

Holbrook Annual Parish Meeting – 25 April 2023

Chairman, Parish Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen

A busy year for Babergh District Council and a very challenging year for all our residents

In April 2022 dramatic changes were taking place within the council due to political infighting between the main party and other political groups. As a result 4 conservative members including myself crossed the floor to become initially Independent Conservatives which resulted in us becoming Independents. Apparently a similar situation had occurred in 2017 with the same trouble making councillors being involved. A Rainbow Cabinet was created by the Leader of the Council John Ward and I was appointed to the Cabinet Portfolio of Communities and Wellbeing.

My notes show that at the beginning of May, council officers were inspecting homes of those who had volunteered to share their homes with people from Ukraine. Our communities have been very pleased to welcome our Ukraine friends and hope they feel at home with us.

June proved a busy month with the The Women's Tour passing through Stutton and Holbrook on their way to Bury St Edmunds on 6 June with many young people cheering the teams on their way. I was lucky to greet the teams at the end of the race. The month also brought the Queens Platinum jubilee weekend and all the celebrations made us feel more normal again. We know that Paddington Bear had his own special party.

The Head, Staff and Student at RHS provided us with their spectacular Festival of the Sea which was enjoyed by us all.

However the Cost of Living Crises was well established and BDC produced their five point plan which is still place and is still responding to the current needs of our residents by co-ordinating public sector, private sector and voluntary sector partners to respond in the most effective and imaginative ways.

July saw the council concentrating on tackling Climate change and how that affects social housing. Our council became the first council to transform their waste collection fleet to Hydrotreated Vegetable oil from diesel as they work toward zero carbon emissions. We called for an urgent review of the number of the number and scale of the energy infrastructure projects locally in relation the possible erection of additional pylons and cables.

The summer brought activity projects for families and every child attending the events who were in receipt of free school meals were provided with a packed lunch or a chance to cook their own lunch. I attended many events across the district and enjoyed joining in the various activities.


September brought us the Local Cycling and Walking infrastructure plan aiming to increase active travel and help tackle climate change. There are many potential infrastructure schemes, Freston Hill being a major one. It will require a large amount of money to see that come to fruition.

The autumn saw the creation of community and church groups being encouraged to provide warm spaces. The benefit of those innovative schemes have provided many people with friendship, support and enjoyment especially for those living alone and in need of friendship. The warm space has been a secondary benefit.



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The wonderful lady who we had celebrated so joyously in previous months sadly passed away and our communities felt that her death was personal to them and our condolences were sent to the Royal Family

In among the mourning for her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth 2<sup>nd</sup> we joined together for a public proclamation of our new monarch King Charles III in our villages and life took on a new direction.

November saw concerns about Avian Flu in our district, grants were made available for warm spaces and a competition to name our new fleet of environmentally friendly bin lorries provided some light relief among the constant pressure of daily national and international news.

In December we were encouraged to buy local for Christmas to encourage our local businesses and the council launched its new tenant strategy as a result of a tenant engagement survey.

The bin lorry name competition attracted over 400 entrants and the names reflected the public's view of their favourite personalities - Ed Sheeran and Gary Lineker being prime examples.

The new year has brought little relief for our residents who are struggling with the cost of rents, council tax, food and coping with high energy and fuel prices.

One in five children in Suffolk are receiving free school meals and many organisations are providing food banks, food pantries and surplus supermarket food.

Struggling with Council Tax or Council Rent contact the Housing Support Team at the council. Make sure you are receiving all the benefits you are entitled to. Do contact the Sudbury Citizens Advice service which is financially supported by Babergh District Council who will help you through the various stages of getting the right help from the right organisation.

On 22 March 2023 The final Council Meeting was held and the current Administration of Babergh District Council came to an end after 4 years.

I wish to thank the Chairman and Parish Council for giving me the opportunity to speak today and for all their support over the past four years. It has been a privilege to serve the residents of Holbrook.

19 April 2023



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