

## Parish Councils - District Councillor Report – November 2023

Dear Councillors,

I'm sure you will share my concern at the unfolding global tension created by the appalling situation in both the Middle East and Ukraine. At what point will there be any 'humanity' introduced to stop the senseless casualties and deaths of, in the case of the Middle East, innocent children suffering horrendous injuries. My father fought for European freedom between 1939 and 1945. At this time of the year, I wonder what he would have thought of where we find ourselves in 2023 and the dreadful strife so many countries across the globe. I'm sure many of you will join me, in reflection, as mourn our own fallen over the various conflicts of recent memory and 20<sup>th</sup> century history.

### Babergh Notes

Last month saw the launch of our new council website. We are keen for your feedback on our new look site. As they say 'its not the finished article' but, hopefully its starting to look a great deal better than what we had, both in design, appearance and being intuitive to navigate. You may have old, saved html links, which will need changing, as they may no longer take you to the expected 'landing site'.

I attended an excellent and well attended Town & Parish Liaison meeting held at the Stevenson Centre in Great Cornard. John Ward, our acting council leader, took the chair supported by Arthur BMSDC CEO and a very able group of officers from various key areas from within the council. The event was attended by parishes and towns from across the district from Shotley to Sudbury and Copdock to Cockfield. Several common themes emerged from the rural parishes with a distinctly different agenda from the more urban town councils. We considered the BDC Corporate plan including the strong desire from many parishes for more 'genuinely affordable' homes sufficient to satisfy the demand from local younger (trying to get a starter home) and older (would like to downsize, but not have to leave the community to do so). The district has a significant social housing portfolio. Some new housing, built in the last few years, in excellent condition. We also have a range of housing in less good shape, that requires updating. There remains strong demand for 'social housing' as it is accompanied by 'social/regulated rents' which are the most affordable way to get a roof over your head.

Tom Barker, BMSDC Director of Planning, talked through the current position on the Joint Local Plan part 1 (JLP Pt1) and the potential impact of its 'weighting' in the planning process along with the older, more redundant local planning policies falling away with less planning 'weight' given to them. It seems possible we may go through a bit of a 'bedding in' period where councillors, involved in decision making, will need to be mindful of the transitory impact for residents making planning applications. It becomes all the more important to consider steering a community's development by creating a Neighbourhood Plan ensuring its given full 'weight' in planning applications that are made in the community. Tom and the neighbourhood planning team (Paul & Jo) would be pleased to give help to start this process in communities that haven't chosen to undertake to go down that route. Let me know if this is something you'd like to consider.

During the last month I've attended a briefing presented Robert Hobbs on the councils Joint Local Plan (JLP Pt 1). This new policy will be received by both councils over the next couple of months. Planning committee (Babergh) has had only one meeting this month on the 18<sup>th</sup> October looking at an application for a 'Drive Thru' Starbucks on adjacent to the mini roundabout on the A1071 junction B1070 & Ellen Aldous Avenue.

The BMSDC Overview and Scrutiny committee has met once when the committee considered the annual review of the 'Joint Homes & Housing Strategy' for both authorities. The councils are now making considerable inroads into progressing the new strategy – including a drive to use our own people to undertake repairs inside homes and outside. This will, eventually, give the council much more control over repair outcomes and generate significant efficiencies. Inevitably, there is some 'lag' in transition from contractors to 'in-house'. I'd be happy to share greater detail with councillors should they wish to discuss this with me.

Full Council met on the 24<sup>th</sup> October with a relatively short agenda. My O&S colleague, Mary McClaren (O&S Babergh Chair), presented the quarterly report of the work undertaken by Overview & Scrutiny committee which was well received by council.

Whilst Dave is away from office, Helen and I are available for help on council or other local issues. I have regular monthly meeting opportunity for residents in Capel library. We are also both happy for residents to contact us for help or support.

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