

Annual Report

Babergh District Council

Spring 2022

Stoke by Nayland

Bures St Mary

Nayland and Wissington

Planning * Licencing * Waste * Environment * Economic Development * Housing * Communities*Building Control* Electoral Services*Communities*Housing

-
- Council tax will increase this year by 2% which on a typical band D house is 7p per week or £3.48 per year. Q3 (Oct-Dec 21) shows a surplus of 744k so expecting a very positive outcome for year end. The gross expenditure of £33.7m and income was £23.3m to give a net service budget of £10.4, which is primarily funded from council tax, business rates and gov grants.
 - The 22/23 budget was approved with a surplus of £527k predicted.
 - A new fund was established under this year's budget of £200k from the GF Reserve which is set aside to cover unexpected costs. As this was not touched during the pandemic it will be released to supplement the communities grant programme leaving a healthy £1m in reserves.
 - Under the Housing Revenue Account agreed at February meeting there was an increase 4.1% in Council house rents, equivalent to £3.72pw for social rent and £5.23pw for affordable rent. Sheltered housing service charges stayed the same (for the services of the Site Manager, alarm system and communal area). No increase in utility charges for sheltered housing for second year running even though gas and electricity prices have risen.
 - Building repairs budget has been set at a more realistic level taking into account last years' increase in cost. It will be sent at £424k pa.
 - The contract was Public Realm was bought back in house in November and feedback has been very positive on the standard of street cleansing, grass cutting is yet to start.
 - The new Joint Local Plan (Town and County Planning) is not complete as the Inspector found serious problems with its compilation.
 - The following information regarding Ukrainians refugees is on Suffolk CC website.
[Supporting Afghan and Ukrainian refugees | Suffolk County Council](#)
 - Central government has written to our council with information on funding arrangements to support Ukrainians refugees however we still don't have any settled individuals here. If you know of host families, please let me know.
 - Parking charges proposed for council owned car parks have been postponed until further notice due to concerns about the effect charges would have on our already struggling high street businesses.
 - Net income in 21/22 is £300k from CIFCO Capital.
 - Land at Belle Vue Park in Sudbury has been sold in a deal to develop the area of the old swimming pool and the house. Access will remain at the entrance from Newton Road. A new entrance will be made to open up the Cornard Road side and a new café and toilets will be proposed (all the above are subject to planning permission). Churchill, the developer wishes to

build private retirement living accommodation and wants to retain the house and include it in future plans.

- Work is complete on a £350k project to build solar carports at Kingfisher Leisure Centre in Sudbury. Government has match-funded with the aims of creating jobs, develop skills, provide infrastructure and tackle climate change. The panels will provide energy to the leisure centre and battery storage and EV charging as part of carbon reduction strategy.
- Work is nearing completion of the £9m extension to Gainsborough's House Museum. Its due to reopen this Spring.
- The Parking Review has been completed and is due to be shared with all Cllr's soon.
- The results of a review of all Babergh owned garage sites is due to identify sites suitable for redevelopment [ownership allowing]. Discussions are taking place with stakeholders in the next months.
- An £20k interest free loan has been launched to help owners improve and renovate vacant homes and bring them back into use ie to repair a roof, install central heating. Please tell the owner to apply if you know of any empty homes near you.

The housing team have worked hard to find temp accommodation for the homeless in the area during Covid. New accommodation has been purchased by Babergh that will offer temp places to homeless people.

- This is the second year that councillors have had an allocated budget of £2k to fund projects, items etc that will benefit the community, I spent some of my locality budget on planters in Bures. I'm waiting to hear if the balance can be carried forward to spend next year.
- Councillors voted against retaining some remote meetings in favour of 100% face to face for all formal meetings. Don't forget you can see how each councillor voted on each motion and check attendance rates on councillor's details page on Babergh site.
- Cabinet changes were made this month which resulted in 3 resignations leaving no independents in the Cabinet.
- Suffolk is one of 9 counties where negotiations are taking place on a new devolution deal. This will affect transport and infrastructure and address regional concerns.

It's been a very busy year. Since Jan 2021 I have assisted in 97 cases and resolved 85 of them.

It continues to be a pleasure to work with residents and parish councillors.

Melanie Barrett

07957928431/01787 370139

melanie.barrett@babergh.gov.uk