

REPORT TO HADLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL

THURSDAY 20TH April 2017

Councillor Dr Sian Dawson (Hadleigh North)

KEY POINTS IN THE SECOND YEAR OF BABERGH CONSERVATIVE ADMINISTRATION

Introduction

Let me firstly apologise for my being unable to join you for the AGM this evening. As an election has been called at short notice, I am unable to attend I trust the following will suffice, but as ever if there are questions please feel to contact me directly.

End of Year 2

As we reach the end of the second year in its history with a Conservative majority in Babergh I can again report that the year has been challenging. In the year, Babergh (and Mid Suffolk) have had to address some key issues that are almost all about “process change” to facilitate better and more effective decision making. The next 2 year will focus more on “outcomes” for our constituents.

Devolution

Devolution (now just for Suffolk) sits on a Minister’s desk in Whitehall. I will be amazed if it goes ahead with Suffolk alone as it goes against all the “bigger is better” principles that this government has pushed in a devolution context.

Governance Arrangements

After the Babergh AGM in May 17 and when we move to Ipswich, Babergh District Councillors will move from a Committee to a Cabinet governance arrangement. This (in theory at least) should make decision making quicker and easier although the power of decision making will rest in the hands of a smaller group of Councillors.

Public Access

An odd name for part of the decision to move from Babergh and Needham Market to Endeavour House, Ipswich. The move will take place in the middle of the year and be completed by September 17. With a shared back office Officer support arrangement this should make us more efficient as we will sit alongside out County Council colleagues and money will be saved by not having 2 half empty District Council buildings. However, the move will be challenging although we will ensure that support arrangements are put in place so that constituents do not have to go to Ipswich if they wish to meet with Council Officers. Details yet to be released.

Boundary Commission

As I have briefed previously, the Boundary Commission (BC) is looking at the number of District Councillors that we have in Babergh DC. Currently we have 43 but the Chief Executive has advised the BC that we require only 31 to populate the various committees that are needed to manage day to day business. The new number, therefore, is likely to be close to 31 (effective for next District Council elections in 2019) rather than the 36 that we suggested. I voted against 31 in the Full Council Meeting as I think the logic that got us to that number is flawed i.e. every District Councillor will sit on a minimum of 2 committees. The jury is out

on that one, but irrespective, I do not anticipate the reduction from 43 to 31 to impact on the South Cosford Ward

Housing (Public Sector)

We have recently completed a new public sector housing development in Lavenham and we have another that should be completed this year. We also have ambitious plans to build more council owned property. Details to follow.

Housing – Private Sector

We are building nowhere near the number of private sector houses that are required for our growing population in Babergh. However, I will remain strongly in favour of “right type”, “right place” and “right number” as we look at individual planning applications.

The Brett Works development by McCarthy Stone will commence this summer Hadleigh and I should like again to thank all those that were so helpful in the process. This is going to be an outstanding project I hope for Hadleigh and we look forward to its completion. The approval is for 65 flats and 2-3 bedroom chalet bungalows in what is best known as the site where Tesco planned (and failed) to build their supermarket. The project has been well monitored and I am advised that my influence has ensured that it is built to a high standard in keeping with the desirable location behind the High Street and close to the river. Building work is planned to start before the end of 2017.

East House Hadleigh

At last and after too many years, the disposal of East House has been agreed. It was offered at offers over £650,000 and it went under offer within 2 weeks. This asset should again become a high-profile part of the town.

Angel Court

Is now at procurement stage and I am advised by Lou Hawthorne and her team that by Autumn we will have details of the project. Again, another project that will be finally completed after many years of stagnation. Any questions please do not hesitate to contact me. This seems to have been a lengthy process but we are near completion of the internal processes to commence the works.

5 Year Land Bank

As part of our housing delivery requirements from national government, we are required to maintain a 5 year supply of potential building sites. Just last month, and out of the blue, Babergh has declared that it no longer meets this requirement, which makes us vulnerable to speculative planning applications.

Your District Councillor

Finally Ward Members may wish to be aware that there was a challenge to the current Council leader (Councillor Jennie Jenkins) who was duly re-elected.

Councillor Dr Sian Dawson

20th April, 2017