

District Councillor Report – Harry Richardson

September 2026

Stowmarket market-day parking	Mid Suffolk District Council's Cabinet will consider proposals on 8 September to provide four hours of free parking in council-owned short-stay car parks on Thursday or Saturday afternoons, or both, to support Stowmarket's market days and increase town-centre footfall. The proposal follows a review of the town's car parks and is part of 19 suggested changes. These include aligning short-stay charges at £1.50 for three hours, introducing a £2 four-hour tariff, removing the two-hour tariff in long-stay car parks, increasing the all-day charge from £2.50 to £3, and installing more ticketless machines while retaining cash payment. The Council manages seven public car parks and one lorry park in Stowmarket. The wider intention is to shift shorter visits towards short-stay car parks, where there is generally more capacity, and ease pressure on long-stay spaces used by town-centre workers.
Affordable housing in Bramford	On 5 August, councillors received the keys to the final two affordable homes at Bellway's Bramford development, completing the handover of all 67 properties to Mid Suffolk District Council. The development provides a mix of rented and shared-ownership housing, including one and two-bedroom flats, two-bedroom bungalows and three-bedroom family homes. The final two three-bedroom properties will be offered for shared ownership to help lower-income purchasers onto the property ladder. The homes were transferred through a Section 106 planning agreement, under which affordable housing is delivered alongside private-sale properties. The completion supports the Council's continuing investment in meeting demand from households on the housing register and residents priced out of the open market.
Sports facilities in Stowmarket	Work was completed in August on a new 3G community football pitch and 200-metre mini athletics track in the grounds of Stowmarket High School. The scheme was delivered on budget and ahead of schedule. The facilities will be managed by Everyone Active and available to the community outside school hours, with bookings due to open in September through its website and app. The running track is the first England Athletics NewGen MiniTrack of its kind in the country, while the football pitch uses cork infill as part of a Football Foundation research project examining alternative pitch systems. Funding came from the Premier League, The FA and the Government's Football Foundation, alongside Mid Suffolk District Council and Section 106 developer contributions. A community open day is planned for the October half-term, and the Council is also pursuing funding for a multi-use games area and progressing plans for a new sports pavilion at Chilton Fields.
Community and environmental	Former Fisons site: The Council has funded mobile CCTV cameras at the derelict former factory in Paper Mill Lane, Bramford, following repeated fires,

updates	vandalism, trespass and community concern. Although security remains the responsibility of the landowner, Paper Mill Lane Properties, the Council is exploring further measures to require improvements. The site contains potentially unstable structures, accumulated waste and evidence of fly-tipping, and its previous redevelopment permission has lapsed. Norwich to Tilbury: In a joint closing statement to the examination, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils repeated their objection to National Grid's proposed 159km overhead-line project. The route includes 21km of underground cabling and up to seven compounds. While some improvements to construction practice and ecological management have been secured, the councils consider that significant questions remain about impacts on communities, businesses, biodiversity, food production, tourism, heritage and landscape, and continue to call for alternatives such as an undersea route or more extensive undergrounding to be fully assessed. Heat-pump scheme: Suffolk's public-sector organisations have partnered with Switch Together to offer residents a free, no-obligation proposal for replacing ageing gas, oil, LPG or inefficient electric heating with an air-source heat pump. Eligible homeowners and small businesses may receive a Government Boiler Upgrade Scheme grant of £7,500, rising to £9,000 for properties currently heated by oil or LPG, together with group-buying savings. Applicants need a valid Energy Performance Certificate with no outstanding major insulation recommendations; the grant is not means-tested and is managed by the installer. Registration opened on 24 August, with applications invited by 16 October.
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