To Chairman & Parish Councillors – Holbrook Parish Council

From Councillor Mary McLaren

Babergh District Council

Monthly Report – 15 March 2021

**COVID-19 – an update**

Regular bulletins are being produced to give a snapshot of the current Covid-19 situation in Suffolk. Along with updates on the work being carried out as part of the Suffolk’s Local Outbreak Control Plan. Bulletins can be accessed via the County Council website. Updates on the vaccine rollout can be found on SNEE NHS COVID-19 Vaccination Service website

**Community Testing**

1 in 3 people who have Covid-19 and do not have any symptoms may be unwittingly spreading the virus to other people without knowing. The current testing is known as the lateral flow or rapid testing and is for those people who are unable to work from home. I did send the parish council the full details of the Testing Centre currently being held in Holbrook Village Hall.

**Council pledge financial support for struggling households**

Households across Babergh will be eligible for a reduction in their council bill after Councillors approved further support for residents facing financial difficulties due to Covid-19.

**Covid support for businesses.**

There are several business support grants which cover different local and national lockdown periods. For businesses mandated to close (including retail, leisure and hospitality) that have applied and received a lockdown grant since November 2020, our plan is to automatically pay additional grants following pre-payment checks. Those who have yet to apply for any grants we are encouraging them to find out more and submit an application form as soon as possible. Further information about all covid business support grants can be found on

our grant funding schemes webpage

**District Council Meeting 23 February 2021**

Councillors have agreed Babergh District Council’s budget for 2021/2022 – delivering financial stability post-Covid while still delivering the councils commitment to climate change. The property investment company CIFCO is set to increase the £1.5m it has already ploughed back into the council services so far this year with a recent purchase of a Coventry Trade Park.

Babergh’s Cabinet approved new taxi fares in the district following wider consultation with cabbies. The base day time rate will increase by 20p.

**Free Port East**

Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils have confirmed their support for Freeport East (Harwich and Felixstowe) following the bid being formally submitted by Hutchinson Ports.

**Census 2021**

Households across Babergh will be asked to take part in **Census 2021** this

Spring. Run by the Office for National Statistics this is a once in a decade survey that gives the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales.

**An extra £3m for warmer, greener Suffolk Homes**

More Suffolk residents including those in Babergh are set to benefit from Government Green Homes grants thanks to the further successful bid for £3m funding by the consortium of Suffolk Local Authorities.

**Councils help combat holiday hunger.**

Both councils have continued to fund a joint initiative offering food and activities for families in need during the school holidays.

**Plug In Suffolk**

Plug in Suffolk is now providing grants for installation of Electric Vehicle charging points at non-profit locations such as community centres, parish council car parks and village halls.

Visit Green Suffolk’s Website or contact Suffolk County Council’s environment strategy officer - Peter Frost to find out more about funding

**The Postbox Project**

Since March 2020 when the Covid pandemic began, many of our residents have been isolated and lonely. BDC and SCC have partnered with Forge Church to launch the Postbox Project. Our aim to connect people across Suffolk using letter writing to build new friendships. We are currently recruiting volunteers to write letters, so if you can spare a little time please let us know. Alternatively if you are aware of someone who is experiencing loneliness and would benefit from a letter you can directly refer them to the project.

**Bad news The Women’s Tour –** The international cycle race originally scheduled to finish in Suffolk on 12 June 2021 has been postponed due to COVID-19. Organisers have requested alternate race dates of Monday 4th to Saturday 9th October. Work with local businesses and schools to help promote the event will begin once the dates are confirmed.

**The Sustainable Development Fund**

The Sustainable Development Fund is available for community and conservation organisations (or individuals) to support such projects for the enhancement of Dedham Vale, AONB and Stour Valley.

The AONB is seeking applications from local projects that benefit the public, are innovative, socially inclusive, sustainable and involve partnership working. For information and advice about the fund please visit the website or contact AONB grants officer OKA LAST.

You will be pleased to note that my final locality grant was awarded to Holbrook and District Pre-School and Playgroup.

We continue to thank The Holbrook Helpers, the Churches, and the many volunteers who continue to be good neighbours and friends to those in our village who are in need.

Mary McLaren

2 March 2021