



To Chairman & Councillors Holbrook Parish Council
From Councillor Mary McLaren
20 February 2023

Town and Parish Liaison Meeting 1 February 2022

The meeting was well attended and the subjects that were presented by Officers and discussed with those attending were:-

Planning – The Progress of the Joint Local Plan.

Finance - The reality of the impact of Covid and the Cost of Living Crisis on the Council Budgets.

May Elections – the major change being the requirement of Voter ID and the rules regarding Parish Council Elections. The pre-election period for PCs starts on the 16 March 2023 to 5th May 2023 however I have been in contact with Edward McCreadie – Head of Electoral Services who has advised me he is putting together an information email for all Parish Clerks which will be sent out the week of 20th February. There will also be a link to a booking system for clerks/candidates to book in to deliver nominations to Endeavour House.

The Communities Directorate - As Cabinet Member for Communities I was very proud of the Communities Staff who organised the whole event and supplied everyone with refreshments and gave a presentation. In addition there was a stand demonstrating the diverse activities of the Communities Teams who are divided into Locality Teams and cover Health & Wellbeing, Leisure, part of the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (ASB, Domestic Homicide, Domestic Violence, Modern Day Slavery etc.) and Grants. For Shotley Parishes - we are in the Green Team and our local Communities Officer is Taiwo Ajayi.

*We need to ensure that all our residents understand the Voter ID requirements and other options and consider a wide distribution of that information.

Building Services Transformation

Babergh District Council is taking urgent action to improve their Building Services which maintain their council housing and resolve several issues.

The council began a programme of work to improve the service last summer and in-depth assessments arising from this work subsequently identified problems around health and safety compliance. Of their 6,788 homes, 344 do not currently have an up-to-date electrical safety report, Gas Inspections are also overdue on 92 properties and asbestos re-inspection surveys are not up to date on 33 homes.

Urgent work to address these deficiencies is already underway including additional inspections, overhaul of existing processes and providing more robust data around health and safety compliance to provide tenants with complete re-assurance.

The Council voluntarily reported themselves to the Regulator of Social Housing as soon as they were aware of the omissions.

The Regulator has issued a Regulatory Notice meaning it will meet regularly with the council and monitor its progress. However, the Regulator has confirmed that it does not intend to take statutory action against the council as the urgent programme of works is already in place.



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Supporting rural communities at the heart of Babergh Budget Plans

Tackling rural isolation and ensuring communities have access to the services they need are at the centre of Babergh District Council's budget for 2023/2024.

Despite the challenging economic climate, the council has been able to produce a balanced budget ensuring on-going support for residents, businesses, and communities.

Babergh District Cabinet met yesterday to review the scale of financial pressure on the council because of global events, such as the Covid 19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and rising inflation and interest rates and how that has impacted the proposed budget.

The figures show that the council's net cost of delivering services is set to increase by 20% from £10.4m in 2022/23 to £12.45m in 2023/24 while the cost of running and maintaining the council's housing stock has already increased by 50%.

Budget Proposals considered by Cabinet were agreed.

- 2.99% increase in Council Tax (equivalent to £5.30pa or 10p per week for a Band D Property)
- 7% increase in council rents (social rents £6.68 per week & affordable housing £9.41 per week)

However, the Cabinet recommendations on the proposed budget will be submitted to a Full Babergh District Council Meeting for approval on 20 February 2023. Any changes to council tax or rents will take effect from 1 April 2023.

Babergh District Council has agreed additional help for those in most financial need with a council tax reduction of up to 100% for residents with the lowest incomes and a simplification of the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme for residents on Universal Credit.

Half Term Holiday Activities will take place in Sudbury, Hadleigh and Brantham (Under the SCC Holiday Activity Fund) when various activities will take place during this Half Term break. This ensures that students who normally receive free school meals will have access to a free lunch during the day of the activity. This is possible as we work with our own and other Leisure Providers.

Mary McLaren

7 February 2022

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Cabinet Member for Communities and Wellbeing.



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