

# DISTRICT COUNCIL

## REPORT TO THE 2015 HEMINGSTONE PARISH ANNUAL MEETING

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The bulk of this report is written in the period leading up to May's District Council elections, a period called "Purdah", and is therefore not written in the same format as the previous three years. Instead some quotes have been taken directly and verbatim from the Mid Suffolk District Council's "End of Term Report". That report was produced by various officers of Mid Suffolk to be factual and free from any political 'spin'.

The End of Term Report.... tells the story of how two sovereign councils, served by one dynamic workforce, have worked together to turn the major financial, demographic and social challenges that our communities face into opportunities to do things differently and better. By working together across teams and service areas we have been trying to focus on delivering key outcomes for our communities in Mid Suffolk and Babergh in a way that would have been impossible for either council to have achieved alone.

In response to the financial challenges we face we adopted a more strategic approach rather than by reducing budgets by small incremental steps. We consulted our communities, analysed community data, identified what matters to our communities and focused on these outcomes – and are shifting the organisation to deliver them.

Last year Mid Suffolk and Babergh agreed a joint Strategic Plan for the years 2014-19. This joint document set out how we, and the communities we serve, can shape the future for the better. This can be found on our website at [www.midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk). The Government's expectation is that local civic leaders will shape and drive the growth in our economy and address the national housing shortage at a local level. This is now a critical part of our local agenda with more money for local services expected to come from growth in our council tax base, new homes bonus and business rates.

The vision identified by your Councillors "We will work to ensure the economy, environment and communities in Mid Suffolk continue to thrive and achieve their full potential". This is underpinned by three priority areas, economy and environment, housing, and strong and healthy communities. These priorities have been translated into a joint Delivery Plan which contains a range of projects designed to achieve the outcomes and to ensure our districts don't just survive the challenges but actually thrive.

Some items on the May 2014 to April 2015 timeline:-

May 2014 – new houses to replace 90 non-traditional Unity houses in Stowmarket, Haughley and Woolpit with 150 modern, thermally efficient homes

June 2014 – residents provided crucial information as part of a Suffolk-wide Housing Needs Survey

July 2014 – The first Council Tenants began to benefit from solar panel installation on council properties helping to alleviate fuel poverty and carbon reduction. We are in the process of installing solar panels on the roofs of more than 2,000 council houses. The result will be around £7.5m in new income from the Government's Feed In Tariff over the next 20 years.

October 2014 - 90% of local people told the councils that they were satisfied with the councils' services. Residents also made suggestions for improvement.

November 2014 - Residents were able to put a greater volume and a wider range of materials into their recycling bins after the introduction of the new materials recycling contract with Viridor.

February 2015 - Planning permission is granted for the first new council homes to be built for 30 years, providing much needed affordable homes for residents.

April 2015 - Tenants experiencing change of circumstances able to more easily access alternative housing tenures as a result of Flexible Housing Tenures.

Your District Councillors for the period of this report and prior to the election in May were Martin Redbond and John Whitehead.

The District Council elections took place on May 7<sup>th</sup>, the same day as the General Election. Following the election on 7<sup>th</sup> May your District Councillors for a four year term to 2019 are James Caston and John Whitehead. We can be contacted by e-mail at [james.caston@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:james.caston@midsuffolk.gov.uk) and [john.whitehead@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:john.whitehead@midsuffolk.gov.uk) or by telephone on 01473 833279. The composition of the District Council following the election is Conservative & Independent Group 31 members, Green Party 5 members, Liberal Democrats 4 members. There was no change in control.