

# Public Document Pack



<b>JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>MONDAY, 20 DECEMBER 2021 9.30 AM</b>
<b>VENUE:</b>	<b>KING EDMUND CHAMBER, ENDEAVOUR HOUSE, 8 RUSSELL ROAD, IPSWICH</b>

For consideration at the meeting on Monday, 20 DECEMBER 2021, the following additional or updated papers that were unavailable when the Agenda was printed.

## TABLED PAPERS

Page(s)

- 3      **JOS/21/19 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2021**      3 - 8

Minutes to follow.

For more information about this meeting, including access arrangements and facilities for people with disabilities, please contact the Committee Officer, Bethany Webb on: 01449724683 or Email: [Committees@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Committees@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank

# Agenda Item 3

## BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS

Minutes of the meeting of the **JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Monday, 22 November 2021

### PRESENT:

Councillors:	Melanie Barrett	Terence Carter
	James Caston	Paul Ekpenyong
	Jane Gould	Mary McLaren (Chair)
	David Muller	Adrian Osborne
	Stephen Phillips (Substitute for Keith Scarff)	Keith Welham (Co-Chair)

### In attendance:

Officers:

- Assistant Director – Law and Governance (EY)
- Shared Legal Service Manager (TH)
- Corporate Manager – Communities (VM)
- Communities Officer – Grant and Funding Practitioner (RE)
- Governance Officer (RC)

### Apologies:

Kathryn Grandon  
Keith Scarff

### 103 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Dave Muller declared a local non-pecuniary interest as a trustee board member of Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice.

Councillor Adrian Osborne declared a local non-pecuniary interest as an observer on Sudbury Citizens Advice.

### 104 JOS/21/12 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2021

It was RESOLVED: -

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2021 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

### 105 TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COUNCIL'S PETITION SCHEME

None received.

### 106 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

None received.

## **107 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS**

None received.

## **108 JOS/21/13 REVIEW OF THE SHARED LEGAL SERVICE**

- 108.1 The Shared Legal Services Manager introduced the report to the Committee outlining that the service worked equally across Babergh and Mid Suffolk and West Suffolk Councils. The Service reported to a steering committee that had representatives from Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, and also reported to leadership teams across the authorities. The Shared Legal Services Manager also outlined that the case management system instructions were dealt with equally throughout all three of the authorities. Work was prioritised within the Service based, on when it needed to be completed and not by which authority it came from.
- 108.2 Councillor Paul Ekpenyong queried the fact that more employees were employed by West Suffolk and whether this had had an impact.
- 108.3 The Shared Legal Services Manager responded that the case management system had been based on the three budgets across the authorities. However, it had now changed to look at the volume of cases coming from each authority to determine how that split would be managed. This would be considered by the steering group.
- 108.4 Councillor Keith Welham enquired as to whether the employment conditions were identical throughout the service, as the number of employees employed by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils was fewer than those employed by West Suffolk District Council.
- 108.5 The Shared Legal Services Manager responded that due to the different rates of pay across the authorities, people doing the same job role were employed by the same authority in order to avoid discrepancies in rates of pay.
- 108.6 The Monitoring Officer added that whilst the number of direct employees from each authority differed, the costs of all the staff were split proportionately across the whole service.
- 108.7 Councillor Welham questioned whether there was a record of external cost and time of cases in each level. The Shared Legal Services Manager responded that the time taken per case would be reported by the individual officers working on it, and that whilst there was no cost per-case, if outsourcing was needed for any matter, it would be billed to the Shared Legal Service and sent to the relevant department.
- 108.8 Councillor Melanie Barrett questioned whether there was any data for the time taken for each case to be resolved and whether this could highlight areas of concern.

- 108.9 The Shared Legal Services Manager responded that there was a complex scoring method for referrals, in order to determine a predicted timeframe that a case could be completed in.
- 108.10 Councillor James Caston suggested that Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council instructions needed to be separated in the future.
- 108.11 Councillor Welham suggested that external services and quality of instructions should be considered in the future so it could highlight if improvement was needed.
- 108.12 Councillor Barrett suggested that in the future, performance statistics should be included in the report in order to show the rate of progression.
- 108.13 Councillor Ekpenyong suggested that the split of work between different departments of each Council and their trends were not clear within the report.
- 108.14 Councillor Carter congratulated the service in its organisation which ensured the service was secure should it split in the future
- 108.15 Councillor Ekpenyong proposed the following recommendations:
- That the Legal Services Steering board review the recharging mechanism for the costs of the legal service and consider whether the performance monitoring arrangements were sufficient and that those findings of the Legal Services Steering board be presented back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee via an information bulletin after its meeting in December.
  - That the information bulletin in recommendation one also include historical and current performance monitoring data, which would enable the Committee to observe the trends in performance over time.
  - That Recommendation three would be that a further information bulletin be presented to the Committee in six months into the new financial year demonstrating the split of new matters between Babergh and Mid Suffolk.
- 108.16 Councillor Terence Carter seconded this motion.

By a unanimous vote.

**It was RESOLVED: -**

- 1.1 That the Legal Services Steering board review the recharging mechanism for the costs of the legal service and consider whether the performance monitoring arrangements are sufficient and that the findings of the Legal Services Steering board be presented back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee via an information bulletin after its meeting in December.**

- 1.2 **That the information bulletin in recommendation one also include historical and current performance monitoring data, which would enable the Committee to observe the trends in performance over time.**
- 1.3 **That a further information bulletin be presented to the Committee in six months into the new financial year demonstrating the split of new legal matters between Babergh and Mid Suffolk.**

**109 RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC (WHICH TERM INCLUDES THE PRESS)**

The meeting did not require to go into a closed session.

**110 RESOLUTION TO RE-ADMIT THE PUBLIC ( WHICH TERM INCLUDES THE PRESS)**

**111 JOS/21/14 TASK AND FINISH GROUP FOR SCOPING OF TRANSPORT IN THE DISTRICTS**

111.1 Councillor Welham introduced the report to the Committee outlining that the Task and Finish Group had had their first meeting to which a number of witnesses were invited. This included officers from Suffolk County Council and service managers of community transport providers in Babergh and Mid Suffolk. The Task and Finish group found that the services provided had little in the way of promotion as to what was available to residents and who were not aware of services provided by connecting communities.

111.2 Councillor Adrian Osborne questioned the position of Suffolk County Council in relation to bus operators, and what influence the Task and Finish Group could have on them.

111.3 Councillor Welham responded that the enhanced partnership and the bus service improvement plan would not just be in terms of the service operators, the Task and Finish Group would highlight the gaps where there were no bus services, so that they could be filled in a coherent fashion and advertised.

111.4 Councillor Barrett suggested that the focus of the Task and Finish Group needed to be clear in its aims of better communication about the transport service that existed but to highlight where there are gaps in the services provided.

111.5 Councillor McLaren stated that as a member of the task and finish group she had found that residents were unaware of community connection services and that there was little in the way of advertising of these services.

111.6 Councillor Welham proposed the recommendation as follows:

*That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved that the Task and Finish Group scope and carry out the exercise.*

111.7 Councillor Adrian Osborne seconded this motion.

With 7 votes for and 3 votes against

**It was RESOLVED: -**

**That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved that the Task and Finish Group scope and carry out the exercise.**

## **112 JOS/21/15 SCOPING OF CITIZENS ADVICE REVIEW**

112.1 Councillor Keith Welham presented the report to the Committee outlining that two years ago a task and finish group from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been set up to review Citizens Advice. The Committee decided to do an annual review of Citizens Advice that should focus on recent impacts on Citizens Advice and allowed the Committee to see where they could facilitate change and add value.

112.2 The Corporate Manager for Communities and the Communities Officer introduced the report outlining that every year the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the service and the work they undertake. The Mid Suffolk and Sudbury Local Citizens Advice would attend the December meeting and provide a presentation on the work they had undertaken over the previous year. The officers would meet with Citizens Advice to discuss whether they had met their key performance areas and whether there were any trends in the data that could change their focus.

112.3 Councillor Welham outlined that Citizens Advice should be given the details from the scoping document in order to inform their presentation.

112.4 The Corporate Manager for Communities responded that officers would meet with both Local Citizen Advice and provide them with the scoping in order to allow them to inform their presentation.

112.5 Councillor Paul Ekpenyong questioned the purpose of the scoping document.

112.6 The Monitoring Officer responded that the scoping document was in order to inform the purpose and focus of the review not just for the Citizens Advice but also for the Committee as it allowed for the focus to be agreed.

112.7 Councillor Carter queried whether the mental health of volunteers and any support they receive could be included to identify if any further help could be provided.

112.8 Councillor Jane Gould questioned whether the scoping document would limit Citizens Advice, as there might have been areas that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were unaware of that would not be within the scoping

document and that Citizens Advice would have wished to be highlighted.

112.9 Councillor Dave Muller proposed that the Committee resolved to approve the scoping document included in the tabled papers with amendments as discussed at the meeting and that delegation was given to the Monitoring Officer to complete the remainder of the scoping document. This was seconded by Councillor Stephen Phillips.

By a unanimous vote

**It was RESOLVED: -**

**That the Committee resolved to approve the scoping document included in the tabled papers with amendments as discussed at the meeting and that delegation be given to the Monitoring Officer to complete the remainder of the scoping document.**

**113 JOS/21/16 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST**

**It was RESOLVED:-**

**That the Forthcoming Decisions List be noted**

**114 JOS/21/17 BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN**

**It was RESOLVED:-**

**That with the following amendment the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan be noted:**

**Amendment of the title of the lead officer on the Review of Local Citizens Advice item.**

**115 JOS/21/18 MID SUFFOLK OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN**

**It was RESOLVED:-**

**That with the following amendment the Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan be noted:**

**Amendment of the title of the lead officer on the Review of Local Citizens Advice item.**

The business of the meeting was concluded at 11:31am

.....  
Chair (& date)