ventilation to do so.

**New planning guidance to ensure local housing needs are met and future agricultural development is sensitive and sustainable.**

The two supplementary planning documents (SPDs) adopted at both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council meetings this week, set out clear expectations of those looking to develop within the districts.

The Housing SPD lays out more detail on the number and type of new properties required by each district on sites, ensuring the right mix to meet housing need, including adequate provision of affordable housing.

The Intensive Livestock and Poultry SPD puts measures in place so intensive farming can sensitively coexist within the districts’ rural communities as a valued part of our economy.

The new planning documents follow the adoption of Part 1 of the councils’ Joint Local Plan last year – the blueprint for the future development in the districts.

The SPDs support the implementation of the Joint Local Plan, which enables the councils to spell out the detailed steps that planning applicants need to take in order to be considered for planning approval within Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

The Housing SPD not only stipulates the number of affordable housing to be included within each development, but also ensures that they are integrated across the site rather than grouped together.