

District Council Report

Canada Cottage flooding

Planning enforcement have again opened a case into this matter - EN/21/00450. The previous investigation was not progressed once the officer in charge retired.

The manager of enforcement provided answers to the parish councils questions last week. However this has raised further concerns about the due diligence of Babergh planning 10 years ago, which I have raised with the manager. At time of writing I am awaiting a reply.

Corks Lane, Hadleigh

Significant inflationary pressures in the construction industry have resulted in a shortening of tender validity periods- to a period of a few weeks and sometimes only days, compared with several weeks, or months previously.

This has put Babergh in a difficult position as the contractor's price for phase 1 of the HQ redevelopment was only valid until 10th June 2022 and the Council needed to decide before this date to enable Babergh Growth to determine whether they can award the contract or not. Babergh Growth could not award the contract until they had secured the increased funding. Further delay to the award of contract in the current market would have resulted in price increases.

On June 8th, the Babergh Cabinet therefore agreed to increase the peak funding threshold for Babergh Growth Ltd to £7m for use to deliver the redevelopment of the former HQ site in Hadleigh

Energy rebate extension

Residents in Babergh and Mid Suffolk who have been unable to access financial support through the Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme may now be able to do so through a discretionary fund. In addition to the one off - £150 – launched in February the Government has made £300,000 available as a discretionary fund to Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils meaning people in need of support who were not eligible for the main fund can now access the £150 rebate.

The discretionary fund is for people who live in a house where the Council Tax is paid by the property owner or for those in a house of multiple occupation, in any Council Tax band that was not eligible for the Council Tax Energy Rebate.

Local community climate fund

A £150,000 fund has been opened to applications from not-for-profit organisations looking to deliver community-based carbon reduction projects in Suffolk. The fund is available to:

Charities

Community interest companies

Parish councils

Voluntary groups

Not-for-profit organisations

Projects could include:

improving the energy efficiency of buildings
promoting walking and cycling
using sustainable/recycled materials
raising awareness of climate change through events, among others

It will support up to 50% of costs (up to a maximum of £10,000) for projects that can demonstrate support from others in the community - in the form of contributions from multiple other sponsors for the remaining project costs.

Cost of Living Plan

Cabinet members at Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have considered a five-point action plan to support residents and staff through the cost-of-living crisis, bringing together work already underway with new initiatives, under five key headings:

Cost of Living:

- 1) Co-ordinating Government support – getting help to those who need it.
- 2) Exercising discretion providing welfare support and advice to support those facing challenging times.
- 3) Maximising partnership working and established systems to provide targeted support where there is a particular trend and need.

Preventing Crisis:

- 4) Maintaining good health – such as referrals for mental health support, use of council gyms, community-led “wellbeing” initiatives
- 5) Ensuring access to food and nutrition – such as healthy eating exercises/initiatives, community gardens and larders, or extra support for local food banks.

The plan brings together a suite of measures that focus on providing advice and support, maintaining people’s health, and building on work already underway since the launch of the councils’ Communities and Wellbeing strategies.

Energy Infrastructure

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are calling for an urgent government review of the number and scale of ‘potentially devastating’ energy infrastructure projects for local communities.

The leaders of both councils have written to the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, calling for a wider review of the strategic planning of energy infrastructure including developments such as solar farms and battery storage, for which the districts are seeing a substantial number of applications.