

District Councillor Report – Harry Richardson

1st February 2026

<p>Councils call for urgent reform of sewage sludge regulations</p>	<p>At recent council meetings, Babergh and Mid Suffolk councillors voiced serious concerns about the presence of hazardous substances in sewage sludge—such as “forever chemicals” (PFAS), microplastics, pharmaceuticals, and hormone-disrupting agents. Many of these contaminants are not covered or regularly checked under the current regulations, which date back to 1989.</p> <p>This follows heightened anxiety in Suffolk after independent tests in late 2025 revealed that water at a sewage sludge processing site near Wattisham air base—run by contractors for Thames Water—contained ammonia levels more than 170 times above the recommended safe limit, posing a significant threat to local aquatic life.</p> <p>In response, Suffolk County Council issued a temporary stop notice in December 2025. The Environment Agency also inspected the site twice, finding the operator in breach for failing to seal the area and prevent contaminated runoff from entering ditches, soil, and groundwater. This week, the council escalated its action by serving a permanent stop notice. Unless the operator appeals, they have one month to clear the site.</p> <p>With strong backing from councillors, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have now formally acknowledged the dangers posed by unregulated contaminants in sewage sludge. They will write to the Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), urging for tighter controls to protect public safety.</p> <p>The councils are calling on the government to stop chemical producers and companies from dumping industrial waste into sewage sludge and to invest in research for safer, sustainable alternatives for agriculture. In the meantime, Defra is warning farmers about the risks of accepting sludge from water company contractors.</p>
<p>Boosting biodiversity by funding nature</p>	<p>Mid Suffolk District Council has introduced a new Community Nature Recovery Grant, offering up to £50,000 for projects that aim to protect and expand wildlife corridors and habitats within the district. Eligible initiatives include tree planting, creating wildflower meadows, and other environmental efforts to safeguard natural spaces for future generations.</p> <p>The scheme encourages collaboration with charities, environmental groups, schools, and local councils to restore natural ecosystems and provide opportunities for residents to reconnect with nature. Each project can submit one application per year, and the deadline for the first round of funding is Monday, 16 March. For more information or to apply, visit the Mid Suffolk District Council community funding page: visit the Mid Suffolk District Council community funding page.</p>
<p>Find out how much heat your home is losing</p>	<p>Sustainable Suffolk and the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership—which includes Mid Suffolk District Council—have previously lent thermal cameras to community groups through their “Keep the Heat” project. These cameras helped volunteers identify where heat was escaping from homes and businesses, leading to cold buildings, higher energy bills, and unnecessary carbon</p>

emissions.

Thanks to the project's success, Suffolk residents can now borrow a thermal camera for free from their local library. Anyone over 18 with a library card can take thermal images of their own home. Simply sign up for a free Suffolk library card, collect a camera from Ipswich County Library or reserve one online, and follow the included step-by-step guide to take your pictures. After use, return the camera so others can benefit.

There's no obligation to make energy efficiency improvements, but Sustainable Suffolk offers free advice on simple fixes—like draught excluders and thermal curtain linings—and provides a booklet highlighting grants and support for bigger upgrades, such as loft insulation. Mid Suffolk residents may also be eligible for up to £5,000 in funding through the council's Cosy Home initiative.

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