

## **District Councillor Derek Davis – Ganges ward (Shotley & Erwarton)**

It has been an interesting and challenging few weeks in my role as Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Communities and as a ward member dealing with very localised issues.

These have included housing issues, missed bin collections, council tax and business rate enquiries, progressing the Ganges site, keeping on top of events at Gate Farm caravan park.

Unfortunately, the Planning Inspector, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State ruled Babergh were wrong to refuse a Certificate of Lawful Development to the owners of Gate Farm Caravan Park and the appellants won their appeal to allow all 13 caravans sited on the land within the AONB can be used for residential, rather than just the three previously allowed.

### **Cabinet Role**

Anyone with a teenager will understand the difficulties of keeping them active and engaged – so for us at Babergh to see 12% of the districts under 17s register for our free swims was a real buzz. More than 4,000 free swims were taken during the school holidays, which has encouraged us to expand the scheme during this October half-term and in the Christmas holidays. Not only is swimming a wonderful way to keep fit but it is a vital life skill.

I also helped launch the Suffolk Silk Industry project, which includes an informative and interesting film and website as part of promoting the festival, and indeed the 250-year-old

industry. Take a look for yourself here...  
[www.sudburysilkstories.com](http://www.sudburysilkstories.com).

### **Congratulations to our Village Hall team**

Village Halls are often the hubs of our communities and at Shotley we are blessed to have a facility, which serves dozens of groups and organisations. Therefore, it was a no brainer for me to nominate Shotley Village Hall in the Suffolk Community awards in the category for most outstanding Village Hall or Community Building. Even so, for them to actually see off the exceptional competition and be named winners is quite an achievement. For me it is not about the building per se, although it has a kitchen, snooker room and large committee room in addition to the huge hall which plays hosts to pantomimes, plays, discos, Soup-a Lunch, carpet bowls and dozens of other events and a large resurfaced car park serving the community, school and the 'Outstanding' Kidzone, it is about the volunteers running the hall on a shoestring and our community which supports it so willingly. Well done to all involved for their much-deserved accolade, including £100 for the coffers and a prestigious trophy. While some may regard awards like this with disdain, or consider them egotistical, they actually help when it comes to asking fund providers for grants, and of course, it shows all the volunteers their efforts are appreciated.

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