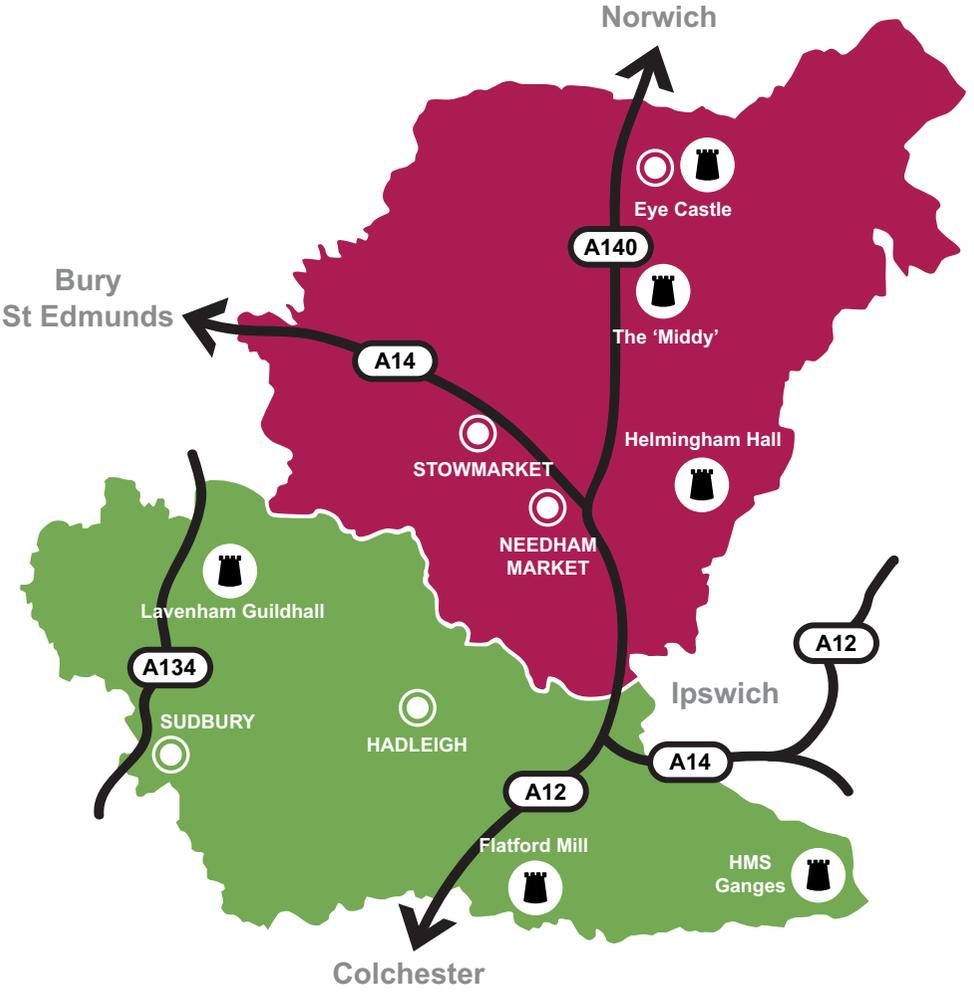


One Council for the
**HEART OF
SUFFOLK**

We are
LISTENING





- Mid Suffolk
- Babergh
- Heritage site
- Market town

Introduction from the Council Leaders

Since 2011 Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have answered the challenges facing local government by developing a new way of delivering council services: a way that we called 'Working Together'.

In the last 6 years, we have achieved £13m of cumulative savings by delivering our services under a joint Chief Executive and fully shared staff structure. We now have a shared Vision and outcome based approach which marks a fundamental shift for both councils and presents the opportunity to move from simply 'Working Together' to becoming one Council. This would not only support the delivery of our shared Vision but also protect our public services by providing long term financial security for the new council.

Given the challenges facing local government, we believe that exploring whether to form a new single council covering the Mid Suffolk and Babergh area is likely to be the best option to continue delivering the very best services for our residents, at the lowest possible cost.

To create a single council, we must draw up a business case for the proposal, one which must be informed by feedback from our residents, businesses and other stakeholders. We encourage you to read this summary document and to have your say by filling in our online survey or by emailing: one.council@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk.

Your views will help inform the councillors when they discuss the business case and make their decision and will also be considered by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he makes any final decision.



Jennie Jenkins
**Leader of Babergh
District Council**



Nick Gowrley
**Leader of Mid Suffolk
District Council**

The history of two Councils, 'Working Together'

By working together, we have pooled our resources and expertise, while remaining two separate and sovereign councils. All of our services are delivered by one workforce on behalf of both councils and through this award winning partnership we have been able to save £2m per annum.

This model of 'Working Together' has allowed the councils to transform without impacting on the quality of services delivered in each district and by minimising cuts to services.

How this worked

Since 2011, the two councils have adopted shared approaches and priorities, with their single workforce supporting innovative new ways of working. They have also been able to take 'big picture' approaches to major projects, and put in place plans to tackle the major challenges from public access to local development.

Major milestones

2011

Appointment of a shared Chief Executive for both councils

2013

A single Joint Strategic Plan was created, acknowledging shared challenges and proposing shared solutions. It was updated in 2016

2016

The two councils adopted a Joint Public Access Strategy

SPRING
2017

The new Leader/Cabinet Governance model was adopted by both councils

The challenge

The local government world is continually changing and the Government is committed to further public-sector reform. Both councils face a number of key local challenges, including:

- Providing long term financial stability in the face of reduction in grant from central government and desire to maintain low council tax
- The need for investment in growth and infrastructure projects
- Addressing increasing housing demand and costs
- Growing employment opportunities and wages
- Improving education and skills
- Being equipped to meet the needs of the growing numbers of older people across our districts

AUTUMN
2017

The two councils have moved into a shared HQ at Endeavour House, Ipswich

2018/19

A shared Joint Local Plan for development across both districts will be adopted

2019

Achieving electoral equality, with wards across both districts achieving roughly equal numbers of electors thanks to a boundary review carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

The benefits of becoming one Council

Both councils are committed to ensuring that the two districts are in the best possible position to respond to these challenges and grasp new opportunities. We believe, for the reasons described below, that this might best be achieved by becoming one council.



The councils have already saved around £2m per annum since 2011 through working together but have reached the limit of new savings that can be achieved this way. A new council is estimated to deliver further savings of £1m a year and would be financially stronger overall, so better placed to face the challenge of reduced government grant. In addition, it would provide much needed stability as simply 'doing nothing' or going back to two separate councils would bring significant costs, and have an impact on the councils' financial capacity to deliver services.

A financial assessment of both councils shows that Babergh and Mid Suffolk have differences in their finances that could impact on their individual long-term sustainability. Babergh has challenges in relation to the General Fund balance (which funds most council services) but has a strong Housing Revenue Account (which supports council housing), by contrast Mid Suffolk has challenges in relation to its Housing Revenue Account but a healthy General Fund. Combining these positions as one council would achieve a stable financial position and allow for investment in much needed affordable housing, higher quality services and allow the council to capitalise more on commercial opportunities.



Working Together

A new council to entirely replace the current district councils is a logical, natural, extension of our working together over the last six years.

The inherent complexities of serving two separate organisations would be removed which would release staff capacity, particularly at senior management level. This would allow an increased focus on delivering the vision for the new Council and better outcomes for residents. Although the councils have a sound model for decision making, the slower process for joint decision making would be streamlined as decisions would be made by one, more democratically accountable body for the area.



Fit for purpose

Mid Suffolk and Babergh were created in 1974 and although they both retain their individual sovereignty they have been through significant transformation over recent years to meet financial challenges and increasing demand for services. Creating a new council in their place provides the opportunity to refresh the council and councillor role and to ensure they are equipped for the 21st century, fit for purpose and forge a new relationship with the communities that we serve.



Leadership

A new larger Council could take a leading role in Suffolk, standing as an equal power among the emerging east and west Suffolk authorities and have a louder, more unified voice, when working with our partners and with Government. This will help to drive investment in our local infrastructure, such as road and rail, boosting the local economy and benefitting our communities.

The engagement closes
5 February 2018



HAVE YOUR SAY



Take part in our online survey:

www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/OneCouncil



Email us at:

one.council@babberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk



Write to us:

One Council Engagement,
Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils,
Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX



Join the conversation on social media:

 /BaberghDistrict  /MidSuffolkDistrictCouncil
 @BaberghDistrict  @MidSuffolk

Use #BMSOneCouncil



Find out more, visit:

www.babergh.gov.uk/onecouncil
www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/onecouncil

