

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT TO LAVENHAM PARISH COUNCIL – 2ND MARCH 2017

DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

21st February 2017 – there were two main items of discussion. Firstly the budget which was voted through and details of what this means for council tax are shown below.

Secondly it was agreed that Babergh will support a proposal to the Boundary Commission to reduce number of district councillors from 43 to 31. The final say is for the boundary commission who are independent, but it is likely a cut in number of district councillors will be a reality soon.

COUNCIL TAX

The Babergh District Council proportion of the council tax you pay will increase by an average of 10p a week (for a Band D property) after councillors voted in favour of the 2017/18 budget, this is equivalent to a rise of 3.4%. This means those in the smallest properties face just over a £3 a year rise, those in a Band D property a £5 a year increase and those in the largest properties a £10 a year rise. The increase was voted through as the council faces a continuing decrease in core funding from central government.

The key highlights of the change are:

- No change to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for eligible residents
- No significant change to service levels despite the reduction in government support, as income generation and cost reduction measures have replaced the loss in government grant
- A decrease of 1 per cent on council house rents, equivalent to an average rent reduction of 91 pence a week, as required by the Welfare Reform and Work Act
- Sheltered Housing Service Charges to be increased by a maximum of £4 per week for each scheme to reduce the subsidy from general needs housing by £72,000
- An increase of 10 per cent on garage rents, equivalent to an average increase of 88 pence per week
- An increase in funding to £5 million for building and acquiring additional social housing in 2017/18

Unfortunately Government funding is set to decrease further over the next few years and all the work the council has done to reduce costs gets counteracted by falling central income. The slight increase was necessary in light of this.

POST OFFICE

The post is currently in talks with a business in Lavenham, looking at the potential of re-opening in a shop in the village. I will update further when I know more.

LORRIES IN LAVENHAM

The Local Government Authority is listening to areas like Lavenham and has come out in support of mandatory commercial satnav (specialist lorry satnavs) use by lorries. The LGA has stated truck drivers should use commercial satnav systems after a "catalogue of chaos" caused by lorries using devices designed for cars. Spokesman Martin Tett said: "It's common sense that all lorry drivers should use satnavs designed for trucks, but this is only going to become a reality when it is a mandatory requirement."

In the meantime I continue to fight the County Council for resolution to long awaited temporary weight restriction scheme.

PLANNING DEPT AT BABERGH

In anticipation of the expected office move to Endeavour House Babergh are taking the opportunity to bring the Development Management planning team into one location at Needham Market. The scheme started on 9th January the planning officer and technical support team will be principally working from Needham Market servicing both Babergh and Mid Suffolk areas. They will continue to provide a Duty Planning Officer service and planning reception facility with technical support staff at Hadleigh.

BABERGH & MID SUFFOLK SERVICE PROGRAMME

The programme, which will also see the Headquarters of both councils move to Endeavour House in Ipswich has announced that the locations of the customer services points will be in Stowmarket and Sudbury.

The specific locations in the towns will be announced in due course.

SHELTERED HOUSING

If you are at all worried about the proposal please contact Heather Sparrow on 01449 72476 or email heather.sparrow@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

COMMUNITIES BUILDINGS ADVICE SERVICE

The Community Buildings and Advice Service is provided by Suffolk Climate Change Partnership. This is a free impartial service, if you are interested in taking advantage of this; please contact John Taylor on 01473 264595 or email john.taylor3@suffolk.gov.uk

CITIZENS ADVISE BUREAU

Sudbury & District Citizen's Advice Bureau is will be offering a drop-in session in Lavenham Village Hall, 9.30am-12.30pm on the second Wednesday of every month.
<http://www.sudburycab.org.uk/home.html>

THE HALT PLAY AREA

I have had confirmation that in the very near future the play equipment for the Halt will be open to the public.

W Shropshire
March 2017