

District Councillor Report (September 2024)

Dear Councillors,

I hope everyone has enjoyed their summer break and the glorious, but somewhat dry weather. Keeping my newly plated hedging and vegetable garden has been a challenge...!

Summer has been quiet on the council front. I've spent some time doing visits to Capel and other parish's with 'domestic/local' issues including a couple of planning enforcement matters and maintaining my library morning residents' surgeries.

Our new government is starting to make its agenda known for local government and their expectations of us. I suspect there are quite a few issues that will manifest themselves over the period leading up to the end of the year, not least, what changes will be made to planning through the NPPF. This will inform the out-turn from our 'call for sites' and the formulation of JLP part 2. I'm pleased we continue to progress our neighbourhood plan's which will be an important element in informing BDC of the parish's expectations on local development for the future

On other matters a few notes below on general community action themes as follows:

Babergh Notes

Following on from my additional roles, I've been involved with the review of the Planning Charter for Babergh along with joining up with colleagues from Mid-Suffolk District Council. The Planning Charter is our 'rule book' on delivering planning activity into the district in terms of timings, decision making 'call in' process and defining our approach and consideration.

I attended the BDC Cabinet meeting on 16th July where Cabinet considered the adaptation of the planning process in Babergh to improve decision making on listed buildings where residents are looking to make energy efficiency improvements to their properties. Cabinet also looked at and approved our approach to creating a 'Social Value' policy such that we continue to drive up, through our wider spend with organisations, additional elements of increased social value. Clearly, we wouldn't wish to constrain our ability to obtain best value for council taxpayers, but we this will help us nudge and steer our 'acquisitions' in an increasingly 'social value add' direction. We also looked at reviewing and re-designing our approach to grants and their distribution.

Babergh planning committee met on the 24th July to consider the extension to the Assington Auto's vehicle dismantling and recycling site. This item had been brought to committee as it was considered to be 'controversial' and, under current planning policy, wouldn't be allowed. After a detailed presentation and careful and robust questioning by committee members, the application was granted. If members are interested, I'd be happy to share the decision-making position adopted for this case.

The joint BMSDC Overview and Scrutiny committee met on the 15th July. We considered the Western Suffolk Safety Partnership. The O&S committee reviews, Section 19 of the Police & Justice Act requires every local authority to designate a committee to scrutinise the activities of the crime and disorder partnerships and the activities of their partners.

I attended my first CIFCO board meeting on 18th July. Our 'professional team' dealing with strategic delivery of our business plan along with the 'hands on' tenancy management company are undertaking an exceptionally efficient process for CIFCO on our behalf.

As ever, I remain open to any members who would like to be briefed on specific anonymised examples of the council's work, in this area, please let me know. These meetings are also open to both parish councillors and members of the public wishing to attend either in person or online.

District Councillor Resident Surgeries

My regular meeting opportunity for residents in Capel library will be Tuesday 10th September at a slightly earlier time of 9.30 – 11.00am. The forward date for next month will be Tuesday 15th October 9.30 – 11.00am. No appointment is necessary, but if residents need more of a confidential chat, please let them know beforehand so I can arrange some privacy. I'm also available 'on demand' at the Capel PC office in conjunction with Julie Lawes (Capel PC Clerk & RFO)

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