

Mid Suffolk

Spring 2025

# Magazine



Bring on spring  
at beautiful  
Needham Lake

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boost **Page 5**



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News and information from Mid Suffolk District Council

## Contact us

### Online:

via our website  
[www.midsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk)

### Phone:

0300 1234000 to be connected to any council service. Lines open 8.45am-5pm, Monday to Friday. On Tuesdays, our phone lines open at 10am.

To report an emergency repair, dangerous structure or homelessness outside opening hours, call 0808 168 7794

### In person:

From 24 February, our customer access point, 54 Ipswich Street, Stowmarket, is now open 5 days a week.

Monday - 9am-5pm

Tuesday - 10am-5pm

Wednesday - 9am-5pm

Thursday - 9am-5pm

Friday - 9am-4.30pm

We also open our first joint customer access point in Eye Library with Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice on 28 March. We will be there alongside Citizens Advice from 9.15am-12.30pm every Friday.

# Lots to look forward to in Mid Suffolk



**Welcome to Mid Suffolk Magazine, which is packed full of useful news and information about what's happening in our wonderful district.**

Inside, you can discover more about some of Mid Suffolk District Council's work in our towns and villages – including the launch of new community transport services, a £2m boost for Stowmarket town centre, and our investment in arts and culture.

Find out if you qualify for free home insulation via our Cosy Homes scheme, and there are also details about the cost-of-living support we offer.

Finally, have you heard about the Government's plans to reorganise local government?

We explain what it could mean for you on pages 8 and 9.

We're proud of Mid Suffolk and working hard to make it even better. Read more about our council's ambitions in The Mid Suffolk Plan – just scan the QR code.




I hope you enjoy the magazine as we look forward to spring in our great district.

**Cllr Andy Mellen,  
Mid Suffolk District Council leader**

## Follow us

 [www.facebook.com/MidSuffolkCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/MidSuffolkCouncil)

 [www.instagram.com/midsuffolk](https://www.instagram.com/midsuffolk)

 Search in WhatsApp channels for Mid Suffolk Council and get updates to your phone

This magazine is distributed to every household in the Mid Suffolk district.

Would you like to advertise in future editions or offer feedback? Email [communications@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:communications@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk)





# Tree for Life – We’re rooting for new parents

**We are offering families living in Mid Suffolk a free tree to celebrate the arrival of a new child.**

The Tree for Life scheme opens every spring for applications – helping make our district greener and promoting the community benefits of tree planting.

This year we will be welcoming applications for children born or adopted between 1 January 2025 - 31 December 2025.

Memory trees are also available for parents who’ve sadly lost a child during the same period.

**Around 2,000 Trees for Life have been planted so far. Visit our website to find out when and how to apply at [www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/tree-for-life](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/tree-for-life) or scan the QR code.**



## Embracing wildflowers

Look out later this spring for our wildflower meadows.

Although Suffolk County Council has responsibility for most roadside grass verges, there are also some open spaces that we’re responsible for. We’ve changed the way we manage some of these spaces where it’s been safe to do so, to create new wildflower meadows.

Our longer grass and wildflower displays throughout the spring and summer provide important food and shelter for many wildlife and insects, and can help reduce flooding.

Learn more about our wildflower meadows and how you can create your own at [www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/wildflower-meadows](http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/wildflower-meadows)



**CARBON  
BALANCED  
PAPER**

[www.carbonbalancedpaper.com](http://www.carbonbalancedpaper.com)

The paper used for this magazine is carbon-balanced, as certified by the World Land Trust.

## Enjoy spring at Needham Lake

Our Needham Lake nature reserve has regularly been voted one of Visit England's top free attractions and is a special place for many.

Spring is the perfect time to visit, and we've improved the visitor experience over the years with:

- An upgraded accessible play area
- The popular Duck and Teapot café
- Discounted electric bike hire and collaborative sustainable travel events
- Augmented reality walking trails via the Love Exploring app
- Bug hotels, bulb planting and lake cleaning nature improvements
- Improved facilities for picnickers and day-trippers



# Celebrating our culture

**Whether it's film and theatre, art and dance, comedy, music, or celebrating Mid Suffolk's proud heritage, food and landscape – we are investing in our district's culture.**

We want our residents to be proud of where they live, to explore what's available and to share the things they love with friends, family and visitors.

We invest in cultural and heritage organisations including the John Peel Centre, the Food Museum, Creative Arts East, Orchestras Live, DanceEast, Eastern Angles and Screen Suffolk.



They not only aim to enhance the lives of Mid Suffolk residents, they attract visitors and make a valuable contribution to the local economy.

Find out more about what we do and what support might be available for an organisation in your area by scanning the QR code.





# New transport services better connect district

New community transport options funded by Mid Suffolk District Council have been hailed as an “exciting” boost to plug a gap in services and better connect our towns and villages.

The first services, just launched, provide transport options for people wanting to travel to and from Stowmarket from surrounding villages, and also connect communities in Debenham, Eye and beyond.

The Mid Suffolk Taxi Bus, operated by Swift Taxi Cabs, provides transport services across central and south Mid Suffolk. Two routes are available – Stowmarket Circular via Thurston and Stowmarket Circular via Bacton.

Journeys cost a flat rate of £6, with customers able to book and pay online in advance or pay in cash card or taxi voucher onboard. A further five routes will be added in the coming year – with the introduction of the Stowmarket Circular via Debenham, the Debenham Circular via Eye, and the Stowmarket Circular via Wattisham Airfield, with more to be added at a later stage.

Meanwhile, the Rural Connect community bus service operated by Communities



Together East Anglia provides transport services across north Mid Suffolk. This is a pre-bookable door-to-door service.

It covers three areas: Eye and Diss, Eye and Debenham, and Stowmarket – connecting people living in outlying villages. It uses a fully electric vehicle as part of the fleet.

Clr Teresa Davis, cabinet member for thriving towns and rural communities, said: “It’s exciting to see these new services up and running – better connecting our rural communities with key services and locations, while also reducing emissions.”

## Rural Connect

Bookings for the Rural Connect service can be made via phone or email up to two weeks in advance. Payment is made on board by card or travel vouchers. Fares vary depending on journey length – eg. 1 to 4 miles is £3, 5 to 7 miles is £4.50 – with strategic stops at rail stations, colleges, as well as employment and leisure hubs possible to support commuting residents of all ages.

Call 01449 614271 for more details, or scan the QR code



For more details about the Mid Suffolk Taxi Bus, including where to ‘hop on’ or how to pre-book your journey if you prefer, call 01449 866966, visit its website at: [www.suffolktaxibus.com/faq](http://www.suffolktaxibus.com/faq) or scan the QR code





# Work to start on ‘groundbreaking’ £18m Skills and Innovation Centre

**Mid Suffolk District Council’s new Skills and Innovation Centre at Gateway 14 is set to have a major impact on the district – super-charging businesses in growing sectors and offering exciting new training opportunities.**

Work is set to start soon on the £18m three-storey, state-of-the-art centre, which will sit at the heart of the business, innovation and logistics park on the edge of Stowmarket.

It will be home to office space for high growth start-ups, collaboration and innovation spaces, training and meeting rooms, and a café.

The centre aims to address skills gaps and seize opportunities around growing sectors such as the green

economy and digital/AI technology.

Cllr Richard Winch, cabinet member for housing and property at Mid Suffolk District Council, said: “This will be incredibly exciting and greatly beneficial for the district. It will not only help to bridge the skills gap, but allow firms to grow, innovate and encourage more inward investment.”

Freeport East is funding £16m, with Mid Suffolk meeting the remaining cost.

## Gateway 14 – the story so far

**2017** - Mid Suffolk District Council invests £36m acquiring land to develop Gateway 14.

**2021** – Gateway 14 confirmed as part of Freeport East, bringing a range of business and investment benefits.

**2023** – Garden and leisure retailer The Range moves onto first unit on site, creating 1,650 jobs.

**2024** – Work starts on 44,000 sq ft manufacturing facility for Bauder, which makes sustainable roofing.

**2024** - Assan Panel, which makes sustainable building materials, given permission for new £45m facility.

**2025** – Work set to start on Mid Suffolk District Council’s £18m Skills and Innovation Centre.

All buildings at Gateway 14 committed to meeting a ‘Very Good’ BREEAM rating, with biodiversity, accessibility and transport links all a priority.

# £2million boost for Stowmarket town centre

**Mid Suffolk District Council is investing £2m into enhancing Stowmarket town centre.**

Using income from its Gateway 14 business, innovation and logistics park on the edge of the town, the initiatives include:

- The £1.5m Stowmarket Town Centre Gateway Fund to bring empty high street units back into use.
- Improving the town centre environment and street scene – enhanced street cleansing and public realm services, in addition to the £50K award already given to support Stowmarket Town Council’s popular new town ranger service.
- The £400K Stowmarket Town Centre Shopfront Scheme – for existing shop and property owners to improve the appearance of their premises.

Council leader Cllr Andy Mellen said: “Like most towns, Stowmarket is not immune from pressures such as online shopping, increased costs, and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.



“However, we have much to be proud of and it is important we invest in the future – giving people different reasons to visit the town centre and spend more time there.”

## Stowmarket Town Centre Gateway Fund

This is aimed at entrepreneurs or small businesses wanting to make their first High Street move.

We’re particularly encouraging arts and cultural experiences, tourism, community activities, retail, small business workspaces, leisure, food and drink and ‘pop up’ activities that bring something new to the town.

## Stowmarket Town Centre Shopfront Scheme

The funding can cover the cost of new signage, canopies, lighting, cladding or the reinstatement of traditional or historic features that have been lost, with awards of up to £10k per property available, or up to £20k for exceptional applications.

Further information is available about both schemes on our website – just scan the QR code



# What we do for you for less than the cost of a coffee each week

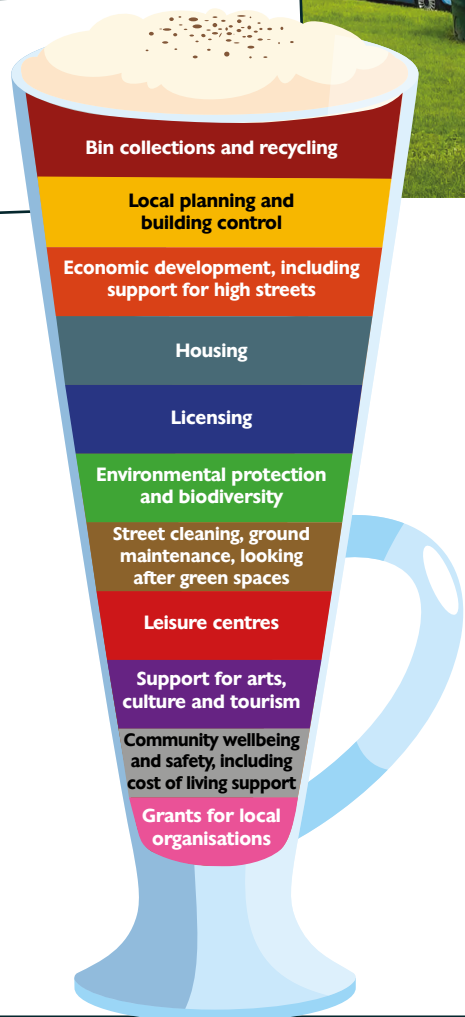
**For less than £3.50 a week\*,  
Mid Suffolk District Council  
delivers these services  
and more...**

\*If you live in a Band D home, you currently pay £175.03 for Mid Suffolk's services, or around £3.37 a week.

## Council tax support

If you are struggling to pay your council tax bill, we offer support.

Scan the QR code to visit our website to find out more, or call our team using the contact details on page 2.





## What do other councils do?

### Suffolk County Council's responsibilities include:

- Education and children's services
- Roads and transport, including potholes, streetlights, drainage, footpaths and verges
- Fire and public safety
- Adult social care
- Waste management, planning and environment
- Trading standards
- Culture, heritage, leisure and tourism

- Economic Development

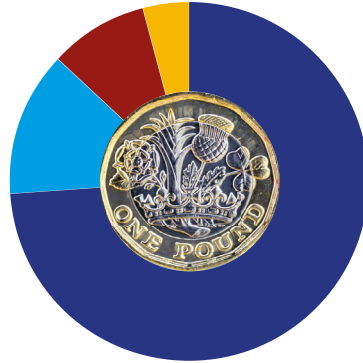
- Community safety

### Town and parish council responsibilities include:

- Community centres
- Neighbourhood planning
- Allotments
- Grants to help local organisations
- Markets
- Burial grounds and cemeteries
- Parks and play areas
- CCTV
- Environment

## Where does your council tax go?

Every pound you pay is split:



Suffolk County Council  
..... 74p

Mid Suffolk District Council ..... 9p

Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner ..... 13p

Town or parish council  
..... 4p (on average)

## But are things about to change?

Three different councils run services where you live – Suffolk County Council, Mid Suffolk District Council, and your local town or parish council.

You can see the sorts of responsibilities each one has on these pages, although this is not a definitive list.

However, things could change in the next two or three years...

The Government proposes creating new Mayoral Authorities, with an elected Mayor covering a larger area, such as Suffolk and Norfolk. They would have powers over things like transport, infrastructure, health improvements and emergency services.

Alongside this, it also wants to replace existing county and district council structures with unitary authorities.

For now, nothing has changed. But our priority will be to ensure any changes make a real difference to the quality of life of our residents. We are working with our neighbouring councils across Suffolk to find the best solution.

# Taking pride in our district

Our Pride in Your Place grants fund projects which seek to celebrate and enhance our local identity, heritage and environment.

Town councils, parish councils and local VCFSE organisations can apply for grants between £250 and £5,000.

To find out more, go to Mid Suffolk District Council's website and visit our 'Community funding' webpage.

# Helping make healthy changes

**Feel Good Suffolk is here to help you make positive changes for your health and wellbeing, one step at a time.**

We can give you the support and information you need to stop smoking, be more active and manage your weight.

In 2024, Feel Good Suffolk received over 1,400 referrals in Mid Suffolk and 861 support programmes were prescribed.

This is what some of our users said:

"I really don't know if I could have given up smoking so easily without the help and support of my advisor and their regular calls. Now I have been successful, I feel much healthier and positive in myself."

**"I'm so grateful to my advisor from Mid Suffolk. They have really been so kind and a great help to me. It feels good to say I am now a non-smoker!"**

"My advisor was really easy to work with. She was really kind and friendly. She encouraged me even when I felt I had failed and dismissed it as a blip which helped me get back on track."

## Do you want to stop smoking, be more active or lose weight? We can help!

You can make a self-referral via the Feel Good Suffolk website and receive support to become healthier and happier.

We also offer a range of useful information and resources on our website to help you get started.

Just scan the QR code to find out more.



We have had



of individuals lose at least



of their body weight!

We have also seen over

200 people



successfully quit smoking!

# ‘Absolutely amazing’ – How to apply for a free home insulation upgrade

**Lower energy bills and a boost for the environment – could you be the next person to benefit from Mid Suffolk District Council’s Cosy Homes scheme offering FREE home insulation?**

We are encouraging eligible residents to take advantage of the £2m scheme, with applications open.

Shaun, from Thurston (pictured), is among the first to benefit. He said: “I’d recommend the scheme to as many people who qualify as possible. It’s much better than what we would be able to afford ourselves.”

The initiative was created to support homeowners raise the EPC rating of their homes from a D to C – improving energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions and cutting bills.

Cosy Homes offers free upgrades to eligible homeowners and private rent tenants, worth up to £5,000.

Shaun said: “We’ve now got



upgraded cavity wall and loft insulation. We’ve also had two mechanical ventilations in our bathrooms, which connect to our light system and are absolutely amazing.”

Cllr Richard Winch, Mid Suffolk cabinet member for housing and property, said: “We want to help people to save energy, save money and reduce their carbon footprint. We encourage any resident that meets the criteria to take advantage of the free offer.”



## Do you qualify?

About your property

- Your home will have an EPC rating of D. Find your EPC rating by visiting [www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate](http://www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate)
- Your home will be in Council Tax band A-E

Households must have:

- A combined annual income below £80,000
- Less than £40,000 in savings

Contact the ‘Cosy Homes’ team for more details.

Scan the QR code to visit our website for more information, or email [cosyhomes@midsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:cosyhomes@midsuffolk.gov.uk)



Warm Homes Suffolk also offers advice, support and grants for home insulation improvements. Visit [www.warmhomes.suffolk.org](http://www.warmhomes.suffolk.org) for more information.



## Planning for the future

Our Joint Local Plan is the blueprint for the district's future until 2037.

It is designed to ensure residents and communities have sufficient housing, employment and inward investment; that our environment and heritage is protected; and that the right infrastructure is in place.

It guides decisions about planning applications, alongside national policies and Neighbourhood Plans.

Our Joint Local Plan was adopted in 2023, but we will now be reviewing this after the Government set much higher housebuilding requirements across the country.

Councillor Andrew Stringer, Cabinet Member for Heritage, Planning & Infrastructure, at Mid Suffolk District Council, said: "Taking this action is the right thing to do for our communities."

Find out more on our website.

# Investing in your community

**When homes are built in your town or village, a fee called the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is paid by developers.**

The council reinvests this money back into communities to help ensure local facilities keep up with new housing.

Since May 2018, Mid Suffolk District Council has allocated £13.5 million to infrastructure projects across the district.

Previous awards include:

- £1.5m Elmswell Community Primary School expansion
- Nearly £500k for sports and wellbeing facilities in Stowmarket
- £538K to extend Stowmarket Library
- £2.4m to build Stowupland Sixth Form
- £646K for an expansion at Bramford CEVC Primary School
- £499K for Claydon Primary School expansion
- £432K for the new

Stowmarket Emergency Services Hub

- £277K for Walking and Cycling Infrastructure projects
- £2.3m Thurston Community College expansion
- £293K redevelopment of Mendlesham Health Centre
- £582K spent on playground improvements
- £505K spent on village hall improvements
- £697k spent on community car park improvements
- £100K for an accessible footpath at Thornham Walks (pictured below, with Gislingham Primary School pupils)

The council also pays Neighbourhood CIL – funding which goes directly to town and parish councils to spend as they see fit in your local community.





# ‘I like living here!’ – Ralph’s praise for new council homes

**When his private landlord decided to sell, Ralph faced eviction from his Needham Market home and had just two months to find a new place to live.**

He turned to Mid Suffolk District Council to find out what his options were.

Ralph, pictured, went onto the housing register and was offered a home on the former Stowmarket Middle School housing development, at Arbon

**In one year, we prevented 234 households from being homeless and helped 296 people remain in their home or obtain alternative accommodation.**

Road and Walnut Tree Walk.

Mid Suffolk District Council purchased the redundant site from the local education authority and has created 38 high-quality affordable homes, offering a mix of affordable rent, social rent and shared ownership.


Ralph is already feeling settled, and says he gets on well with his new neighbours: “We are around the same age – I like living here.”

Building affordable homes helps the council support residents that find themselves at risk of losing their home.

**We are here for tenants**

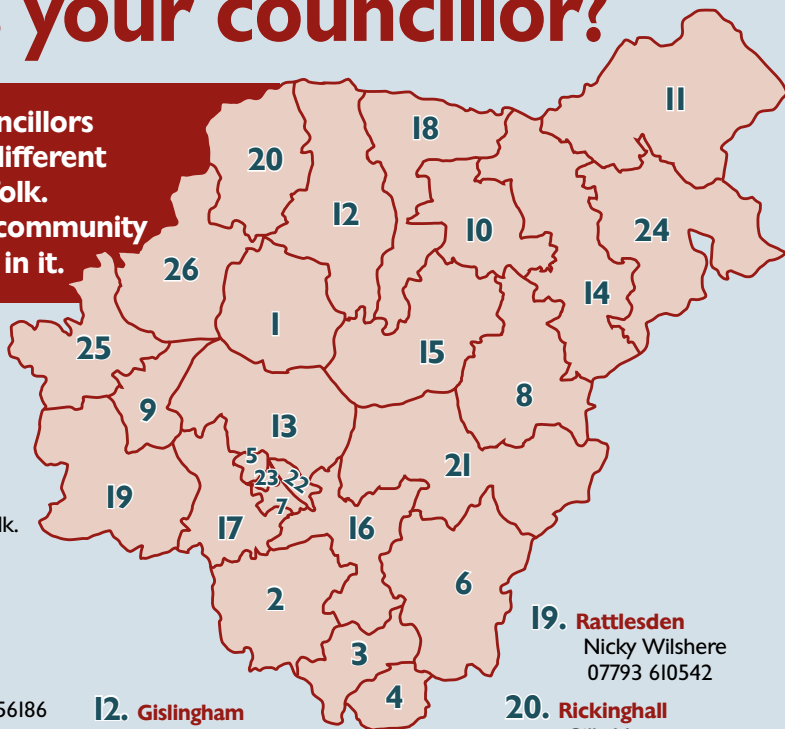
Our tenants are our priority, and we are committed to providing the best possible services to them. In the last 18 months we’ve invested nearly £700,000 more into repairs.

To find out more about our Housing services, scan the QR code.



# Who is your councillor?

There are 34 councillors representing 26 different wards in Mid Suffolk. They serve their community and people living in it.



## 1. Bacton

Andrew Mellen  
07955 434435

## 2. Battisford & Ringshall

Dr Daniel Pratt  
daniel.pratt@midsuffolk.gov.uk

## 3. Blakenham

Adrienne Marriott  
07928 512583

## 4. Bramford

James Caston 07548 156186

## 5. Chilton

Lorraine Baker 07928 512580  
Terence Carter 07548 153770

## 6. Claydon & Barham

David Penny 07761 319157  
John Whitehead 01449 760521

## 7. Combs Ford

Miles Row 07928 512582  
Keith Scarff 01449 770966

## 8. Debenham

Teresa Davis 07928 512588

## 9. Elmswell & Woolpit

Sarah Mansel 07860 829517  
Jen Overett 07928 512591

## 10. Eye

Lucy Elkin 07928 512590

## 11. Fressingfield

Lavinia Hadingham  
07860 829499

## 12. Gislingham

Rowland Warboys  
07484 186121

## 13. Haughley, Stowupland & Wetherden

Rachel Eburne 07768 460108  
Janet Pearson 07928 512592

## 14. Hoxne & Worlingworth

Matthew Hicks  
07824 474741

## 15. Mendlesham

Andrew Stringer  
07774 199061

## 16. Needham Market

Terry Lawrence 07928 512599  
Dr Ross Piper 07928 512581

## 17. Onehouse

John Matthissen  
07976 308128

## 18. Palgrave

Tim Weller 07928 512586

## 19. Rattlesden

Nicky Wilshere  
07793 610542

## 20. Rickingham

Gilly Morgan  
07928 512578

## 21. Stonham

Nicholas Hardingham  
07928 512584

## 22. Stow Thorney

Colin Lay 07928 512595  
James Patchett 07928 512587

## 23. St Peter's

Ollie Walters 07514 951199

## 24. Stradbroke & Laxfield

Anders Linder  
07928 512585

## 25. Thurston

David Bradbury 07514 951188  
Harry Richardson  
07842 322913

## 26. Walsham-le-Willows

Richard Winch  
07931 709486

For more information, visit our website.







# Struggling with the cost of living? We're here for you

**The high cost of living continues to be a challenge for many. We've taken action to support those finding it difficult to keep up with their outgoings.**

Mid Suffolk Council allocated £40,000 to extend the Household Support Fund, which offers financial aid to those struggling with rent and service charges, when government funding was uncertain.

Additionally, 1,400 residents who pay reduced council tax have had up to £50 extra cut from their bills to ease some of the pressures they face.

■ Our website details the support available to help with housing costs, energy, food and other essentials. You can also find resources to help you boost your income and

make your money go further. Scan the QR code to find out more.



- Or you can contact our Customer Services team on **0300 123 4000**, option seven, to discuss your situation and find local organisations available to support you.
- Citizens Advice Mid Suffolk offer free, independent advice on a range of issues including benefits, energy, debt, housing, employment and beyond. Call **01449 676 060** or visit **[www.midsuffolkcab.org.uk](http://www.midsuffolkcab.org.uk)**.

## Funding for community groups

Do you belong to a community organisation that needs funding for a project?

We have a wide range of grants available to support schemes across the district that benefit the wider community. Now, our new-look webpage makes it easy to understand and apply for these grants.

To find it, just click the 'access community funding' button on the homepage of our website.

# Getting your recycling right

## Are you putting the right items in your recycling bin?

Incorrect and dirty items in the bin that ruin other recycling costs Suffolk taxpayers £1 million a year to clean up – money we could be diverting to other vital services.

Batteries, including in electrical items, are especially dangerous as they can cause fires.

For more details about what you can put in your bins, visit [Suffolk Recycling's website](http://Suffolk Recycling's website).







**We ONLY want these items in your recycling bin**

Items should be

 **EMPTY**

 **CLEAN**

 **DRY**

**NO BAGGED ITEMS**

 **YES**  
Plastics



Plastic bottles - empty, wash, squash and lid on



Plastic yoghurt pots, tubs and food trays



Bathroom and household cleaning with all tops on

 **YES**  
Metals



Food and drinks cans



Aluminium foil and trays - roll foil into a ball



Empty aerosols - e.g. deodorant, air freshener

 **YES**  
Paper/card



Paper, newspapers, magazines and junk mail



Cardboard, clean food packaging, boxes and cards



Books, paperback and hardback

## Recycle even more from 2026...

You'll be able to recycle more items from home from 2026 as part of nationwide changes to waste collections.

There'll be new weekly food waste collections, and we'll be collecting glass and cartons too.

It is estimated this will mean over 58% of the waste that currently goes into the black rubbish bin can be recycled instead.

Cllr Tim Weller, cabinet member for environment, culture, and wellbeing at



Mid Suffolk District Council, said: "This is a once in a generation opportunity to improve our recycling habits.

"We understand change can be unsettling, but I also know that most of us would like to see as much of our waste as possible recycled, instead of incinerated. We'll communicate these changes to all residents before they begin."

Find out more on our website

