

Babergh District Council report for January 2021  
Presented by Cllr Bryn Hurren.

First of all, I hope that everyone has come through the Christmas festivities in good shape and goes on to enjoy a progressively good new year with hope and better prospects on the horizon.

From the District Council's aspect we are all, officers and councilors alike, back at the coal face managing to do whatever we can to help manage the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic and all of our day job duties as well. We have become very adept at moving faster to make necessary decisions through working together with other agencies and with virtual meetings across the spectrum now the norm.

Housing has been a major problem with some fallout amongst crowded families, especially where several working adults have no job to go to and older relatives shielding and young people away from school and education. The better weather and the distribution of a reliable and safe vaccine will bring hope and relief to so many.

Our housing team have worked wonders and I am sure will continue to do so.

Another success is the expansion and refurbishment of our swimming pools and leisure centers, much of the work has been carried out during lockdown, which has not been easy and is a credit to our contractors who have worked tirelessly on the new pool at Hadleigh and the expansion of the kingfisher leisure center and pool at the Kingfisher at Sudbury.

The council is having to support these two premises at the moment through an enforced closure with grants and loans to keep them running and ready for when they can be used again.

Mental health, sport and recreation is going to be so important to get our district back to fighting fitness and wellbeing in the coming years and we hope to see these facilities well used.

Not so good is the backdoor attempt by some at the council, officers and councillors alike to slip a proposal for very increased car parking charges into the cabinet papers over the holiday period. While we must make every attempt to give value for money and keep council tax as low as we possibly can, this was not the way to do it and I would like to put it on record this proposal does not have this councillor's support, nor some of my longer sighted colleagues. At this moment in time we must give every support we can to our beleaguered high streets and surviving retail outlets and this was not the way to do it, any tinkering must be left until we are all moving normally again and retail outlets are on a firmer footing.

In this coming year we plan to cut the emissions from our fleet of refuse vehicles by around 90% by switching to biofuel which is basically a mixture of vegetable and cooking oil, this is also reputed to cut down maintenance and wear on engines and hopefully the emissions from the exhaust will not smell as bad as in the past when this was tried previously, I am assured that this fuel is more refined than before and any smell is burnt up before it is emitted.

The not inconsiderable cost of this scheme is to be borne by capital received from our CIL monies which means there is at least some benefit from all the development imposed upon us.

We are currently awaiting a final decision regarding County and PCC elections which were to be held in May and June of this year. We are expecting them to both be postponed until at least July and probably September. I think everyone would agree that purely postal or remote elections are unsatisfactory and would disenfranchise some and it would be totally reckless to have them in the normal way at polling stations. Also I do not feel that it would be possible for my district council colleagues to stretch to yet another onerous task just at this moment.

I will be able to attend the first half of your meeting and can answer questions or develop any subject further at that time.

I will verbally report on the latest Coronavirus figures and the LNH at your meeting tomorrow.

All very best regards. Bryn.