

## **News and information from Jane Gould, Babergh District Councillor, to the Parish Councils and residents in Orwell Ward July 2021**

### **Ward News**

In Woolverstone, planning application DC/20/03247 for 22 houses and some cycle paths went before Babergh District Council Planning Committee on Friday 4th June and was approved by 7 votes to 3.

Applications are open for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' Locality Awards funding enabling communities to improve facilities, learn new skills and work towards becoming environmentally sustainable. In Orwell ward Chelmondiston are the first parish to apply for some of this years' District Council Locality funding, if any other parishes would like to apply please have a conversation with me first and I can advise on the next step.

### **An update on Covid-19 in Suffolk**

Regular bulletins continue to be produced to give a snapshot of the current Covid-19 situation in Suffolk - along with updates on the work being carried out as part of Suffolk's Local Outbreak Control Plan. We continue to play our part in response to the pandemic, alongside public sector colleagues within the Suffolk Resilience Forum, supporting in the event of local outbreaks as well as continuing to offer support to our communities and businesses. Please see the council website for more information.

### **Councils' Joint Local Plan examination to reconvene in September**

Hearing sessions for the examination of our councils' Joint Local Plan are expected to resume again in September, following a change of date, enabling them to be fully inclusive, whilst also ensuring public safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that the Stage 1 sessions, originally scheduled for June and July, will now take place over a concentrated period from September, with Stage 2 hearing sessions in mid-Autumn as originally planned.

### **Next steps for councils' biodiversity and climate change plans agreed**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have given the go ahead for £97k for projects aimed at boosting biodiversity and tackling climate change across their districts.

### **Local leisure centre to benefit from green initiative**

Councillors on Babergh District Council cabinet recently agreed funding for a new, more energy efficient, pool water cleaning system at Kingfisher Leisure Centre in Sudbury. The new system is expected to reduce Kingfisher's annual carbon emissions by between 6.4 and 8.6 tonnes, and, if successful, will be

considered for the three other council-owned leisure centres across both Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

### **New 'virtual' high street supports market town's recovery**

Shopping in Hadleigh is now just a click away thanks to the launch of new Virtual High Street sites. Over 100 new businesses have signed up to new sites in Hadleigh and Stowmarket, joining over 130 already signed up to the platform in Sudbury.

### **Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee approves CIFCO plans for 2021/22**

Councillors on Overview & Scrutiny have approved CIFCO's annual business plan ahead of its review by Full Council, with the property investment company having now brought in more than £5.4m to help fund services and projects for residents in Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

Cifco, the commercial property venture set up by Babergh and Mid Suffolk 4 years ago, is having to defer £1.5m of interest payments over the next three years. The move is to ensure it has sufficient cash to service its properties and meet other running costs as it continues to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. It revealed that six of its tenants have gone bust and although replacement tenants have been found for some of these properties they are paying a lower rent. The £1.5m being withheld represents a percentage of the payments Cifco is intending to make to the councils over the next three years. (13%, 11% and 6%). The council says the remaining repayments are still comfortable enough to allow it to pay back the interest on the Public Works Loan Board loans it has taken out.

### **CIL funding supports future investment in Babergh**

The latest Community Infrastructure Levy round sees housing growth in Babergh fund £346,000-worth of vital improvements, including the transformation of a village hall, as well as the expansion of a local secondary school, following agreement by councillors last month.

### **Belle Vue Park entrance on the agenda**

Plans to realise the full potential of a new entrance for Belle Vue Park, including a new café and fully accessible toilets for visitors with disabilities, are to be considered by Babergh District Council's cabinet in July.

### **Changes agreed to social housing allocation system to ensure fairness and consistency**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council cabinets both recently agreed amendments to Gateway to Homechoice, the lettings system used to allocate social housing across the local authority areas of Babergh, Braintree,

Colchester, East Suffolk, Ipswich, Maldon and Mid Suffolk. The changes have been made in response to national legislative and policy changes, including a new Code of Guidance issued by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government in December 2020, and will ensure that key decisions can be made fairly and consistently by all Gateway local authorities.

### **Performance update**

Cabinet members for Babergh District Council recently considered the latest performance reports, highlighting the council's outstanding response to the pandemic, whilst continuing to deliver against the Corporate Plan. The full report provides an insight into what service areas have achieved over the last quarter and is available to view on the council's website.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any issues that you think I can help with and all the very best to you all.

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