

To Chairman & Councillors Holbrook Parish Council
From Councillor Mary McLaren
16 January 2023



2023 is bringing many challenges to Babergh District Council that will require good governance based on sound information and good working relationships with our Parish Councils. Together we want to achieve the best outcomes possible for our residents despite their individual difficulties.

Town and Parish Liaison Meetings

Babergh District Council is reinstating regular meetings with Town and Parish Councils with invitations already issued via Parish Clerks. I would be grateful to know if Holbrook have already received such an invitation.

The next session in February will be an opportunity to share current thinking on Babergh budget setting, update on progress with the Joint Local Plan and plans for the 2023 elections.

We would also like to hear about your parish plans for local Coronation celebrations and introduce our new locality officers and approach.

The meeting for Babergh is on Wednesday 1 February 2023 9.30am to 11.30am at Constable Memorial Hall, Gandish Road, East Bergholt, CO7 6TP

CIL Briefings with Parish Councils

I attended on-line, one of the many CIL Briefings offered to Parish Councils in December. For Parish Councillors & Clerks (and there are always new councillors) who are not familiar with CIL funding, this is a helpful event. The sessions are useful to the understanding of the process and the benefits to communities and groups who may have a project that could be financially supported by such funds even though that parish may not have had developments that have generated CIL funds. These sessions will be offered on a regular basis by the CIL Team.

Keeping charges fair

BDC Cabinet are due to discuss future fees and charges for council services at their first meeting of the year on 9th January 2023. Fundamental to that discussion is pledging to keep increases fair and continue to support those in need.

Also on the Agenda is the possibility of zero council tax for the poorest households in Babergh.

Fees and charges are a vital revenue stream for Babergh to help to sustain essential services for residents and communities.

Statutory charges that are not within the council's control are licensing and building control.

Discretionary charges for non-essential services are bulky item or garden waste collection.

“A home is not just a house”

Another important agenda item for the 9th January 2023 Cabinet Meeting, is the adoption of the council's new tenancy policy. This supports the council's vision to improve the wellbeing of its tenants and support the development of family life and thriving communities across the district.

The policy sets out a clear explanation of the range of tenancies that the council offers and how they are managed.

Babergh has to be in line with the requirements of the Housing Regulator as the Council aims to be a good landlord. The implementation of secure tenancies is the best practice within the housing sector and our current practice of tenancy management or the rights of existing or new tenants requires no significant changes.



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Councils successful bid for housing fund pot (Housing Advisers Grant)

A successful bid of £20,000 was led by East Suffolk Council on behalf of all the councils in Suffolk. They will work together as the Suffolk Housing Board identifying opportunities to bridge the gap between housing supply and demand.

Working together councils have already identified 900 properties available for rent, 5,000 properties marketed for sale, 1,000 long term empty homes and 6,000 second homes. Despite this there are a significant number of households living in unsatisfactory, unsuitable accommodation experiencing or at risk from homelessness. The Suffolk Housing Board will therefore agree proposals that remove barriers to accommodating people as well as gaps in policies where accommodation solutions could be encouraged. As the Cost of Living Crisis impacts our residents, working together to find genuine affordable properties for those in housing need is important.

Pioneering a carbon cutting solar investment at Kingfisher Leisure Centre Sudbury

I was happy to attend the official launch in December of 40 Solar Car Ports at the Leisure Centre which will provide over 16% of the Centre's annual electricity demand. The site includes battery storage so excess energy produced during sunnier periods can be saved for later, as well as eight electric vehicle charging points (including two rapid chargers)

Christmas holidays full of fun for families and children

The breadth of activities available for young people this Christmas were wide and varied but addressed other issues within the cost of living. Some families attended cooking sessions, as families together learned to cook and then at the end of the session left with a box full of ingredients to carry on cooking at home (with recipe cards) or a family of four for a week. Other activities were adventure days and inflatable games.

Abbecroft Leisure at Hadleigh and Sudbury opened their Leisure Centre doors as "warm spaces" for all to charge mobile phones, get a hot drink, even a hot shower as well as family swimming. The Holiday Activity Fund (funded by the County Council) and delivered by District Councils provides free sessions and activities to those children who receive free school meals and encourages young people to stay socially connected and physically healthy over the winter break whilst ensuring they all receive a packed lunch or similar.

Winning Names for Babergh and Mid Suffolk's environmentally friendly bin lorries.

The competition to name the lorries was a great success and attracted over 400 entries from different age groups and different villages.

The council's crews and waste team had the difficult job of choosing 22 from a short list of just over 30. The upgrade of the new bin lorries (first time in 10 years) cost £2million. The lorries undertake over 100,000 collections a week. We are the first rural councils in the UK to use HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) and this will contribute to reducing our carbon emissions. The names reflected popular culture and favourite personalities. Ed Sheerbin and Gary Bineker being two prime examples.

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3 January 2023

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