

News and information from Jane Gould, Babergh District Councillor.

To the residents in Orwell Ward

COVID 19 Newsletter 5

31 May 2020

Some positive news here with quotes that Babergh and Mid Suffolk have received over the COVID 19 period that shine the spotlight on compliments that the incredibly hard working staff have had paid to them.

Our business grants team for their efficient delivery of business grants:

"A big thank you to Babergh for making the grant payment so easy and so quick. Even though I had to go to my office to get the information on the business rates bills, the claim itself and the payment were not only quick but also very much appreciated to help us pay our ongoing commitments."

"The grant for small businesses which we received from Babergh was done very quickly. It will make a great difference as nobody knows how long this lockdown will go on for."

"We are very grateful for the grant and it will be most helpful in getting us back to normal, hopefully, in the not too distant future. I know how much criticism Babergh gets, occasionally from me, but the staff must be working very hard under difficult conditions and they deserve to be thanked."

"Thank you so much for processing my grant so quickly. You will never know the relief I felt when your email arrived with my remittance advice. I really appreciate your prompt support at such a challenging time when

you all must be so busy and have a huge workload. I am truly grateful for the lifeline - thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Our council tax team for their support:

"Shout out to the lovely lady who helped me plan my council tax bill in current emergency. Very helpful and friendly despite the amount of calls. Brilliant service."

Our waste team who received several compliments for carrying out essential services in our districts:

"I just wanted to pass on my thanks to your refuse collection teams in Shotley Gate. I am so grateful that they continue to work during these worrying times - they are much appreciated."

"Thank you super stars for all you do. Keep well."

"My bin was missed yesterday, but after dropping an email to Babergh it was collected this morning. Great turn around in difficult times thank you!"

"Please thank all your staff for the excellent work being undertaken. Keep up the great work."

Update on business grants

The number of applications for the Small Business and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants has started to slow down, and we have now distributed almost £40m across both districts which equates to around 85% of our grant funding allocation. Businesses who are eligible can still apply for either of the

grants by completing the simple online application form which is accessible on our website.

Launch of Discretionary Grant

The Discretionary Grant to help small businesses in shared spaces, market traders, charity properties and Bed and Breakfast owners has been launched. The Discretionary Grants criteria have been set out by Government to help those businesses unable to claim the Small Business or Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants but have fixed property costs. The grants range between £2,500 and £5,000 depending on the type of business, number of employees and impact of COVID-19 on the business. Applications can be made through our website and businesses will have to provide evidence that they have suffered financial losses due to the coronavirus crisis.

The first phase of funding will close on Friday 19th June, after which, we will review the available budgets and establish whether the scheme can be expanded for any other businesses outside the initial Government recommendations.

A Tree For Life

A Tree for Life scheme in Babergh and Mid Suffolk which offers a free tree for new parents is now open for 2020 applications allowing families to apply from home during the coronavirus outbreak.

Recognising that new parents may be feeling more isolated than usual, and looking for something to look forward to with their new arrival, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have now opened their Tree for Life applications. It is open to all families in the districts who welcome a new arrival between 1 January and 31 December 2020, in addition to parents who may have lost a child during the same period, to apply for a remembrance tree.

The initiative offers parents with a new born or newly adopted child the chance to mark their arrival by planting a tree. It aims to benefit families, communities and the environment by boosting tree coverage across the district.

This year's relaunch follows a bumper 2019 scheme with over 400 trees given away earlier in the year, ahead of the coronavirus outbreak. Tree collection events were held in Stowmarket and Hitcham, where expert help was on hand to advise families on their tree choice and aftercare at home.

Open to all including those without a garden, a selection of trees were also planted with families at key locations in the districts including Needham Lake, Shotley Golden Wood, Broom Hill in Hadleigh, Gallowsfield Wood in Haughley and Sproughton Millennium Green.

In Babergh, where the Tree for Life scheme launched for the first time in November last year, there were 196 applicants. According to the Office for National Statistics, that means around 30% of families with new-borns in our districts applied for the scheme, but now the council is encouraging even more people to claim their free tree this year.

Cllr Elisabeth Malvisi, Babergh District Council's cabinet member for environment, said:

"While we are in uncertain times, I hope that by opening applications now we can give our new families something to look forward to over coming months.

"I'm proud that in just a matter of months, Tree for Life in Babergh has blossomed beyond expectation providing a unique opportunity to benefit our environment and support the county-wide climate ambitions, while also giving families a reason to spend time in the garden planting and nurturing their tree for the years to come.

"I would encourage as many people as possible to claim their free tree."

Families can apply for their tree on the councils' website with 2020 applications closing on 17 January 2021. Any applications and queries received about the scheme will be processed and responded to later in the year. The trees must be planted within the two districts and eligible applicants will be invited to choose and collect their tree at a tree giving event expected to be in early 2021.

Council meeting arrangements

All full council, cabinet and committee meetings will be held virtually until at least September 2020 in accordance with the existing schedule of meetings. All non-public meetings with councillors (briefings/working groups/panels etc) will be held virtually. We are using Micro Soft Teams rather than Skype to conduct formal public meetings.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committees are resuming their regular meetings by holding them virtually. The Chairmen of both committees have reviewed the Committee's work plans, ensuring that the councils continue to have a robust scrutiny process.

The Climate Change Task Force group have been meeting regularly since Babergh declared a Climate Emergency this time last year. They are now in a position to make recommendations to Cabinet. We are looking at many ways we can make the workings of the council carbon neutral by 2030 and ways communities can be supported to work to the same time target. I will give more details as they emerge.

Domestic abuse support is now available 24/7 in Suffolk

A domestic abuse helpline run by Suffolk County Council and the Anglia Care Trust extended its opening hours on 22 May, enabling support to be offered 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The helpline, which is free to call on 0800 977 5690, provides assistance to those who may be at risk of abuse at home -

especially during the lockdown. Anyone with concerns can access this local support, including professionals who may be supporting clients, as well as friends or families who are worried about loved ones.

If it's difficult for you to talk on the phone, a live web chat service can be accessed Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm.

Alton Water

Please see the letter that Grant Tuffs has sent with information about the reopening of Alton Water. Some of you have circulated this already, thank you for that but to some of you it may be new information.

We would like to thank you for your support since Alton Water has been closed, and while we've been making plans to reopen safely. We know this has been a long and frustrating period for us all and we thank everyone for their patience and understanding. What makes us love doing what we do, is seeing and experiencing the pleasure all our visitors get from their experience on our parks. Being closed has been very uncomfortable for all of us but necessary in our combined struggle to get through this pandemic together.

Pleasing all of our varied communities during this time was always going to be a difficult task, but we have tried to do the right thing by our employees and by residents, living nearby. We know many have been looking forward to getting back on the local trails. As we are now confident our reopening preparations are all in place, we're very happy to let you know we will be reopening Alton Water from Tuesday 2nd June.

However, there will be changes across the park to make sure social distancing can be maintained, to protect visitors and our colleagues. For example, The aquapark will be closed and water sports will be limited (day launch only, no hires). The mini golf and children's playgrounds will be closed and the cafes will be offering takeaway food and drink only, but toilets will be open. Please check our webpage for full details: <https://anglianwaterparks.co.uk/alton-water>

It is clear that there is still a long road ahead in respect of living with Covid-19 and it'll come as no surprise that, as with all walks of our current lives, things will look a little different for some time to come. We will be monitoring the Government's advice and the situation at our parks as the summer progresses, and will keep you updated on any changes we need to make.

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.

Jane Gould

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