

District Councillor Report: November 2018

As Armistice Day approaches there are several events being organised. Babergh has sponsored an avenue of Oaks in Bourne Park in Hadleigh the last tree of which will be planted in a short ceremony on the 2nd November. Why Hadleigh, mainly because the Council owns the Park and it is not likely to be included in planning targets, where as other sites around the District are at risk.

In Bentley and East Bergholt schoolchildren will lay special commemorative crosses and symbols on the graves of First World War servicemen, those few who have both a known grave and are buried at home.

Planning still dominates the agendas. Phil Isobel is promoted to an Assistant Director role to lead planning policy and implementation. Not quite sure why as we have enormous gaps in the staff numbers in both areas! At a recent meeting on the NPPF and Neighbourhood Plans it was clear that Government regards Local Planning Authorities as the "problem" when it comes to house building, and that the 6,500 valid permissions that Babergh has are all its own fault. When developers show flat line house completion figures but increased profits, and mortgage approvals are down 10% and their average value down 20% (meaning lower house prices,) its hardly surprising that developers are trying to restrict supply to increase prices! Smaller builders are often more reliable but skills shortages and material limitations cause everyone problems. CIL should have eased the regulatory log jams but when one rule is sidestepped another is introduced and SUDS run by the County seems to be one of the latest problems!

The Budget left us very little in practical terms, but we can borrow more to build social / affordable houses, and increase our total debt up to nearly £100Million! That's about £1000 per individual across the District!

In the mean time East Bergholt waits anxiously for the outcome of the JR due Thursday (today). The appeal against a development in Boxford refused by planning committee against officer recommendation was rejected. There was some concern that our "Five Year Land Supply" figures were to be challenged and could be faulty!

Highways still present a challenge, with no news on the signage on the A12 although anyone waiting for a bus at the Four Sisters will have to wait in the rain as it was demolished by a vehicle overshooting the exit on Saturday night! If there are concerns over surface flooding etc form the rainfall, please contact SCC as quickly as you can. It may take 6 months for them to respond, on personal experience, but if we do not tell them they just will not know.

Bin collections have been a bit erratic, due to driver issues, apparently the contractor Serco, lost a lot of drivers due to the changes in license requirements, continuous professional competency, but they have now increased pay levels and are recruiting! Not a job I would like especially now the weather is deteriorating so they all should be adequately rewarded.

Elections are due at the beginning of May 2019 so expect the politicking to increase but do not expect too much in hand outs as we are supposed to be "skint"!

Cllr John Hinton
Dodnash Ward.
1st November 2018