

What have we done for **you?**



Mid Suffolk District Council
2019 - 2022 report



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Keep in touch

www.midsuffolk.gov.uk



Mid Suffolk District Council

@MidSuffolkDistrict

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils

0300 1234000 to connect to any council service. Our phone lines are open from 8.45am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday. On Tuesdays, lines open at the slightly later time of 10.00am.

Write to us – Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX

We have a customer access point in Stowmarket, with face-to-face enquiries available by appointment only.
Visit: www.midsuffolk.gov.uk for more details.

A message from our Council Leader and Chief Executive

It has been an extraordinary four years. Our communities have faced the impact from a series of global challenges which few of us could have predicted.

This report is an opportunity to reflect on how we have risen to those challenges.

You will read how we supported many thousands of residents and businesses during through the Covid-19 pandemic.

We outline the innovative action we are taking to deal with the climate emergency.

And, as the cost-of-living crisis continues, we talk about how we have been helping residents in need.

But this report is not just about how we have dealt with the challenges. It is a celebration of the outstanding work done by the council in all areas - including planning and housing, driving economic growth and delivering a vision for our district and its communities.

I am immensely proud of the work done by our council officers and the Conservative administration in the last four years.

Since 2011, Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils have answered the challenges facing local government by developing a new way of delivering council services.

In the last 11 years, we have saved £2million each year across the two councils by delivering our services under a joint Chief Executive and fully shared staff structure.

Over the last four years, Mid Suffolk District Council, working with our Babergh colleagues, has been on a journey to improve the way we do things.

This report aims to provide the opportunity to reflect on Mid Suffolk's performance, successes and awards since 2019. During this time, we have continued to deliver vital services for our customers despite the impact caused by the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic.

We are now focused on resetting following the pandemic and responding to the impact of global challenges on our communities such as the cost-of-living crisis.

We could not be prouder of our dedicated councillors and staff, who work tirelessly to support our communities, and we are buoyed by the fantastic support of local community groups, volunteers and partners with whom we work.



Cllr Suzie Morley,
Conservative leader
of Mid Suffolk
District Council



Arthur Charvonia,
Chief Executive,
Babergh and Mid
Suffolk Councils





Our changing district

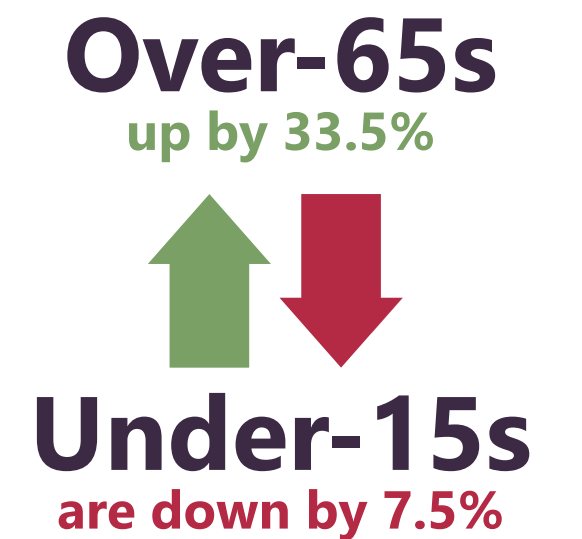
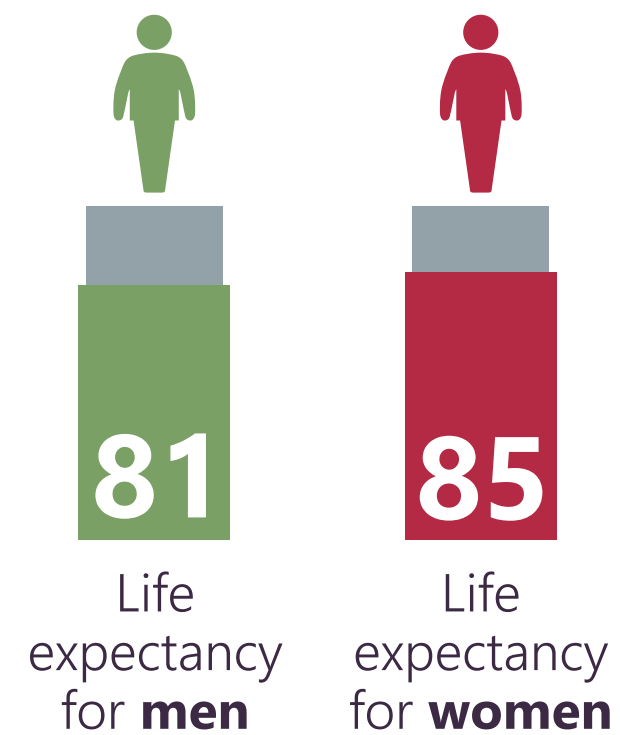
What changes have we seen in the Mid Suffolk district in the last decade? The 2021 census indicates some of the key trends, and helps identify some of the challenges faced.

Compared to data from a decade earlier, it shows the population is rising, albeit slower than the national average, and there has been a significant rise in over-65s.



Population up from 96,700 to 102,700 - a 6.2% rise, but that's lower than the England average of 6.6%.

2011 to 2021



We have reached our **highest employment levels** among 16-64-year-olds - up from **44,000** in 2011 to **49,000** in 2020

Number of people at NVQ Level Four and above up from **16,500** in 2011 to **23,400** in 2021.

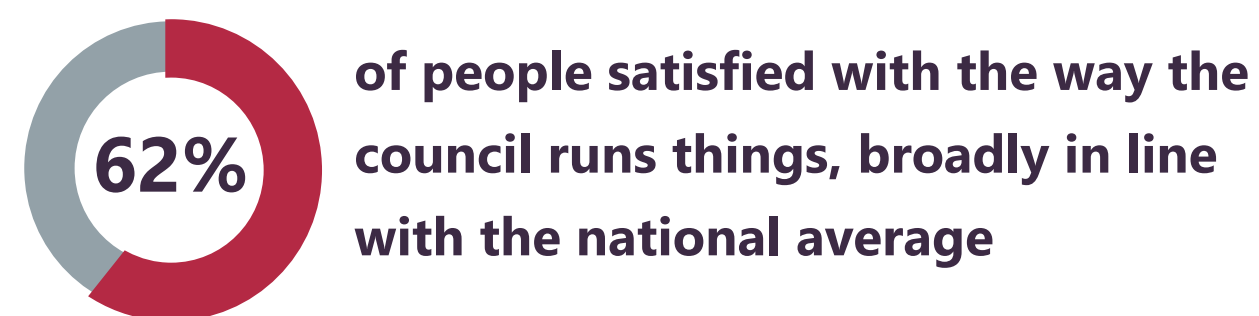
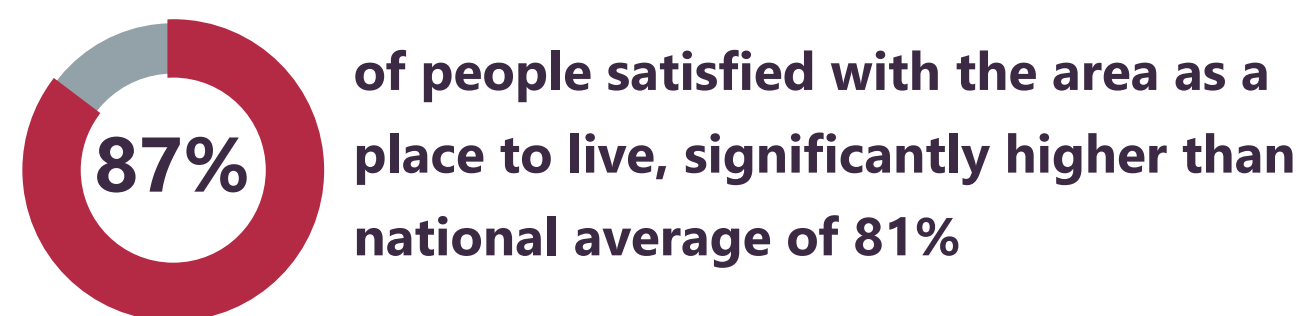
Number of local businesses has gone up from **5,015** in 2018 to **5,515** in 2021



The outcomes we want for you

- All our customers are able to access high quality services and support
- Families lead active, healthy, safe and independent lives, with children having the best start in life and adults managing their own health and wellbeing.
- We enjoy, value, enhance and protect our environment
- Our places are known for strong growth in innovation and creativity, for being highly connected and sustainable with the best skilled workforce in the East
- All our communities are attractive, successful and connected places for people to live and work
- All our residents live in affordable and high-quality homes that enable them to build settled, safe and healthy lives.

What you told us*



*Residents' Survey, Summer 2022



Real impact in our communities

These are the projects in our district supported by Community Infrastructure Levy funds since 2019. The levy is paid by developers of residential sites, with communities invited to make bids for funding.

Bedfield - New play area

Botesdale - Community facility - entrance infrastructure and picnic tables

Botesdale - Play Area

Bramford - Primary school funding

Claydon - Primary school funding

Debenham - Community centre funding

Debenham - Leisure centre car park

Elmswell - Chamberlayne Hall community facility

Elmswell - Primary school

Eye - Play facilities

Framsden - Play area

Gislingham - Running track

Haughley - Crascall Pavillion car park

Haughley - Storage unit, Crascall Pavilion

Mendlesham Health - Admin hub, clinical capacity, EV charging

Occold - Village hall enhancement extension

Rickinghall - All wheel sports area

Ringshall - Play area

Ringshall - Village hall work

Stowmarket - Community club

Stowmarket - Creation of emergency services hub

Stowmarket - Creting Road depot

Stowmarket - EV charging point

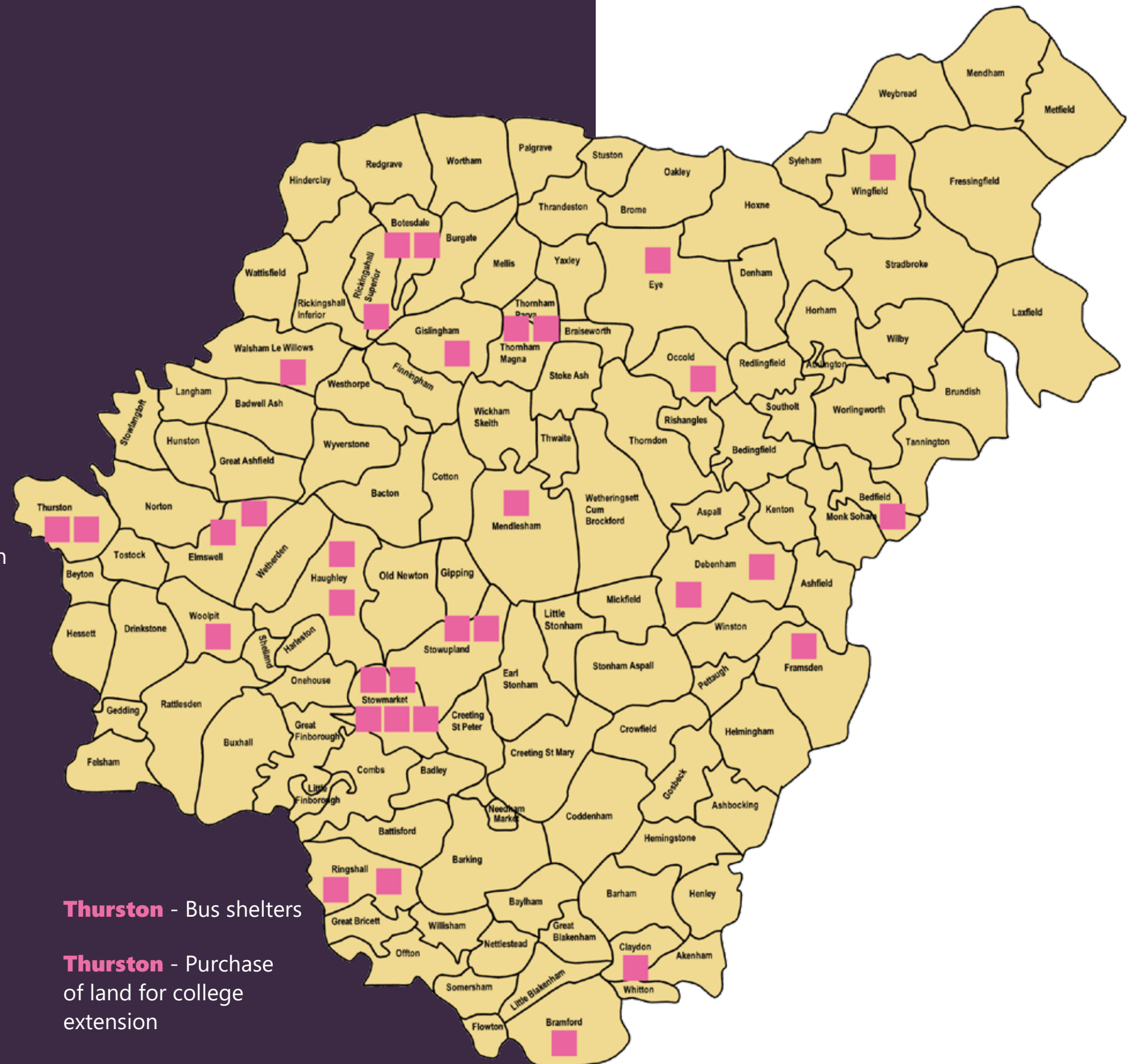
Stowmarket - The Food Museum Crack Wood project

Stowupland - Noticeboard

Stowupland High School expansion

Thornham - Car park

Thornham Walks - Overflow car park



Thurston - Bus shelters

Thurston - Purchase of land for college extension

Thurston - Rail feasibility study

Walsham le Willows - Play area

Wingfield - Conversion of barn to children's nursery

Woolpit - Car park

Want to know how to bid for a Community Infrastructure Levy grant?



■ Total value of grants allocated 2019-2022 - **£8,677,501.18**

■ Neighbourhood CIL distributed to parishes in the last four years - **£5,322,516.11**

Exciting additions and improved facilities



Cafe is fabulous addition to beauty spot

The Duck and Teapot Café opened at Needham Lake in spring 2022, and has proved a hit with visitors.

It is part of our Invest in Needham Market programme, delivering a series of projects for the town.

Managed by the team behind Cabbages and Kings, the popular café

at The Mix in Stowmarket, it has been a welcome addition to Needham Lake - Mid Suffolk's most popular free attraction.

Designed to complement the natural surroundings, the café meets the council's climate change ambitions with a number of environmental features.

These include the introduction of solar panels, sustainable drainage, an air source heat pump, bird boxes, whilst using sustainable building materials as part of the construction.

The Duck & Teapot Café



A fresh new look for fitness suite

Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre in Stowmarket underwent a £2.2m upgrade and extension.

An extension to house a newly-refurbished fitness suite, doubling the number of stations, was included in the work as well as refurbished

showers and toilets in the fitness changing rooms.

Updated poolside railings and glass barriers, and the introduction of Poolview technology to support lifeguards, were also installed.

Mid Suffolk District Council made the investment in the centre, which is managed by leisure provider Everyone Active.

Stradbroke Pool and Fitness also saw an equipment refresh.

Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre



A new library for our community

As part of the new housing development being delivered by the council at the former middle school site in Needham Market, a new library was provided.

The library features a children's area, with a special sensory wall and more dedicated space for children's events and activities, such as Wordplay and story time sessions for young children.

We've helped make communities stronger and healthier

We know the importance of digital inclusion, which is why we started a scheme for residents to borrow iPads from Suffolk libraries, and offer training.

We know loneliness can be debilitating, so commissioned Active Suffolk to deliver a project addressing **social isolation and inactivity** in Stradbroke, Fressingfield, Debenham and Eye.

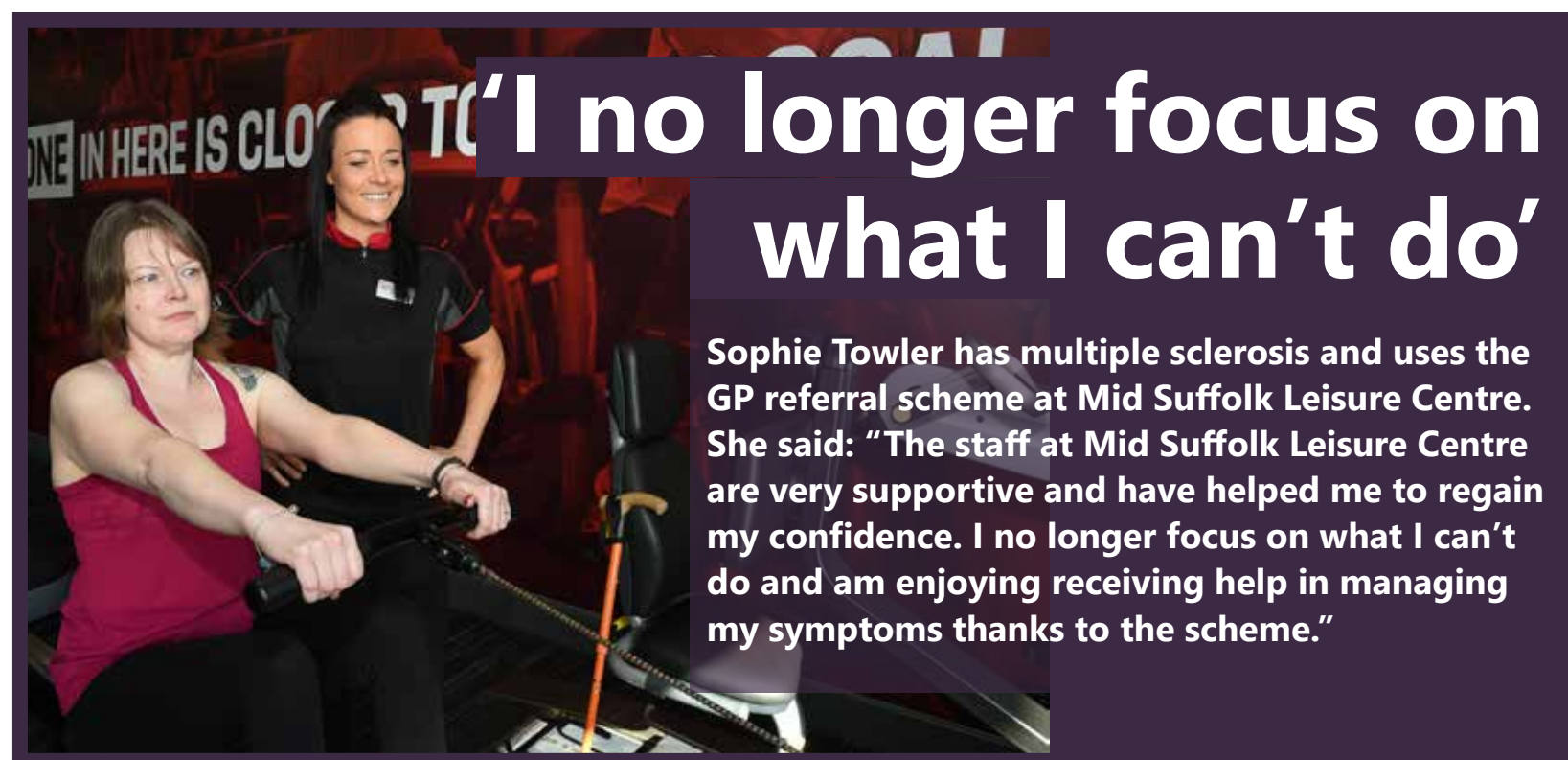
We know the value of a healthy start in life, so joint-funded work with **20 schools** across Babergh and Mid Suffolk with a higher prevalence of childhood excess weight at reception and year six.

We know the power of sport to inspire, so got behind the elite Women's Tour cycle race as it passed through our district in October 2021 and June 2022 - helping get schools involved, and showcasing the area. **45,000 people** watched, an estimated **71% said the event made them feel prouder of the area**, with 61% inspired to cycle more.

We're working with Everyone Active to grow the number of GP referral programmes at local leisure centres. These are helping people get healthier, tackle medical conditions and rehabilitate. This programme is available at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre in Stowmarket, and is launching at Stradbroke Pool and Fitness Centre.



Photo Credit: SWpix



I no longer focus on what I can't do'

Sophie Towler has multiple sclerosis and uses the GP referral scheme at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre. She said: "The staff at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre are very supportive and have helped me to regain my confidence. I no longer focus on what I can't do and am enjoying receiving help in managing my symptoms thanks to the scheme."

Cycling & Walking Friendly

Mid Suffolk published its first Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, alongside Babergh District Council.

The 10-year strategy identified and prioritised around 80 schemes or routes across all parts of Mid Suffolk to improve the safety, comfort and appeal of walking and cycling.

This list was developed through extensive public consultation, with over 1,800

contributions, about where and how infrastructure could be improved.

The district council continues to work with the highways authority and public rights of way teams at the county council to deliver on the plan.

We've been there for families

In summer 2022 alone, children were booked onto nearly 1,200 activity sessions as part of the council's Holiday Activity Fund programme.

These inclusive, friendly sessions help children feel safe, relaxed and able to be themselves.

They have proved successful for several years, including this Family Fun Day in Stowmarket in 2021, where activities included archery, rock climbing, bread making, skateboarding and face painting. Dozens of youngsters were provided with lunch, too.

One parent said: *"The amount of free activities on offer for everyone was fantastic but the fact that we got a fantastic free lunch (including an ice cream voucher!) was the icing on the cake - all morning my son was asking for an ice-cream but I couldn't afford it, so the voucher was an amazing surprise, thank you!"*

2021-22 in numbers

169 children attended the 'Adventure Days' programme

147 families attended the 'Family Park Cooking' sessions

117 people attended 'Our Parks' programme

61 children attended free swimming sessions





Bee kind

Mid Suffolk District Council also started trialling wildflower verges. Grass cutting in specific council-maintained areas is reduced to give existing wildflowers a chance to thrive. Crucially, the flowers provide food for bees and other wildlife.

Initially, grass is left to grow to see which wildflowers already exist. The council then cuts and seeds the areas with flower mixes as needed.



Terrific for trees - our pioneering study

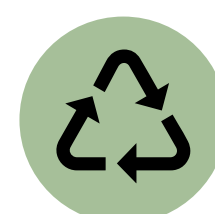
Mid Suffolk and Babergh Councils became the first rural authorities in the UK to commission a full tree canopy survey in the districts.

Specialists identified and mapped existing tree coverage and habitat networks across the districts - the work forming part of our Biodiversity Action Plan.

The aim was to identify and protect existing places where biodiversity is thriving, while also locating areas with low coverage or gaps where it could be strengthened.

Carried out by Treeconomics it found that Mid Suffolk's coverage sits at just over 8% ranging from 6% in the Stow Thorney ward to 12.8% in the Claydon and Barham ward.

2019-22



Recycling increased 10% from our 'bring' sites - mainly glass, but also textiles.



Green waste subscribers increased 17% to 18,189.



Nearly 300 trees planted as part of the Queen's Green Canopy and as part of our biodiversity action plan, plus 1,100m of hedgerow.



Since 2021, we have given out nearly 3,000 bags of compost to residents.



Cutting our carbon emissions through innovation

Mid Suffolk and Babergh Councils became the first rural councils in the UK to start the switch from diesel to hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) to fuel its fleet of bin lorries.

Working with waste collection provider Serco, this decision has delivered a CO2 reduction of 467,000kg - an **89% CO2 reduction per kilometre**. The fleet had previously represented the biggest proportion of the councils' CO2 emissions.

More than 500 solar panels have also been installed on the roof of Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, and over 100 at Stradbroke swimming pool and fitness centre.

Combined with similar work at leisure centres and swimming pools in neighbouring Babergh, the £2.8 million measures are expected to **save 269.9 tonnes of CO2e**, while also reducing the amount of energy needed to run the leisure centres.

We are also installing **70 solar covered parking bays** at Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre, with work nearing completion.

They will generate electricity on site, and provide up to 23.7% of the leisure centre's annual electricity demand. They will also power up to eight new electric vehicle charging points.

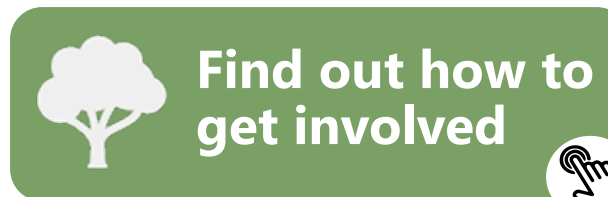
We are among the first rural UK councils to trial the technology, and hope that by championing innovation it will encourage others to follow suit.

A 'Tree for Life' for all new parents

Since 2019, we have offered parents with a newborn or newly-adopted child the chance to plant a tree. The scheme is also available to parents who may have lost a child in the same period. Plant pot-grown trees are also available for those without access to a garden.

The initiative aims to boost tree coverage across the district, and in the last three years **471 trees** have been planted.

Through the gifting of trees, we are helping families give back to their communities as well as supporting the councils' commitment to tackle climate change and strengthening biodiversity.



Supporting business and our high streets

High streets connect communities, but they have faced unprecedented challenges during and since the pandemic.

To support them, we've launched several initiatives.

Our **Innovate Local scheme** was launched to create new business opportunities, increase visitor numbers and give start-ups a great place to trade.

It has three types of support:

- **Pilot market stalls for start-ups**
- **Creating permanent innovation hot desk spaces in rural market towns**
- **Creating pop-up innovation space in vacant units**

For example, the council offered free market stalls in Stowmarket for six months during 2021. We provided start-up business owners with the infrastructure - like gazebos, business support and advice - to start trading.

This work has been carried out with support from the Suffolk Inclusive Growth Investment Fund.

We also piloted **Virtual High Streets** in October 2020, connecting shoppers with local traders through an online platform.

It has since been rolled out across Mid Suffolk and Babergh:

- **Needham Market (39)**
- **Stowmarket (109)**
- **Eye (19)**
- **Hadleigh (65)**
- **Sudbury (176)**

There were **52,000 online views** of businesses on the platform and to date we have generated more than **£500,000** of additional value for local, small businesses.

More than **40 businesses** have also accessed free digital support and training through a programme delivered in partnership with business support agency MENTA.



Helping the local economy

- **£43,865,548** in Covid-19 business grants, including £15.2m to small businesses and £7.5m to retail, hospitality and leisure.
- **£1,718,500** growth and climate change grants, including £750,000 to public sector decarbonisations and £400,000 to solar carports.
- **£1,964,216** in external government grants, with £1m used in shared prosperity fund and £621,369 in the Rural Development Fund.
- **137** young people aged 13-24 attended free Careeriosity events to connect with local employers.

Driving economic growth across our district

Gateway 14 bringing thousands of jobs to Mid Suffolk

Work is under way to create the Gateway 14 business, innovation and logistics park on the edge of Stowmarket, next to the A14.

In October 2022, the first unit - for retail giant The Range - received detailed planning permission, with work on that starting in early 2023.

The homes, garden and leisure products retailer will operate from a bespoke sustainable logistics unit, bringing more than 1,600 jobs to the area.

Gateway 14 Ltd is owned by Mid Suffolk District Council. Gateway 14 Ltd are delivering the development with development partner, Jaynic. The site is part of the low-tax Freeport East designated area.

Accessibility through and around the development is a key feature, with significant walking and cycling routes being integrated along with access to public transport links and local amenities.

There will be high-quality landscaping, green corridors and nesting boxes introduced to support wildlife and ecology, and create a vibrant, sustainable, attractive working environment.



Fantastic new facilities coming to Stowmarket

The Stowmarket sport, health, education and leisure facilities (SHELF) project is set to bring huge benefits to the district.

Stowmarket was identified in our leisure, sport and activity strategy as being in need of more facilities, prompting this joined up approach with partners.

The site includes the existing sports fields in north-west Stowmarket, around the high school and Chilton Fields.

It has been a collaboration between Mid Suffolk District Council and many stakeholders, including Suffolk County Council and Stowmarket High School, while we have also invited the public to comment and influence the plans.

The proposals include:

- A 4G football pitch
- Multi-use 2G pitch
- Mini athletics track
- Sports pavilion
- Multi-use games area
- Four indoor sports courts
- New cricket square and nets
- Multi-agency wellbeing hub available for use by partners and the local community
- Current parking facilities at Chilton Fields will also be reshaped





Celebrating *innovation* in our district

Our Innovation Awards celebrate some of the trailblazing businesses in the district.

We held the awards in 2020, and most recently in October 2022.

On both occasions the finalists were a fantastic showcase for the talent helping to drive economic prosperity in Mid Suffolk.

The awards particularly look to identify businesses using innovative solutions, approaches and technologies to reach new customers, become more sustainable or grow their business.

The most recent awards, held at Wherstead Park, saw double success for Palgrave-based Natural Building Systems Limited win the Construction Innovation and Tomorrow's World awards.

Helen Su, from Stowmarket-based Modece Architects, won the Rising Star award, while DXB Pump and Power Ltd, in Elmswell, took the Sustainability Innovation award.

The Virtually There Studio CIC, which is based in Stowmarket and produces exhibitions, events and educational opportunities to improve digital

literacy and help people reconnect with nature, took the Healthcare Innovation title.

The Innovation Awards were compered by Tim Robinson from Tech East.

Barry Fine, CEO of headline sponsor, LDH (La Doria), said: "The standard of entries to the Innovation Awards was incredibly high.

"It is inspiring to see businesses from many different industries making positive steps to embed innovation into how they work."

"The standard of entries to the Innovation Awards was incredibly high. It is inspiring to see businesses from many different industries making positive steps to embed innovation into how they work."



INNOVATION Awards

Winners & Finalists

2020 Awards

Shooting Star Award
Winner: Halo Service Solutions
Finalists:
 Dough&Co Woodfired Pizza
 Personal Training Centre

Rising Star Award
Winner: Chloe Davis and Sophie Tapscott At The Mix
Finalists:
 Ellis Heighes Queue Technology Ltd,
 Piers Brady, Orbital Media

Tomorrow's World Award
Winner: Acorn Bots Ltd
Finalists:
 CAP Certified Ltd
 Halo Service Solutions

Innovation in Customer Service Award
Winner: West View IT Limited
Finalists:
 Andrew's Quality Butchers
 Shotley Premier Stores and Post Office

High Street Innovation Award
Winner: Ferguson's Deli
Finalists:
 Battleburys at the Kings Head
 Duck In Boots

Innovation in Sustainability Award
Winner: Modece Architects Ltd
Finalists:
 Carbon Charter - Groundwork East
 Challs International Ltd

Innovation in Healthcare Award
Winner: Personal Training Centre
Finalists:
 Guided Innovation
 Gymophobics, Sudbury

Future Food Award
Winner: Yum Yum Tree Fudge
Finalists:
 Acorn bots Ltd,
 Applewood Acres Market Garden

Innovation in Construction Award
Winner: Modece Architects Ltd
Finalists:
 Gorniak & McKechnie Ltd Architects and Designers

Most Innovative Micro Business Award
Winner: Modece Architects Ltd
Finalists:
 AVW Controls Ltd,
 EO Escape Rooms Ltd

Most Innovative SME Award
Winner: Challs International Ltd
Finalists:
 Halo Service Solutions
 Orbital Media

2022 Awards

Business Innovator of the Year Award
Winner: Queue Technology

Shooting Star Award
Winner: Queue Technology
Finalists:
 Events under Canvas
 Sniffe & Likkit Ltd
 Softwood Self-Publishing

Rising Star Award
Winner: Helen Su - Modece Architects
Finalists:
 Ella Gill - Fox Yard bar Ltd
 Josh Partridge - Sell Beyond

Tomorrow's World Award
Winner: Natural Building Systems Ltd
Finalists:
 Aquagrains Ltd
 Queue Technology

Customer Service Innovation Award
Winner: Events Under Canvas
Finalists:
 Breakout Long Melford
 West View IT

High Street Innovation Award
Winner: Breakout Long Melford
Finalists:
 Baked by Humphries
 Queue Technology

Sustainability Innovation Award
Winner: DXB Pump & Power Ltd
Finalists:
 Aquagrains Ltd
 Burland Technology Solutions Ltd

Healthcare Innovation Award
Winner: Virtually There Studio CIC
Finalists:
 Therapy Gyms Ltd
 James White Drinks Ltd

Construction Innovation Award
Winner: Natural Building Systems Ltd
Finalists:
 Caribbean Blinds UK Ltd
 Modece Property Ltd
 Obee CIC (Orchard Barn Environmental Education)





How our grants help local organisations and the places you love

Mid Suffolk District Council provides funding to scores of community groups and organisations each year, with a range of different grants available for projects of clear community benefit.

We provide grants to some of the best-known organisations in the district. They include:

- **Citizens Advice**
- **Community Action Suffolk**
- **East Anglian Traditional Music Trust**
- **Rural Coffee Caravan**
- **The Mix**
- **Debenham Sports and Leisure Centre**
- **The Food Museum**
- **Home-Start in Suffolk**
- **Families Together Suffolk**
- **Lighthouse Women's Aid**



The John Peel Centre

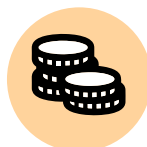
Iconic venue, the John Peel Centre for Creative Arts, will be welcoming more visitors, events, and experiences as it expands into neighbouring 11 Market Place.

This is thanks to a partnership between the Stowmarket venue and Mid Suffolk District Council.

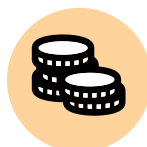
Once used as the town's Assembly Rooms, and formerly as a NatWest bank, the additional, flexible space could be used to create an alternative entrance from the marketplace.

The expansion will also create more space for music, art, performance, and a range of community uses for the whole town to enjoy.

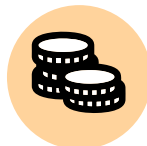
2019-22



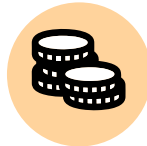
£673,737 in capital grants allocated to support 66 projects



313 voluntary, community and social enterprise groups given community grants



£30,575 minor grants allocated to 36 projects



£981,570 in Section 106 funds allocated to support 35 projects



Case study #1

Stowmarket Community Centre received £17,339 of Section 106 funding to refurbish its entrance, making it more accessible for wheelchair users and those with pushchairs.



Case study #2

Yaxley Community Centre received a capital grant of £4,172 towards its kitchen refurbishment. The old kitchen was dilapidated, and the new facility is much better suited to the needs of hall users.

Conversations with our customers

Our customer services team has responded to more than 67,000 emails and answered nearly 400,000 calls in the last four years.

In January 2021, we also launched a chatbot and automated telephone service to help customers gain access to our services at a time that suits them. Since then, it has seen 36,272 interactions.

In 2019, we met with 146 customers to discuss the changes they want to see to our website - and those changes will be made in 2023.

We joined the Suffolk Information Partnership in 2021 to ensure our customer service and housing team could link people up with over 90 voluntary and statutory organisations. This has helped customers access services around skills, debt, and wellbeing.

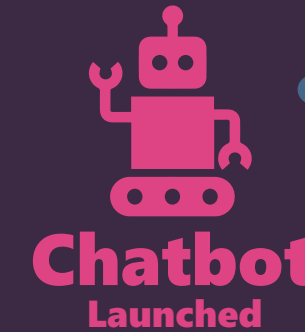
In our customer satisfaction survey, we have scored an average of 4 out of 5 rating. We will continue to learn and improve.

Our teams make sure bins are collected, grass is cut, our tenants' homes are well maintained and the districts are kept clean.



400,000
Calls

67,000
emails



36,272
interactions



Tackling anti-social behaviour



Between 2021 and 2022, the council dealt with **196 anti-social behaviour cases**.

We've improved our systems to make it easier to report incidents, including a new online referral mechanism, greater profiling and communications.

In June 2022, our Community Safety Team took part in the National Anti-Social Behaviour Awareness Week, focusing on the impact on young people and engaging with the wider public about their vital role in tackling ASB.

Alongside Suffolk Constabulary, we held community engagement days in Stowmarket and Eye.

Hundreds more homes for our district

In the last four years **517 affordable homes** were delivered, of which 86 were new council homes.

Of the new council homes, 67 were for affordable rent and two for social rent. We also sold and delivered 17 new homes for shared ownership and 53 existing council homes through the right to buy scheme, with this boost to the housing supply helping many residents to find a place to call home.

But the work doesn't stop. We have started construction on three further council-owned sites in Eye, Stowmarket and Needham Market which will deliver **101 new homes in 2023**.

2019-22



3,698 homes approved via planning applications.



No Mid Suffolk planning decisions have been overturned on appeal in the last two years - the Government's threshold is 10%.



We are judged against the Government's 'Housing Delivery Test', which looks at the number of homes delivered compared to the number required.



On this measure, we continuously improved - from 99% in 2019 to 137% in 2021.



Expertise in creating award-winning developments

The council's Building Control Team won an award in 2022 for its work on the renovation of The Regal, in Stowmarket.

The team ensures home improvements and developments are in line with the UK's building regulations - it can advise planning applicants on all parts of their builds to make sure they are to the highest professional and environmental standards.

This work was recognised at the regional final of the Local Authority Building Control Building Excellence Awards.

The renovation of The Regal, in Stowmarket, was named Best Non-residential Extension or Alteration.

Two new screens were added in sympathetically-designed extensions, as well as a raft of accessibility retrofittings.

The work was a joint effort between Stowmarket Town Council and Mid Suffolk District Council and maintained the character of the 1930s cinema.

The winning schemes will move onto the national finals in London in January 2023.

Central Suffolk Lettings



We developed Central Suffolk Lettings (CSL) to increase access to good quality homes in the private rented sector for eligible residents.

We've formed partnerships with **50 private letting agents and 50 private landlords**, and supported hundreds of people.

Since its inception in 2020 up to October 2021, we housed more than **90 homeless households in Mid Suffolk and Babergh**.

In November 2021, we were **assisting 131 homeless households** to secure private accommodation across both districts.

But the help goes far beyond just a home.

The case of one domestic violence victim illustrates the extent of support

'Miss N' had been a victim of domestic violence from her husband since the start of their arranged marriage when she was 14.

CSL matched her to a one-bedroom house with a garden, but also:

- Worked alongside health partners to help her.
- Assisted her in furnishing the new home.
- Supported her to open a bank account, apply for Universal Credit, and learn how to save.
- Set up her rent account and showed her how to pay.
- Made weekly visits to support her to be independent once again.

'I lost everything I owned - but the council changed my life'

Mr P said: "I was street homeless. I had lost everything I owned. I am now disabled due to spinal surgery and suffer with mental health issues. I was taken off the streets and housed by Babergh and Mid Suffolk in emergency accommodation and was then moved into shared accommodation under the care of Alannah and Carrie. This is when my life changed dramatically.

'Their professionalism, passion and honesty have been a huge factor in my current situation. I have now moved into a bungalow of my own through the Gateway to Homechoice system, my mental health is stable, and I feel now that having them in my corner, anything is possible. Without them and the accommodation, I have no doubt I would not be here now. You have two ladies who have changed my life completely.'

2019-22

- ▶ **161 households helped via Disabled Facilities or Minor Adaptation grants totalling £799,596.**
- ▶ **549 cases of homelessness supported.**
- ▶ **£57,816 of welfare benefits secured by our Tenancy Support Team, boosting the incomes of those struggling financially.**



During Covid-19, we were there with you...

We gave financial help to foodbanks including in Stowmarket.

Our grants supported new and existing groups to cover staff costs, volunteer expenses, utility bills and food purchasing.

We worked in partnership with other Suffolk councils to offer an app and phonenumber to connect volunteers to those who needed help.

Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils provided £1.6m to local community organisations assisting with the pandemic response.



This ranged from people who had difficulties getting groceries, medication, and essential household goods, to those affected by isolation, loneliness or bereavement. By the end of September 2021, the helpline had received 14,850 calls.

Our Communities Team also led a 'Knock and Check' campaign over Christmas 2020 to ensure people stayed connected, warm and with enough food. We linked up with parish councils and local partners.

Across 2020 and 2021, the council helped businesses by providing over 7,700 Covid-19 grants, totalling £38,471,188 in financial support.

Our Covid-19 related housing support

During the first lockdown, we supported **106 rough sleepers** and allocated **348 properties** across Mid Suffolk and Babergh districts, working hard to ensure properties were ready to let.

We visited former rough sleepers who had recently moved or were about to move to a permanent accommodation, to ensure they could maintain their tenancies.

We also assisted **561 households** who were faced with financial difficulties by securing **310 food parcels**, **120 furniture items** and **£15,913 in charitable grants** and supported **352 tenants** as they faced furlough, redundancy, and financial uncertainty, helping to secure **£67,302 in benefit support**.

In summer 2021, Suffolk Public Sector Leaders earmarked **£1million** towards housing, homelessness, rough sleeping, and addressing inequalities.



VIRTUAL HIGHSTREET.UK



What we learned from the pandemic

We showed how we can respond at pace to extraordinary challenges, while lockdown also accelerated our digital development.

It meant, for example, we could provide platforms such as the **'Virtual High Street'** to support business and use digital resources to reduce isolation in communities.

[Watch our video explaining more about the initiative.](#)



We also moved to online working in most services, while empowering approach to our staff, using more online wellbeing sessions to give them more freedom to act and opportunity to be listened.



In the cost-of-living crisis, we're here with you

We live in extraordinary economic times, and the cost-of-living crisis will impact on everyone in different ways.

In response, we developed a five-point action plan in May 2022.

We want to ensure people get the help they are entitled to, work with our partners in Suffolk to provide targeted support, give advice, and do what we can to prevent people falling into crisis.

For example, we successfully supported 34,747 households using the government's Council Tax Energy Rebate - a total of £5,212,050 spent under the main scheme, and £37,050 in discretionary payments.

And we are working with partners and community groups to set up 'Warm Spaces' where people can go if they are concerned about heating costs at home.

We've been offering one-off grants to organisations so they can keep buildings open without passing on increased costs to the community, or provide activities/entertainment.



Our five-point action plan

Influencing the Suffolk system

We don't work in isolation. We help lead Suffolk-wide action which makes a difference to people's lives.

Mid Suffolk, for example, is part of the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders Group.

This coordinated countywide support through Covid-19, has helped the most vulnerable, improved community safety, tackled climate change, and fought for fairer funding for Suffolk.

Here are some of the things it has achieved:

- **Helped fund a new literacy project to get young people reading in Suffolk.**
- **Invested funds into Screen Suffolk to bring more TV and film shoots to the county, boosting the economy.**
- **In May 2022, committed £1million to help Suffolk's hardest-hit families during the cost-of-living crisis.**
- **Pledged millions helping Suffolk recover from the pandemic.**

- **Helped fund the Domestic Abuse Champions project, with 870 people signing up.**
- **Funded a three-year program to tackle criminal exploitation, with 20 'County Lines' removed from Suffolk in first year.**
- **Helped fund a new Fuel Poverty Retrofit Delivery Team to make thousands of Suffolk homes more energy efficient.**

Mid Suffolk is a member of the Suffolk Growth Partnership, which discusses key economic issues, and the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership. This supports residents and businesses to reduce carbon emissions, and realise the economic benefits of cutting energy use.

Our chief officers and leadership team also work with partners in the health, housing and children's safeguarding sectors.

In 2022, the Local Government Association commended Mid Suffolk for punching above its weight in influencing the wider Suffolk system and this partnership working.

It said the council was well respected in the region, with partners saying there had been a noticeable step change in Mid Suffolk's aspirations in the last three years.



Our awards

2021

- **iESE Gold award for our Virtual High Street initiative**
- **iESE Silver award for Service Improvements**
- **iESE Bronze award for Council of the Year**
- **Highly commended at the MJ Awards for our housing services**

2020

- **iESE Silver award for the best use of digital and technology**

2019

- **iESE Bronze award in the Intelligent Council category for work on the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 agreements, making them more transparent and accessible for residents.**

