

**1. Public feedback sought on changes to the proposed new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

CIL, a method of securing funding for infrastructure through development, would replace the complex negotiations involved in Section 106 agreements with a set levy. Following earlier consultation that took place last year, MSDC and Babergh are now putting their revised Draft Charging Schedules out for comment. The Councils are looking for responses only on the new thresholds and revised charges for smaller housing developments.

Residents, developers and planning agents will have until 4pm on 13 February to submit their responses.

This new consultation follows the Government announcement in late November aiming to cut the cost of building new homes for small house builders. The announcement included plans for sites of 10 homes or fewer to be exempt from affordable housing or other tariff-based charges.

John Whitehead, Portfolio Holder for Planning at MSDC, said: "The changes to Section 106 costs on small developments will change both the viability of the sites and the way developers contribute to the costs of infrastructure their new schemes incur. We think these revised proposals are the fairest way of balancing the need to bring housing forward with the need for the new infrastructure to support the housing, while making the process clearer and more transparent for everyone involved."

Following the current round of consultation, the final proposals for CIL in each district will be sent to an Independent Examiner, who will check the proposals against statutory guidance. Once this is complete the plans for CIL will be made publically available before going to meetings of full Council in both Babergh and Mid Suffolk for Councillors' consideration.

**2. Additional Housing Revenue Account borrowing**

Following a bid we submitted to the Government's Additional Housing Revenue Account Borrowing Programme, our two councils have been granted approval to borrow a further £5.5m, above our Housing Revenue Account borrowing caps.

We are among just 21 councils nationwide to have been successful in gaining £100m of borrowing against their HRAs. For us this means that Mid Suffolk and Babergh we will be able to build 60 much needed, affordable homes for our communities by the end of 2017.

We have been working closely with colleagues at Suffolk County Council to bring forward these homes on sites they own and need to develop. We will be elaborating more detailed plans as a result of securing the funding.

**3. Shortlisting for Housing Zone status**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk have been shortlisted as one of only 29 places in the country which the Government is now considering designating as a Housing Zone. This would bring a range of potential benefits that would help deliver sustainable housing on brown field sites across the two districts including access to funding for site de-contamination, infrastructure and community facilities, cheaper borrowing to fund capital infrastructure and support from the Homes and Communities

Agency to help accelerate delivery of new housing on these sites. If successful, the designation will specify the site(s) or areas where these benefits will apply. As part of the bid process, the Council was required to identify potential site(s). However, at this stage, no formal notification of our short listing has been received and we are unable to speculate as to which site(s) may or may not be included.

#### 4. Housing Enforcers

Mid Suffolk and Babergh are to be featured in a second BBC series of The Housing Enforcers, presented by Matt Allwright, later this year. We were approached because the producers want to feature tenants living in rural areas, and have recognised our forward-thinking approach, as seen for example in our current solar PV programme.

This series follows the work of housing teams across the country. It is fronted by consumer champion Matt Allwright who learns about the vital work these teams are doing. Matt does this by working alongside 'housing officers' as a trainee. This is a device that takes Matt into the heart of the issues 'housing officers' face, though, of course, he is there purely to observe – each programme makes clear his input is there only for the benefit of the viewer.

TwoFour make celebratory documentaries without any investigative agenda – we are not seeking to vilify any party but are looking to emphasise the great and varied work of the housing officers. They believe that this documentary will be an excellent opportunity for both Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils to show the nation how its officers support landlords and tenants, especially at a time when this issue is so firmly planted in the public's consciousness.

We shall have control over the stories featured, along with the factual elements of the story etc. The producer explained that for Members elsewhere the first series was a hit, because it is a feature programme that puts 'Housing officers, councils and the tenant's firmly in the position of heroes within the story'. Filming is expected to take place between January and April, but the programme is unlikely to be shown on television until September, i.e. well after the election!

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