

# All change for local government in Suffolk

The shape of local government in Suffolk looks set to change over the next few years with Suffolk County Council and the county's seven District and Borough Councils all being abolished and replaced by a smaller number of "unitary" or single tier councils.

Here, *Babergh Matters!* quizzes Pat Rockall, the Council's Chief Executive, about this issue.

## Q: So what's been happening?

In February this year, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government gave the green light to the Boundary Committee for England and Wales to draw up proposals for unitary council arrangements across the whole of Suffolk and Norfolk. The Boundary Committee has a specific brief within that joint review of Suffolk and Norfolk to look at whether there could be arrangements for a "cross county boundary" unitary council covering all or parts of the district council areas of Waveney in Suffolk and Great Yarmouth in Norfolk. No other part of the Suffolk county boundary is subject to such review.

The review is intended to produce alternative proposals to Ipswich Borough Council's bid for unitary arrangements on its own current boundaries (a bid that was rejected by the Secretary of State in December last year), whilst the rest of Suffolk would have continued to work with two-tier arrangements.

## Q: Why unitary councils?

The idea behind unitary councils is that they would run all of those services currently provided by the County Council (such as Social Services and Libraries)



and the Districts/Borough Councils (eg Waste Collection and Planning).

The aims of such a change are:

- To save Council Tax payers significant sums of money by ending duplication and slimming down on staffing and councillor numbers
- To end confusion about which council provides which services
- To make access to all services by residents simpler and easier
- To give clearer accountability for decisions made by elected councillors
- To provide clear community leadership

Babergh District Council strongly supports the principle of unitary arrangements for Suffolk, and is pleased that this review is taking place. The Council

believes that unitary arrangements have the potential to deliver real benefits for Suffolk's residents, and is keen to work with the Boundary Committee and other Suffolk councils to identify which model of unitary government would be best able to deliver the benefits described above.

## Q: What type of unitaries are on the cards for Suffolk?

Four possible options for unitary arrangements have been identified by Suffolk's Council Leaders. These are:

- One single unitary council for the whole of Suffolk
- Two unitaries made up of separate councils for East and West Suffolk
- Two unitaries made up of a council for an expanded Ipswich and a council for the rest of Suffolk
- Three unitaries made up of a council for an expanded Ipswich plus councils for East and West Suffolk (*continues p9*)