

# **HADLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2017**

**Report by District Cllr Dr Siân Dawson (Hadleigh North Ward)**

## **KEY POINTS IN THE SECOND YEAR OF BABERGH CONSERVATIVE ADMINISTRATION**

### **Introduction**

#### **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 years 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 our 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. Full details of location, opening hours and staffing levels have 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.

## **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 – possibly on suitable garage sites. Details to follow but Angel Court is also expected to deliver a considerable number of properties. I have requested directly to the CEO Arthur Chorovia that a poster is put up on the hoardings to advise residents we are here and that we are expecting the announcement in October following the procurement exercise what will be delivered.

## **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 McCarthy Stone development has already started and I understand the architectural dig will go ahead in Hadleigh shortly. This will take approximately 6 months and then building should commence latest early next year. The approval is for 65 flats and 2 and 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 will endeavour to influence the proceedings to ensure what was agreed is delivered. It is built to a high standard in keeping with the desirable location behind the High Street and close to the river.

## **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 – sold for £700K to a developer. This asset should again become a high-profile part of the town.

## **5 Year Land Bank**

As part of our housing delivery requirements from national government, we are required to maintain a 5-year supply of land bank 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. Not good news and especially relevant to villages where developments are being considered

## **Grass Cutting**

As I am sure you are all aware there is a lot of complaints regarding the grass cutting in and around Hadleigh. Peter Garrett of Babergh has advised cutting has been reduced from 14 to 12 cuts per annum and thus areas will be cut every 3 weeks from March to October. Cllr Tina Campbell (Hadleigh North) is Cabinet Member for Environment so any future green issues should be directed to her.

## **Cedric Morris Florilegium**

Delivering this project for Hadleigh is a personal initiative of mine that I hope will bring many visitors to the Town. On completion, the collection all watercolour paintings are being donated and is estimated to be worth £80,000. I am endeavouring to ask for your support that the Hadleigh Chamber is retained as an area for public art, lectures and exhibitions and will be used to house this collection for future generations.

***Cllr Dr Sian Dawson***