

District Councillor Report – Harry Richardson

October 2026

Local government reorganisation	The most significant development during September was the Government's decision, announced on 7 September, to withdraw its earlier proposal to replace Suffolk's six councils with three unitary authorities. They are now reviewing the reorganisation process following new legal advice and we expect a further update later this month. The immediate position is that District council elections are expected to take place in May 2027 on the present boundaries, with the planned Mayoral election in 2028 thereafter.
Sport and leisure in Stowmarket	At the September Council meeting, we agreed to forward-fund the proposed multi-use games area at Stowmarket High School after the scheme stalled because external capital was not immediately available. The facility is intended to accommodate activities including tennis, netball, basketball and football. Forward-funding should allow the project to proceed while Mid Suffolk waits for the external funding to reimburse its investment. This forms part of the wider programme of sports investment around the school and Chilton Fields. A 3G community football pitch and mini athletics track have already been completed, alongside cricket nets, a trim trail and improvements to grass pitches. Mid Suffolk also agreed a further £350,000 for the planned sports pavilion, to improve its sustainability and provide a larger risk reserve, together with a £50,000 grant to Stowmarket Rugby Club to appoint a facilities manager before the building becomes operational.
Former Fisons site, Bramford	Mid Suffolk has now served a formal Section 215 notice on Paper Mill Lane Properties Ltd, owner of the former Fisons factory site in Bramford. The site has remained derelict since the 2019 fire and has been affected by vandalism, trespass, fly-tipping and repeated concerns about public safety. Mobile CCTV was installed earlier in the year, but the September notice represents a more substantial enforcement step. Unless the notice is appealed, the owner must by 30 October 2027 demolish specified remaining buildings, remove demolition debris, graffiti and fly-tipped material, and replace temporary fencing with permanent fencing and gates. The part of the site containing listed buildings is not covered by the notice.
Planning and local influence	On 25 September, Mid Suffolk agreed to write to ministers about recent changes to national planning policy and regulation. The principal concerns are the ending of Government funding that supported communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans, the removal of ward councillors' ability to call in planning applications for committee consideration, uncertainty about proposed Spatial Development Strategies and wording in the National Planning Policy Framework that may allow more speculative development.

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