



**Corks Lane
Hadleigh
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MEDIA RELEASE
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FIRST BABERGH YOUTH CONFERENCE PROVIDES A 'VOICE FOR THE FUTURE'

Improving the environment, providing services and facilities for young people, involving them more in decision-making and ensuring the vitality of the area's towns and villages are the key priorities of Babergh's youth.

These and other views were voiced at Babergh District Council's first ever Youth Conference, held last Friday (10th October) at the district council's Hadleigh offices. In addition, the 45 young people, aged between 13 and 17 and drawn from eight local schools from across the district pinpointed the services, activities and facilities they thought important for their age groups. Issues such as the need for better public transport, concerns over both personal and road safety and the lack of certain social and recreational facilities were among the main topics of concern.

"This was a golden opportunity for local young people to make their views known and they went for it!" explained Cllr. Nigel Bennett who opened the conference. "I was really impressed by the delegates' energy, enthusiasm and willingness to articulate their concerns – and potential solutions. They provided a clear voice for the future".

Lucy Bowman, a pupil at Great Cornard Middle School commented that she "particularly liked the way we had to discuss issues in workshops with pupils from other schools. It was great and I think that more of these conferences should be arranged".

Grace May, Head of Geography at the school added "the pupils from our school got a lot out of this conference – it made them more aware of local issues and gave them the opportunity to voice the opinions they had gathered from other pupils in Great Cornard Middle School".

Babergh is keen to harness the momentum and ideas of the conference by incorporating many of the young people's priorities into the Council's first ever Youth Strategy. The continued involvement of the young people themselves in helping to shape the Youth Strategy and its implementation will be essential for its long-term success.

"Babergh is fully committed to working with our young people to jointly deliver the solutions they are looking for, alongside the many other priorities of the Council" explained Jill Shuttleworth, Babergh's Overview & Scrutiny Officer. "The views expressed at the Youth Conference are a very useful starting point to achieve this."

ENDS

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Notes to editors:

Images of the Youth Conference are available on request.