

## **District Councillor (Dave Busby) Annual Report 2022**

### **2022-23 Budget**

The 2022-23 budget process was helped by a rise of over 4% in the Council Tax Base and a, better than expected, Government settlement. Babergh's element of Council Tax has gone up by £3.48 per year for an average (Band D) dwelling taking it to £177.34. Council house rents increased by 4.1% in line with Government guidance. Sheltered housing charges and garage rents remain at 2021-22 levels.

### **Car Parking Charges:**

Whilst the decision to introduce revised charges still stands, the implementation date is still not fixed.

### **Belle Vue Park and House:**

A planning application has been submitted for conversion of the house and new build to provide retirement accommodation. The new entrance proposals are also at the planning stage, with both decisions expected soon.

### **Planning.**

The new Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for an Independent Examination last year. Following the Inspector's suggestion, the Plan will now progress in two parts. Part one will concentrate on the various Development Control policies and is expected to be complete by the end of 2022. Part 2 will address Settlement Hierarchy and allocations and we are hopeful it will be ready for adoption late in 2023.

### **Council Housing.**

Over the years, Right-to-Buy has gradually reduced BDC housing stock. The Affordable Housing Programme looks to increase that with acquisitions and new builds. During 2021-22 the overall total BDC housing stock increased by 82 to 3677.

### **Climate Change**

The Council is committed to reduce its 'carbon footprint' and to help in this: the refuse collection fleet (the largest element of the Council's carbon emissions) has changed to using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) for all refuse freighters. A project to recover backwash water at Kingfisher Pool has been completed which reduces both energy and water consumption. Work has also started on the 'solar carports' in Sudbury's Kingfisher car park which will generate electricity to charge the car parked in the shade below.

### **Waste and Recycling**

Covid continued to present challenges, affecting collection crews and HWRC staffing. Fly tipping incidents have returned to pre-covid levels, but contamination of dry recyclables is still a problem. The Suffolk Waste Partnership has embarked on an awareness campaign to reduce the amount of glass in both blue and black bins. Glass is currently recycled via 'bring sites' – bottle banks and HWRCs.

## Sundry Items – A Flavour

- Draft strategy on development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) following public consultation. Prioritisation framework developed for projects.
- Hosted Local Energy Showcase Event – Over 220 attendees and excellent feedback received.
- Innovate Local programme is continuing to prove successful with great feedback from businesses who have been part of the trial. The pilot finished with Christmas markets.
- Delivery of 57 trees and 2,045 hedgerow plants to parishes who applied through our Tree and Hedgerow planting scheme.
- Surveying of BDC owned local nature reserves, county wildlife sites and large public realm sites with high biodiversity value completed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust.
- We commenced the delivery of our pop-up services in Shotley and Hadleigh from October 2021
- CCTV – all cameras are now installed and further work with the police commenced to ensure CCTV operatives are aware to monitor areas within the towns to identify possible vulnerable women and girls being followed or approached.
- Active Schools: 8 Primary Schools took part in the programme - awaiting an evaluation but initial data is extremely positive. The most significant improvement has been the increase in active travel percentages across a number of schools, where scooting, walking, or cycling to school has improved. This in part can be attributed to our work with schools on the promotion of bike/walk to school weeks and the provision of resources to promote safe, active travel to and from school.
- Health and wellbeing event for residents aged 50+ was held in partnership with Active Wellbeing service at Hadleigh Pool and Leisure.
- Launched our Scheduler within our Repairs Service – this will massively improve our service by making it easier for our tenants to schedule repair jobs when they first make contact.
- Developed Concept Plan with Staff and Member Working Groups ahead of the next stage of our proposals for our office space at Endeavour House. Significant reduction in space occupied likely.
- Regular involvement with proposed infrastructure projects such as solar farms, new overhead lines, battery storage, etc.