



## **PUTTING BABERGH IN PERSPECTIVE**

### **MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE 2003/04 – 2006/07 COUNCIL**

#### **Introduction**

The aim of this Briefing Note is to provide an ‘at-a-glance’ guide for Members and staff alike as to the main achievements of the Council over the last four years.

As such it does not seek to be a comprehensive account but rather one which illustrates the progress made by Babergh through use of a number of key measures. Babergh’s Heads of Service would, obviously, be able to supply details of other measurements not included in this digest.

The achievements listed below have been placed within one of the District’s five corporate priorities in order to demonstrate how each one is contributing to the wider objectives of the Council.

In addition, pertinent financial information has also been included.

#### **At-a-glance – the headline achievements**

**Over the last few years, Babergh has:**

- **delivered on the pledge contained in its Financial Strategy to try and keep Council tax increases to within the rate of inflation**
- **vastly expanded the number and range of successful sport and arts-related projects aimed at improving the health and ambitions of young people and others – including the Beacon-winning BE Active scheme**
- **made access to its services (including information about those services) easier than ever before through the use of both new technologies and locations away from its Hadleigh HQ.**
- **Nearly tripled its recycling rate through a range of innovative schemes**
- **Made a significant contribution to the building of new affordable homes and laid the policy groundwork through the new Local plan for even more to be built in the future**

## **Financial information**

- Council Tax (1). Over the four years of the last council, Babergh has kept to its intention of keeping Council Tax increases at or below the rate of inflation (Babergh's cumulative increase has been 12.6% compared to the cumulative inflation rate of 12.7%)
- Council Tax (2). As of 2006/07, Babergh had the second lowest Council tax of any district (£122.68 for a Band D property) and 15% below that of the overall district council average
- Council Tax (3). The 2007/08 increase in the Babergh part of the Council Tax was beneath inflation at 2.9% - or less than 7p per week
- Savings. Babergh has achieved nearly £2m in cashable and non-cashable savings since 2002.
- Investment. Babergh has invested £23m in capital projects – including £14m on Council Housing

## **Promoting healthy living and reducing health inequalities**

- Suffolk Youth Games. Between 2003/04 and 2006/07, 369 young people participated for Babergh in the Suffolk Youth Games, including 95 in the 2006 tournament
- Sports courses. Between 2003/04 and 2006/07 Babergh-run sports activity programmes resulted in 1680 attendances by young people – with 482 in the last year alone
- Babergh Be Active. To date courses run under this groundbreaking project have totalled nearly 1300. In 2006/07 327 new participants took part in activities (of which 217 were at risk of offending and 111 disabled)
- Boys in Babergh. This project was initiated six years ago and is still going strong with 246 boys taking part in 2006/07
- Decent Homes Standard. Babergh has met all its targets to date in delivering the Standard by 2009/10 for all of its housing stock

## **Increasing the supply of housing that local people can afford to rent or buy**

- Total number of new builds. Between 2003/04 and 2006/07 nearly 220 new RSL affordable homes were built in the district – involving nearly £15m worth of investment. Babergh remains on target to deliver over 500 more during the lifetime of the next Council
- Plans for the future. Babergh's recently adopted Local Plan requires that up to 35% of homes on new developments should be affordable (ie for rent or shared ownership)

- Completion of the 7-year Anglia Estates Improvement Programme one year ahead of schedule
- Informing and supporting parishes. Babergh continues to inform and support parish councils as to how they can get involved with affordable housing schemes in their areas – as well as recent success stories – through its regular publication *Affordable Housing News*

### **Giving easy, convenient access to quality public services**

- Debt Advice. In 2005 Babergh teamed up with Sudbury CAB to offer support and counselling in this area. To date over 70 people have been helped. In addition, a mobile support service currently receives 30 customers per month seeking advice
- Council Tax by Direct Debit. Over the last four years, in part due to an ongoing Babergh publicity campaign, the numbers of residents paying by this cost effective method (each transaction costs only 2p compared to 75p for a payment by cheque or cash) has risen to nearly 80%
- Benefit claims turnaround. Since 2002, thanks to new technologies and more efficient ways of working, Babergh has reduced the time it takes to process new claims from 56 to just 20 days. This has been achieved alongside a reduction of the equivalent of three full time staff!
- Sudbury Advice Centre. In 2006, 22,000 people visited this Babergh, Sudbury Town and Suffolk County-run service

### **Maintaining a safe, clean and sustainable environment**

- Council house repair works. 99% of Council House tenants were satisfied with the repair work carried out by Babergh according to a 2006 survey
- Use of Brownfield sites. In 2006/07 88% of new homes built in the district were constructed on 'Brownfield' sites – compared to a target of 40%
- Domestic waste reduction. Babergh has been successful in encouraging residents to minimise the amount of household waste they create. In 2006/07 the average figure was 309 kilograms per head per year – compared to the target of 430.
- Recycling rates. By the end of the third quarter 2006/07, Babergh was achieving a recycling rate of just over 35%
- Anglia Estate Project. Since 2003/04 over 2200 local people have been involved in various projects aimed at improving the estate – including the Passing Comment project whereby residents record their personal experiences of living in the area
- Sustainable staff! Babergh invests in a 'hybrid' lease car (using both a conventional petrol engine and a rechargeable battery) for use by staff
- Tackling anti-social behaviour. Babergh has committed to fully fund the Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator when Home Office funding runs out and to

further expand efforts through the recruitment of a Community Safety Manager and Officer

### **Raising individual & community ambitions and encouraging active citizenship**

- Business rate relief. Currently, 115 businesses are benefiting from approximately £218k of relief
- Concessionary travel. Around 11,000 residents have been issued with concessionary travel passes – with some 200 disabled persons making use of vouchers to assist with the costs
- Rural Cinema Project. Film screenings in Babergh parishes using the Rural Cinema Project (partly funded by Babergh) has totalled 5429 attendances (across 11 cinemas) – with over 1000 in this year to date
- Backing the Quay Theatre. Since 2003/04, over 30,000 people have attended performances at the Quay Theatre, Sudbury – which receives a sizeable annual investment from Babergh
- Homelessness (1). Through the use of preventative advice and help the number of people declaring themselves homeless has fallen from 268 in the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005 to 108 during the same period up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006
- Homelessness (2). Babergh has further improved its turnaround of homelessness cases in that period, whereby 97% are determined within 33 days, compared with the previous figure of 92%
- Development Control satisfaction levels. Customer satisfaction levels have increased across all criteria relating to planning applications from 2003 to 2006, including: adequate help & advice (now 68%), fairly treated (66%), dealt with promptly (58%) and overall (74%)
- Grants to communities. Over the last four years, Babergh has distributed £400k of grants for the construction and/or refurbishment of community facilities, which in turn has resulted in at least an equivalent amount being ‘leveraged in’ from other sources
- South Suffolk Leisure Trust. In order to take advantage of various financial opportunities and improve the running of Kingfisher Leisure Centre and Hadleigh Swimming Pool, Babergh set up this leisure trust, which it part funds. Currently, the two facilities are estimated to generate about 500,000 visits per year.

#### **Summary of summaries**

**For little more than £10 per month, Babergh provides a full range of refuse collection and recycling, environmental health, planning, affordable housing, leisure and benefits services – plus many others!**