

To The Chairman, Parish Councillors and Residents – Holbrook

Annual Parish Meeting Report 2024

In April 2023 I was coming to the end of my tenure as a Babergh District Council Cabinet Member for Communities and a District Councillor for Stour Ward (Harkstead, Holbrook and Stutton). The local elections loomed large in the minds of Parish and District Councils and the purdah period was full of delivering leaflets (one day I clocked up walking 11.5miles on my fit bit), meeting many people on the doorstep, attending to matters of concern to residents and still supporting those village activities and groups that are important to all of us. There was a sense that change was in the air and council groups were meeting perhaps for the last time.

4th May brought great changes and our neighbouring council Mid Suffolk created history by becoming the first authority in the UK to have a Green Administration. Babergh did not have any political party with an overall majority (That is 16 plus 1 in 32-member council) The outcome was the creation of a Rainbow Cabinet (4 Green, 3 Independents and 1 Liberal democrat)

Thank you to all the residents of Holbrook, for returning me as your District councillor for the next 4 years. Across the ward we had a 40% turnout which was good.

I was delighted to be elected to be the Chair/Co-Chair of the Babergh & Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees and sit on the Joint Audit and Standards Committee and the SCC Health Scrutiny Committee. All roles that I had held before. A new one for me was to be appointed as an observer on Ipswich Citizens Advice Board.

In May we celebrated the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III and Queen Camilla, and all the community celebrations were amazing in each parish.

Meeting the needs of young people especially those with special needs and families in need of financial support with children receiving free school meals is well demonstrated within our district council area. In each school holiday, activities such as family Park Cooking, free swims, sports, water sports, arts and crafts are available for parents to access and pre-book. To achieve these, we work with our Leisure Centres and other partners.

The Cost of Living Crisis continues to impact our residents and each parish have adopted various activities to become community spaces who welcome residents for social interaction, games, knitting, jigsaws and latterly support from Babergh District Council staff in on-line/internet training and practical advice from the Cost of Living Co-ordinator.

In October Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils staged a Community Climate Action Road Show. Greener Holbrook Greener World was chosen to demonstrate their very successful work and enthusiastic commitment to local residents, visitors from Shotley and all points east of Hadleigh.

At the end of October, the Parish Council Liaison Meeting was held in the Stevenson Centre in Great Cornard. Very well supported by Town and Parish Councils and lots of interaction between Parish Councillors and the CEO and Leader of the Council. There was some discussion on the new Joint Local Plan and existing neighbourhood plans.

In November both councils formally adopted the Joint Local Plan which was designed to ensure residents have sufficient housing, employment and inward investment.

In November, our Communities publicly remembered local residents who gave their lives for their country here and overseas in both World Wars and many conflicts since. We will always remember them.

Holbrook & Stutton have both undertaken successful Neighbourhood Plan referendums and can be proud of the confidence that was demonstrated by their residents on the day. In the Planning Process, the Neighbourhood Plan carries weight in the ultimate decision by the Planning Authority and the Planning Committee.

Well done to Bill Hewlett and Stutton Community Association who last year successfully bid for £100,000 CIL Money to upgrade the Community Hall. Everyone is delighted with the “new layout” in the Hall which will enable more groups to use the hall at the same time and be more practical for smaller groups.

Finally I wish to thank all the organisers, volunteers and supporters of so many clubs, social activities, schools and churches who every week willingly support, visit, enable and empower young and old residents to feel part of our communities. We would be lost without you. A very Big Thank You.