

Derek Davis District Council Report - September 2018

Community Infrastructure Levy Bids

I'm urging Community groups and parish councils are being urged to put bids in to fund projects which will benefit infrastructure our village villages.

The funding will come from two pots of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money collected by Babergh District Council from developers who have built in the parish.

One pot is the CIL 123 list, which is open to the whole district for infrastructure projects which benefit the community.

The other pot is paid direct to parish councils, and is a percentage of any scheme where CIL payment is due. This is 25% if the parish council has fully developed a Neighbourhood Development Plan, or just 15% if they do not have a ratified plan.

For example, four building projects in Shotley has attracted £15,777 for the parish council since the beginning of the year, with a further £1.8m available to spend from the district's 123 list.

Babergh has been collecting CIL since April 2016 and has completed its first round of bids. The new round starts in October and peninsula councilors are keen for as many groups as possible take advantage.

We are beginning to see this relatively new system of collecting money from developers and that can have a hugely positive impact on local projects,"

I would urge those who have wanted to do things to benefit the village to put forward their ideas and turn them into bids.

We have seen village money given to parishes and groups for a wide variety of things, including providing play equipment, kitchen improvements in public buildings, electric car charging points, and buying up land for community use.

Please feel free to get in touch with me or Babergh council if you would like to know more.

Pier Progress

Just because the planning committee refused permission for a café, offices, workshop and a visitor centre to be built on Shotley pier, does not mean Babergh is against its restoration. On the contrary, getting the Victorian pier opposite the 19th century Bristol Arms, back to its best where people can stroll down to enjoy the views along the Stour, perhaps do a little fishing off the end, remains an ambition.

As you may remember I was instrumental in getting the pier project off the ground, with considerable help from Babergh officers. We secured a £20,000 grant to get things off the ground and Babergh commissioned a survey of the pier to assess the viability and outline costs of making the pier safe and usable.

During the planning application consultation dozens of people wrote in to object, only one person wrote in support. It was a similar story in the planning committee when three

objectors shared the three-minute slot allocated to air a wide-ranging number of reasons why the application by the pier group should be refused.

These included the loss of a treasured view down the Stour, parking problems and adverse economic issues.

No-one spoke in support, even though there was a slot available before the applicant said his piece. In the end the planning committee agreed the substantial harm outweighed any benefits.

In a pretty unique move, representatives of the objectors subsequently offered to sit down with the pier group directors and find a way forward. This is encouraging as I feel it is always better to have open conversations and find an answer agreeable to the many, than force things the wider community has made clear it does not want.

Access Success

Reaching out the residents is an important part of Babergh's remit and while the ever-increasing use of the internet means many more people these days use our website to access services, there are still many who prefer face to face interaction when possible.

Customer service is part of my cabinet responsibility, and I'm delighted to see our pop up customer service access point at Shotley Village Hall has gone so well, with many people from a number of villages on the peninsula using the facility.

It helps that we have linked up with Suffolk Libraries, that has successfully provided a service each Monday, with people of all ages coming along and joining in. So please pop in.

It is expected the pop up model Babergh have tried, will be rolled out in other areas, with Hadleigh set to be the next venue starting in October.

Council Housing

Homelessness is not confined to the urban areas, as an example on the peninsula recently showed. A concerned resident contacted me about a gentleman living in a tent on the verge of a narrow country lane. When I spoke to him he told me of his circumstances and how he had not had any support. The most important thing was he was willing to accept my help. I contacted our homeless team at Babergh and also Tiffers, the Homeless Bus Shelter project, and they reacted quickly. At the time of writing this the gentleman was warm and comfortable and getting the right sort of support.

Housing is always one of the hottest topics in the district and it is excellent to see the strides my cabinet colleague Jan Osborne has made with her team in getting the time between a council house becoming vacant, and then re-used has dropped to 17 days (it was previously 54 days).

This means we can utilise our properties better, get our waiting list down and help families settle into a more suitable home.

I'm also hoping to bring you more good news in terms of new council housing being built on the peninsula very shortly as part of the 210 target set by Babergh.

Further afield

Babergh has agreed to sell the current TiC building in Lavenham to their parish council, negotiations regarding the car park and toilets are ongoing.

Stars of Babergh

Kind-hearted, selfless individuals and groups of volunteers are the lifeblood of any thriving community and we are fortunate to have so many wonderful people helping a raft of groups and organisations.

Like many others, I have put forward a range of people, groups and businesses in our Stars Of Babergh Awards, with the winners being announced at the end of October. Good luck to all those nominated.

If you have an issue you would like to discuss, please contact me at derek.davis@babergh.gov.uk or 07824167196. My Facebook page is: Derek Davis – independent Councillor