

District Councillor Report – Harry Richardson

4th January 2026

<p>Warm Homes Suffolk</p>	<p>Warm Homes Suffolk is a collaborative initiative led by Suffolk County Council and East Suffolk Council, in partnership with Ipswich Borough Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, Babergh District Council, and West Suffolk Council. In November 2025, Suffolk County Council secured £1.38 million from the government’s Warm Homes Local Grant Fund.</p> <p>Residents and landlords are encouraged to apply soon, as the funding must be distributed by the end of March 2026. The grant provides free energy-saving upgrades—such as wall and loft insulation, solar panels, or air source heat pumps—to homes that are energy inefficient. To qualify, applicants must either have a low income, receive certain benefits, or live in specific postcode areas.</p> <p>Eligibility requirements for Suffolk homes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The property must be privately owned (by the resident or their landlord). • The home must have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D, E, F, or G (this can be checked during the application process). • Household income should generally be £36,000 a year or less. However, those earning more may still qualify if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ They live in designated postcode areas (parts of Beccles, Felixstowe, Ipswich, Lowestoft, and Stowmarket). ○ Someone in the household receives certain benefits. ○ A household member has a severe or long-term health condition made worse by living in a cold home. <p>Once eligibility is confirmed, an assessment will determine the most suitable improvements for the property, which will then be installed free of charge by approved contractors.</p> <p>To check if you qualify or to learn more, visit https://www.warmhomessuffolk.org/ or call 03456 037 686.</p>
<p>Gateway 14 Community Benefit Fund</p>	<p>The Gateway 14 Community Benefit Fund has been established to help local community groups deliver projects that make a real difference in their area. Each year, £30,000 will be available for the next three years.</p> <p>Organisations located within five miles of Gateway 14 can apply for grants to cover either running costs or capital expenses, with funding available for up to 100% of a project’s total costs. The fund welcomes a wide range of projects, provided they support at least one of the following themes: skills and education, sustainability, environment, innovation, or sport.</p> <p>Applications are now open, and groups can request up to £5,000 for their initiatives. The fund is supported by Gateway 14 Ltd, a private company owned by Mid Suffolk District Council.</p> <p>This fund’s launch follows the recent opening of the Bauder distribution centre</p>

	<p>at Gateway 14 in July, with Assan Panel, a Turkish building materials manufacturer, set to join the site soon. Construction is also progressing on the £18 million Stowmarket Innovation Gateway—a modern, three-storey, 35,000 sq ft centre owned by Mid Suffolk District Council. This facility will offer office space for fast-growing start-ups, areas for collaboration and innovation, training and meeting rooms, and a café.</p> <p>The deadline for the first round of funding applications is 1 March 2026.</p>
<p>£1.5m town centre fund</p>	<p>About a year ago, Mid Suffolk District Council launched the Stowmarket Town Centre Gateway Fund, using proceeds from its investment in Gateway 14 on the town’s outskirts.</p> <p>In the first round, the fund provided £125,000 in match funding for a new community darts venue, The Bull Room, on Tavern Street, and £615,000 towards a major restoration and expansion at the John Peel Centre.</p> <p>The scheme has now reopened for new applications, creating opportunities for new businesses in the town centre. The council is working with landlords to bring under-used properties, including empty shops, back into use. This may involve purchasing properties for short-term rental or supporting refurbishments for new business ventures.</p> <p>The fund also helps potential tenants find suitable locations, making it easier for new businesses, pop-ups, and other ventures to launch their first premises. Mid Suffolk District Council is collaborating with partners such as Stowmarket Town Council, private owners, businesses, and prospective tenants to find long-term solutions.</p> <p>The council is especially interested in attracting arts and cultural activities, tourism, community events, retail, small business workspaces, leisure, food and drink, and any initiatives that bring something new to the town. All bids will be reviewed by technical and stakeholder panels before a decision is made</p>

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