

As dark and depressing as it is outside, there are some bright lights to look forward and not just the Christmas decorations which festoon many houses in Shotley and Erwarton.

As we come out of a second lockdown, the growing excitement and anticipation of the festive fun ahead will have an extra special meaning for many this year as we look to put a horrible year behind us.

The announcement of a vaccine gives us huge hop going into the new year and a return to a new normal is in sight, albeit a speck on the horizon for now. As part of the disruption over the past nine months has been the curtailing, if not the cessation, of many of our community groups for young and old. There are signs they will be returning in the early part of 2021 and as part of Babergh's Locality Awards scheme I'm able to offer grants from £250 to eligible bodies for a wide variety of worthwhile causes. Relatively small amounts maybe, but can make a big difference to your village group looking forward to restarting in the new year.

Contact me in the first instance, or check Babergh's Communities website.

Big decisions made

Although we have been meeting via, Teams or Zoom, Babergh's cabinet has been as busy as usual, and decision have been made, or taken to full council for a wider vote.

The Joint Local Plan, which outlines how planning decisions will be made on the peninsula and beyond, in line with national policy, has been agreed and sent to the government for ratification.

Our Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) system has been tightened up and made clearer for developers, parish councils and other infrastructure providers. CIL, which can be found on the Babergh website's ground breaking Exacom system, which shows exactly how much money will be paid by developers into neighbourhood infrastructure or the wider district pot, by developers.

Our Biodiversity paper was also agreed by a large majority of Babergh councillors, and that will pave the way for even more trees, hedges and meadows, being grown in the district as part of our Climate Neutral pledge.

Heartwarming

Great to see the new defibrillator now in place on the wall of the Bristol Arms pub in Shotley Gate. Installed by the Shotley Open Spaces' Walkers Are Welcome group, the defib is portable so they can take it on their health walks. The group raised the funds to buy and install it themselves, and I was delighted to put £365 from my aforementioned Locality Award towards the project.

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