

## DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT FOR NEDGING & NAUGHTON

PARISH COUNCIL – 12<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2019

### Introduction

A short report today under the new reporting arrangements but I will be pleased to answer any supplementary questions as required.

You may wish to know that the pre-election period (usually known as purdah) for the Local Elections will begin on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 19. From this date until polling day any materials prepared or released by council officers must not appear to be designed to generate public support for a political party or candidate. As such any press releases issued by the Council will contain statements by officers rather than Councillors during this period and Councillors will not be able to participate in any publicity for events. However, this does not prevent Councillors from continuing to undertake normal activities and officers will continue to support ward members working on behalf of their residents during this period.

### Disposal of Corks Lane Buildings

The plan to bring the disposal of Corks Lane to the Planning Committee early in 2019 were frustrated by an attempt to have the old Babergh Council Chamber listed grade II. This has now been reviewed by the Secretary of State and **refused**. The plan now is to bring it to the Planning Committee in March 19 as any further delay would push it back to after the Local Elections in May.

### Babergh Joint Area Parking Plan

This plan, which **does not include** any proposals to increase car parking charges in Babergh, sets out eight parking policy objectives and what they are intended to achieve. They include proposals that will:

- Establish a principle whereby parking will be allowed where possible and controlled where necessary
- Utilise off-street parking places to assist with traffic management and support local communities
- Set out how parking petitions and consultations will be managed
- Establish standard on-street parking scheme operating hours, with scope for different timings where need is proven
- Make clear the council's position on parking on footpaths

The policies will be used to guide councils' decision making around parking. The proposed plan does not set out specific proposals for parking restrictions for specific areas, nor is it a blue-print to change current paid parking arrangements.

More locally, I have an overriding concern that Babergh DC does not have a long-term strategic plan to provide additional parking in Hadleigh. With the likely growth in housing locally, this issue needs to be addressed by the new Administration as a matter of urgency.

### Investments

This has been mentioned before, but to update you, Parish Council members will wish to be aware that Babergh and Mid Suffolk DCs have the green light to double their lending from

Central Government from £50M to £100M. The principle being our borrowing at a low rate of interest to then allow CIFCO Capital Ltd to invest in commercial assets for profit. To date the first £50M has been invested/allocated to the purchase of a mixed portfolio of assets including office, retail and warehousing space. When all £100M is invested, we expect to achieve a healthy return in the order of 6%.

I will be formally appointed as a Director of the Holding Companies at the next Babergh Council Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> March 19. But having attended (as an observer) a meeting of the Holding Companies on 17<sup>th</sup> February 19, I was encouraged by the level of expertise and scrutiny involved. I was also pleased to hear that further investment in retail has been given a lower priority until we have a better understanding of Brexit and the likely future of struggling high streets in competition with the internet.

Irrespective, this will be a very important element of Babergh's future income stream if services are to be maintained.

### **Services**

I was recently made aware that Babergh is failing to carry out hedge cutting in some areas of the Parish. This is quite unacceptable, and I have asked the Cabinet Member to make enquiries as to why this has not been done. The question has been posed to the Officer responsible for this aspect of Babergh's support but as of today, the question had not been answered. I will follow up as required.

### **Local Elections**

The Local Elections for the new 32 Councillor Babergh District (down from 43) will take place on **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 19**. This will be your opportunity to either re-elect me or replace me as you prefer! Irrespective of who you will actually vote for, can I encourage you to drop into your local polling station on the day. Every vote really does count.

*Alan Ferguson*

Alan Ferguson

District Councillor South Cosford Ward