

## BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

<b>From:</b> Clive Arthey Cabinet Member for Planning	<b>Report Number:</b> <b>CMU1</b>
<b>To:</b> Council	<b>Date of meeting:</b> 22 March 2023

### TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING

#### 1. Overview of Portfolio

1.1 The role includes the following responsibilities:

Ensure the Council carries out its statutory duties as Local Planning Authority;  
Ensure Development Management makes good quality and timely decisions;  
Ensure that the Council has up-to-date Planning Policies that have a positive impact without unduly restricting development;  
Ensure Heritage and Planning Enforcement functions are efficient and effective; and  
Ensure the Building Control service is delivered effectively.

1.2 These collectively deliver the following outcomes:

- Protect and enhance our built and natural environment
- Understand what housing and employment sites are needed
- Unlock the barriers to sustainable growth
- Help create and maintain sustainable communities
- Agree where growth goes
- Liaise with neighbouring authorities to fulfil our Duty to Cooperate

#### 2. Recommendations

2.1 That Council notes the report.

#### 3. Key Activities

3.1 The Joint Local Plan has continued to progress through its examination and a consultation on the Inspectors' Modifications to the Plan will take place during March and April. The next steps after this may include further Examination Hearing sessions before the Inspectors provide their final report.

3.2 At this month's Cabinet meeting Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding of more than £350,000 was allocated to community projects in Capel St Mary, Edwardstone, Monks Eleigh, Sudbury and Stutton. This adds to the £2.3m that had already been allocated by Cabinet over the last four years, all of which is in addition to the extra £2.2m that has been given directly to Parishes over the same period through the Neighbourhood CIL.

- 3.3 The CIL expenditure framework has also been revised and forms one of the papers before Council this evening. This year has also seen us building on our pro-active approach to CIL debt recovery with more than £372,000 of outstanding CIL debt recovered. These cases can be complicated but I am pleased that through our work on debt recovery we are demonstrating our commitment to collecting all CIL contributions that are due. CIL is a known up-front cost for developers and we will take robust action, through the Courts if necessary, to secure it. Parishes experiencing growth need their CIL to provide the necessary infrastructure to accommodate that growth.
- 3.4 Moving to the development management side of things, performance on planning applications (as judged by DLUHC statistics) for 'majors in time' in the year to 22nd February 2023 was 85% (35 cases). For non-majors Babergh decided 96.6% applications (883 cases) in time.
- 3.5 Following several years where the Development Management team experienced a high volume of applications, there has been a slowdown in recent months and planning fee income is broadly in line with that forecast at Q2 of this financial year. Income from pre-application advice is delivering against forecast though and Planning Performance Agreement income is significantly above forecast.
- 3.6 Joint Overview and Scrutiny recently had a thorough look at the pre-application charging service to understand whether customers were getting good value
- 3.7 A cross-Council, cross-party, working group has met several times over the course of the year to revise and update the Councils' Joint Local Planning Enforcement Plan and I am pleased that the revised plan is at this meeting for approval.
- 3.8 Neighbourhood Plans continue to make positive progress. Stutton, Leavenheath and Holbrook Neighbourhood Plans are proceeding to Referendum. Wherstead and Sproughton Neighbourhood Plans are at Examination. Gt Waldingfield Neighbourhood Plan has been submitted and will commence Reg 16 consultation. Hadleigh Neighbourhood Plan is developing and Chilton are likely to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.9 Building Control have been busy with inspections and both income and market share have been holding up despite challenging market conditions for the construction sector. The team have also been preparing for the changes necessary to address the new Building Safety Act.

#### **4. Future Key Activities**

- 4.1 The Joint Local Plan will continue through the public consultation on proposed modifications to the plan, which may be followed by further hearing sessions before we receive the Inspectors final report and can move to adopt the Plan.
- 4.2 We will continue with everyday activities associated with CIL collection and expenditure, planning applications across development management, heritage and enforcement, as well as supporting communities to develop their Neighbourhood Plans.

- 4.3 Officers will also continue to work with Councillors to respond to government consultations. We have recently submitted the response to the Levelling Up Bill consultation and changes to the NPPF. There are current consultations on changes to planning fees as well as changes to permitted development rights and there are anticipated to be several further consultations associated with the introduction of National Development Management Policies, further changes to the NPPF as well as consultations on enacting aspects of the Levelling Up Bill and Environment Act.

## **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 Overall our Planning Teams continue to deal with high demand on a day-to-day basis. Most importantly, we must maintain momentum and engagement on the Joint Local Plan to ensure the timely adoption of Parts 1 and 2. We must provide for the infrastructure requirements of communities and we will continue to focus on decisions made on individual planning applications to maintain the efficiency and quality of our decision-making processes.