

District Councillor Report (February 2025)

Dear Councillors,

January, with the rapid acceleration on 'Devo' and NPPF reform seems to have flown by...! My comments concerning the pace towards postponing/cancelling the County Council elections in May this year are starting to look inevitable based upon the 'noises' coming out of UK Gov and the local government minister, Jim McMahon OBE MP. We have also now been written to, on several occasions by the Minister of State for housing and planning, Matthew Pennycook MP. The NPPF review has now reached a Bill and is 'journeying' through Parliament. The impact of these changes cannot be ignored, and I was pleased that PC's were able to join (94 Participants....!) the Town & Parish Liaison Teams meeting presented by Deborah Saw, Chief Executive, Arthur Charvonia and our planning team of Robert Hobbs and Philip Isbell. Philip and Robert gave some insight into the NPPF issues and how BDC will manage their impact into our Local Plan and integration with communities Neighbourhood Plans. We remain firmly committed to community led planning decisions with full weight continuing to be given to 'made' Neighbourhood Plans. We will also aim to ensure we maintain the best level of resourcing to our neighbourhood planning team at Babergh. I will continue to throw my full weight behind all our parish's emerging NP's to get them over the line and support our communities in achieving this. As we have understood, for some time now, the NP needs to be a 'living' document that requires periodical review in the light of changing and evolving circumstances. Again, I'm pleased this is something our parish's' are considering.

Quick reminder on the Norwich to Tilbury National Grid Upgrade. There will be a NG webinar on the changes made following the statutory consultation piece. It takes place on 13th February between from 6.00pm. You can sign up from the NG website. It's worth a look as it will give a precise picture of how the line will go underground behind Woodlands Hall traverse Raydon, Holton St Mary and onwards.

Activity

- Brockley Woods – Apologies for the reminder, but we still need to remain mindful that this application remains in the background but must not be forgotten by us. Their next meeting will have passed on the 4th February. I suspect the application will now be heard on Tuesday 4th March meeting of SCC Development & Regulation Committee. Our very own BDC member, Peter Beer, is the committee vice chairman. I'm sure Peter will very much understand the impact developments, such as Brockley, can have upon local communities, whether it be the unexpected traffic consequences, which we all know and understand or simply the devastating impact on our landscapes and heritage. I continue to urge members to scrutinise the terms of the application and respond/lobby/share your thoughts with committee members (peter.beer@suffolk.gov.uk)

Babergh Notes

Babergh planning committee met on 22nd January to consider an application to grant approval at Holton Hall Farm for the erection of a 28-bedroom community care, rehabilitation and respite centre. The application site sits adjacent to the existing Holton Hall business park and APT Farming Ltd operation. Although there were 'heritage' and transport constraints the overriding benefits that will be generated from both economic growth (80 new jobs) and locally based health/respite care moved the balance towards approval which was unanimous by planning committee members.

The BDC Overview and Scrutiny committee met on the 13th January where we scrutinised the councils' Annual Complaints Report. The paper was presented by Cllr Alistair McCraw the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resilience. The Council is consistently 'upping' its game on seeking feedback from our various stakeholders and, as such, the level of response across various media platforms needs to be understood and analysed to consider and improve our performance. Looking forwards into the late summer, we will be reviewing the introduction of car park charging across the district to consider its progress and potential improvements to its operation.

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 the library will be Tuesday 11th February 9.30 – 11.00am. The forward date for next month will be Tuesday 11th March 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 PC office in conjunction with Julie.

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