

BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS MEDIA RELEASE

WE ARE LISTENING: A NEW COUNCIL FOR THE HEART OF SUFFOLK

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have today, Monday 11 December, launched a public engagement on the future of local government in the two districts.

The engagement, which runs until Monday 5 February 2018, asks residents and businesses in the districts, as well as other stakeholders, to comment on the proposals to dissolve both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and form a new, single council to cover the area in the heart of Suffolk. Responses will help shape the business case for such a change.

Anyone wishing to comment can take part online via:

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

Further information on the proposals, and what they could mean for residents of Babergh and Mid Suffolk, are also available on the councils' websites.

The two councils have also commissioned an independent telephone poll, to be carried out by ComRes, which will contact a statistically robust sample of 4,000 residents, consisting of 2,000 residents in each district. ComRes will work to ensure that the feedback collected is balanced in terms of age, gender, geography, socio-economic grade and ethnicity, canvassing a representative sample of residents in Babergh and in Mid Suffolk.

These engagement exercises come after meetings of both Babergh and Mid Suffolk's Cabinets, which resolved "to jointly conduct stakeholder, public and staff engagement".

All the engagement will help inform the business case which will be considered by councillors following the closing date in February. At that point councillors will debate the proposals, including the question of whether a local poll should also be held.

Cllr Jennie Jenkins, Leader of Babergh District Council, said: "Since this idea was first discussed in 2011 a lot has changed: with councils in both the east and the west of Suffolk coming together, the local government landscape of Suffolk in 2017 would have been almost unrecognisable to us in 2011. We all need to make our residents' council tax go further, and if creating a new council will allow us to do that we owe it to our residents to at least look into the idea. But we can't do this alone, we need everyone to get involved, and let us know what they think, right across both districts. Only by doing this can we be sure our business case has all the detail we need to help us make the right decision."

Cllr Nick Gowrley, Leader of Mid Suffolk District Council, said: "With the financial challenge facing all of local government, business as usual is not an option. We need bold and innovative solutions to protect the services our residents need. Since 2011 we have saved £13 million by working closely with Babergh, but with further reductions in central government funding we need to do more. The option of creating a new council is one idea, but we need help from everyone across the districts to put together this business case. We need the right information so we can make the right decision, and that is why we're asking everyone to get involved and let us know their thoughts."

ENDS

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<http://www.facebook.com/midsuffolkdistrictcouncil>

<https://twitter.com/MidSuffolk>
<https://twitter.com/BaberghDistrict>

<http://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/>
<http://www.babergh.gov.uk/>

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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