

Derek Davis, Ganges ward (Shotley & Erwarton)

I write this from my sick bed, unable to swallow, so have not eaten for a couple of days. I tell you this not to elicit sympathy but to reflect the empathy I have for every one of you that has tried, and failed, like me, to get a GP appointment, despite being on the phone to the surgery bang on at 8am and then 1pm. An 'all lines are busy' message is eventually followed by no answer at all.

It is a ridiculous situation that needs to be sorted at national level, with the NHS, current Government and the GP Federation responsible for sorting out this mess.

At a local level, I sympathise with the reception and dispensary staff at Shotley (and indeed Holbrook) surgeries who do a good job under huge pressure and we (me as your ward councillor, and Babergh in general) can do our bit by ensuring the GP practice gets the funding it needs, and is entitled to, from S106 agreement and Community Infrastructure Levy funding and trust me I'm all over it, especially as the first occupants are just months away from moving in – triggering the first payments.

Another of Shotley and Erwarton's important institutions are the primary school and Kidzone and as more new homes go up, so the pressure piles up on them.

I was fortunate enough to be shown around Shotley's Community Primary School by the impressive head teacher Rebecca Newton and was greatly impressed by the improvement she and her staff have made, and indeed the children themselves.

By the time you read this, the school's Ofsted report will have been made public, and while I'm not privy to the specifics, I'm sure it will be hugely positive and in turn the school's reputation will take a

huge surge in the right direction with even more parents wanting to enrol their children in the new term.

As always I will be supportive of the school when it comes to any housing development plans and in ensuring it gets the funding it is entitled to, and more if we can.

It was also excellent to see plans being formulated for a collaboration between the school, its elder pupils and Shotley marina. An exciting project which I'm sure will be of wider interest when all is revealed.

Locality Awards

As a cabinet member, implementing a health and wellbeing strategy, among the things I implemented, were free swims and also ensured Babergh councillors for the first time ever, received a Locality Award provision meaning they can directly fund groups within their ward.

I have used mine to support a number of worthy community groups including most recently Shotley Drama Group, I have also helped the revival of Shotley Rangers, Shotley Bowls Club, the provision of swift boxes for the Viking Project, a defib at Shotley Gate, and youth sailing instruction. Oh and of course, ensuring Shotley Pop Up library survived.

Still more to do

It has been an interesting and challenging eight years as your ward councillor and I believe much has got done, but it is a never-ending task and I have never rested on any laurels.

Currently I'm the vice-chairman of Babergh, a largely ceremonial role but I never miss an opportunity to promote Shotley and all we have so much to offer in our tranquil part of the district.

I believe I have a record to be proud of but I'm also well aware there is so much more to be done, especially when it comes to development.

There is also the very day needs and requirements of you as residents, which I quietly crack on with and other issues persist.

This includes: supporting the parish council in answering the needs of many young parents and grandparents in getting both play areas upgraded. The money is there one way or another and consultation has started.

I'm sure you may have your own thoughts, which I'm always happy to hear.

Please feel free to get in touch on all these and any other matter.

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