

News and information from Jane Gould, Babergh District Councillor.

To the Parish Councils and residents in Orwell Ward

October 2020

Ward news

Chelmondiston was the first Parish Council in Babergh to be awarded some of the District Councillor's locality fund. I was able to allocate £500 towards the resurfacing of the village car park which will not only benefit Chelmondiston residents but all the other feeder villages who use the local facilities in the village; I am also pleased to be giving Woolverstone United Football Club £250 to help with their Covid 19 risk reduction measures. Other applications are in the pipeline but if you have any community projects that you think would benefit from this fund please speak to me about it in the first instance.

Detailed plans for 75 new homes at Wherstead received the green light on 23 September; the application includes 'affordable homes' for low income house-hunters and the gift of public woodland to the local community. Outline planning permission for the development of Klondyke Field to the west of Bourne Hill, was granted by Babergh District Council's planning committee in December 2018. A decision on the final details of the scheme, scheduled for August 2020, was deferred on recommendation that the plans were amended to improve the design, securing more amenity space for the proposed flats and ensuring a better distribution of the development's affordable housing units. Councillors also requested improved pathways and boundary treatment to the neighbouring A137 to best meet the needs of future residents. Since then, planning officers have worked closely with the applicant, and other stakeholders to seek further clarity on queries raised and to develop the package of public benefits associated with the application. The development will benefit from 26 affordable homes, with further consideration having been given to the distribution of these. These homes will range in size from one-bedroom apartments to three-bedroom houses. Plans also cater for increasing demand from the district's ageing

population with the inclusion of one shared ownership bungalow and two bungalows earmarked for affordable rental properties, allowing residents to benefit from lower rents than the local market rate. Proposals incorporate public woodland which was previously privately owned enabling use of a community nature area by residents of both the development and local area. An obligation set out by the council, will see the applicant fund the management of the woodland, guaranteeing future enjoyment for years to come. A generous area of maintained public open space to the north of the site has also been included in plans. This will be accessible by proposed new footpath links creating additional connectivity throughout the development and wider area to promote greener, more sustainable transport options in the village.

To further support the council's blueprint for addressing climate change, the applicant will take a 'fabric first' approach to construction minimising carbon emissions by reducing heat and power usage from residents for the lifespan of the building. The developer has also committed to measures to encourage biodiversity, and will fund the installation of multiple electric vehicle charging points on site. Ecological mitigation measures include a 13-15 metre wide hedgerow buffer to the north and east of the site complementing the request made by councillors in August to provide a secure barrier between the site and the A137. In addition to this, the applicant will carry out fence improvements to address safety concerns previously raised about the site's proximity to the road.

There is an application in for 22 new homes pepper potted through Woolverstone and Freston, the consultation period has just ended for this application and we are waiting for it to come to planning committee. The application includes improved connectivity by way of new and upgraded cycle paths and footpaths between Woolverstone and Chelmondiston and Holbrook.

Babergh Chair re-elected

Councillor Kathryn Grandon will serve a second term as Chair of Babergh District Council for 2020/21 following the council's annual meeting. Cllr Grandon, Independent ward member for Hadleigh South, was first elected to Babergh District Council in 2011 and served as cabinet member for Communications before being nominated as Chair in May 2019.

Housing

Heather Tucker who is the Corporate Manager, Housing Solutions, reports that Babergh and Mid Suffolk have been successful in securing funding to ensure interim accommodation for the most vulnerable over the winter period. Heather says "We have been awarded £100,000 to help cover the costs of any commercial hotels we may need to rely upon to provide accommodation, especially if we get a second 'Everyone In' during the colder weather. The funding has been secured via the Next Steps Accommodation Programme, which is part of the government's landmark commitment to end rough sleeping for good. We have never had a 'winter provision', such as a night shelter in our Districts before, so having funding to enable us to get rough sleepers off the streets promptly, is fantastic. Last year we were awarded up to £2,500 per Council so to get £100,000 is incredible. We are one of 274 Councils who are being allocated £91.5m to help ensure vulnerable people are housed and continue to be housed during the pandemic."

Public Realm

Babergh's cabinet has approved plans which will see the management of public open spaces, playgrounds, and litter bins move in-house, in line with neighbouring Mid Suffolk. Public realm services in Babergh will be directly managed by the council from November 2021. The change will follow the end of the council's current contract with Idverde in October 2021. Bringing the service in-house, as is already the case in Mid Suffolk, will allow for consistent service standards and increased flexibility. It will also enable the council, jointly with Mid

Suffolk, to manage land more holistically to increase biodiversity. Planting wildflower meadows to replace strict grass cutting regimes where suitable and creating wildlife corridors are all options currently being explored by the councils' biodiversity task force sub-group. The in-house option was recommended by Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier this month, with cross-party support. The committee also praised the work of Mid Suffolk's existing in-house team, highlighting their efficient service. The public realm offer includes:

- Countryside
- Amenity areas, parks, and open spaces
- Street scene
- A14, highways verges work for Suffolk County Council
- Playgrounds
- Public conveniences

Babergh District Council worked with experts from the East of England Local Government Association to look at current service levels, and ensure all options were fully explored.

Please contact me if you have any issues that you think I can help with and all the very best to you all.

Jane Gould

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