

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT FOR NEDGING & NAUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

TUESDAY 9th JANUARY 2018

Introduction

It would be an understatement to say that a lot of things have gone on in Babergh since my last report. Perhaps the most high profile issue was a Motion raised by Opposition members, with some Conservative support, to demand a second referendum before taking any decision/recommendation on the merger of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils.

This was heard at a full Babergh Council Meeting on 19th December when the Leader of the Council (Jennie Jenkins) resigned just before a motion was debated to remove her as Leader of Babergh DC. Had it gone to the vote, she would have been removed by a combined vote of Opposition and disenchanted Conservative Members. Legal arguments were deployed to prevent the election of a new leader that night and an Extraordinary Council Meeting was convened for 4th January 18 to elect a new Leader.

I will brief verbally on this process and the events that led up to the election of Cllr John Ward as the new Leader of Babergh DC.

Public Access

I need to correct a previous incorrect statement concerning the new drop in locations for the electorate post closure of Corks Lane. I was led to believe that people who required face to face contact with Officers in Babergh had the option of going to Sudbury or Endeavour House in Ipswich. This is **not** the case as the facility has not been provided in Endeavour House. I do not believe that this is an acceptable solution to the less IT literate (mainly older) members of the electorate but I will track the levels of concern that become evident and respond accordingly.

Boundary Commission

The Boundary Commission for restructuring the current Babergh Ward pattern will produce its final recommendations on 6th February 18 when the implications will then be debated by the full Council. As I understand it, the Boundary Commission's recommendations will be agreed by the Secretary of State for implementation at the next local elections in May 2019. I fully expect the number of District Councillors to come down from 43 to 32.

Public Sector Housing

Following the completion of 12 additional public sector properties in Lavenham in 2017, 15 additional houses are due to be occupied in Glemsford in 2018 with a further 34 flats becoming available in Hadleigh following the refurbishment of Angel Court. I am currently not able to provide any further details of this particular project. Babergh also continues to buy suitable properties on the open market to increase the supply of Council owned houses. All in all, this is a good news story.

Private Sector Housing

Work has now started on the McCarthy Stone retirement development in Hadleigh (the old so called Tesco site). As a reminder, the plan is for 35 one/two bedroom flats and 28

two/three bedroom chalet bungalows. McCarthy Stone expect to start selling off plan in February 2019. This is a development that has the potential to allow older house owners (55 minimum age limit for the development) to sell larger houses and move to more suitable accommodation.

Merger of Babergh & MSDCs

Thank you again for letting me have your feedback on the merger option. Like you, I have reservations that need to be addressed before we move forward. I am pleased to say that we have been successful in that another referendum has been promised to ascertain the level of public support for merger. I acknowledge that much has changed in the 6 years since we last asked the people of Babergh to give their views. This will be explained in a business plan that is now being drawn up by the Chief Executive and his staff.

The process will now be a referendum (which I would expect/hope to be completed before the middle of the year). If this votes in favour of merger, the decision must be agreed by a majority of Babergh Councillors before it can be submitted to the Secretary of State as a **recommendation**. Only he can take the final decision and I would not now expect this to happen before 2020

Disposal of Corks Lane Buildings

Councillors will be briefed on the disposal recommendation for the Corks Lane facility on Friday 12th January 18 I will update/advise as soon as I can

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