

## District councillor's report, February 2014

### **1. Council Tax 2014/15**

At present, Babergh is minded to opt for a Council Tax freeze, while Mid Suffolk, after two years of no increases and on the basis of current information available, is looking at possibly increasing Council Tax by 5p per week for a Band D equivalent property. However, no final decision will be taken until the Government announces the threshold beyond which any proposed increases would trigger a referendum.

### **2. Power to the Community - Localism in Action**

The Case is Altered, a pub in Bentley near Ipswich, has hopefully been saved from closure after a Babergh community group used The Localism Act to buy the freehold. The group, known as Bentley Community Pub Limited, began the process of acquiring the pub last year and has now agreed, subject to contract, to acquire the building from Punch Taverns. They had successfully approached Babergh District Council to have the pub listed as an 'Asset of Community Value', in line with the provisions of the Localism Act. The property could not then be sold by the vendors before the community group was given the opportunity to buy it on the open market.

The listing of the pub as an Asset of Community Value did not provide the community group with any preferential rights in their negotiations with Punch Taverns. Likewise it did not compel the owners to sell the asset. It did however allow them some time to negotiate the eventual purchase.

Bentley Community Pub Limited is hoping to reopen the pub once the purchase is complete and the building has been refurbished.

The Localism Act allows community groups and unincorporated bodies to nominate a number of facilities as Assets of Community Value subject to the qualifying criteria.

If you are interested in finding out more about the steps involved please contact Tracey Brinkley, Communities Officer (Enabling) for Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils [tracey.brinkley@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:tracey.brinkley@midsuffolk.gov.uk)

### **Mid Suffolk Community Achievement Awards**

Mid Suffolk District Council's Community Achievement awards started eight years ago and aims to give recognition and honour to those individuals and groups who strive to make a real difference in their communities to make them better places in which to live and work.

To be eligible, nominees must be living in the Mid Suffolk district, work in the local community on an unpaid or voluntary basis and be someone who the community feel should be recognised for their contribution.

This community work could come in any shape or form, from fundraising work, to campaigning for improved local services, or providing a long-term service to the community.

Nomination forms have already been sent to schools, parish and town councils, voluntary groups and charities and Mid Suffolk is urging anyone who knows someone who should be recognised for their achievements to quickly grab a form and nominate.

The winners will be honoured at the Ninth Mid Suffolk Community Achievement Awards Ceremony which will be held Thursday, 20th March, 2014, at The John Peel Centre for Creative Arts in Stowmarket, at 6pm.

The closing date for nominations is Friday 7th February 2014, more details can be found at [www.midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk).

### **European Parliamentary Elections**

Voting for the next European Parliament will take place on Thursday, 22nd May 2014.

The deadline for registering to vote is 6th May.

The deadline for applying for a postal vote is 7th May.

Application forms must have been received at the Council Offices by these dates. We will bring you more information and fuller details once they have been received from central Government.

### **Individual Electoral Registration**

This change to the way that people register to vote starts on 10th June 2014.

From that date, electors will be able to register to vote online, and each individual will be responsible for their own registration.

Again, once more information is known on this, we will let you know.

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