

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE HELD IN ELISABETH ROOM, ENDEAVOUR HOUSE, RUSSELL ROAD,  
IPSWICH ON MONDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2017

PRESENT: Barry Gasper - Chairman

Clive Arthey  
Peter Burgoyne  
Alastair McCraw

Melanie Barrett  
Bryn Hurren  
Fenella Swan

48 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES

None

49 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None declared.

50 BOS/17/20 CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23  
OCTOBER 2017

**It was RESOLVED:-**

**That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2017 be confirmed as a true record.**

51 BOS/17/21 CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31  
OCTOBER 2017

**It was RESOLVED:-**

**That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 31 October 2017 be confirmed as a true record.**

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

None received.

53 BOS/17/22 THE HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT APRIL 2018

53.1 Heather Sparrow, Corporate Manager – Homeless Prevention and Financial Inclusion, introduced report BOS/17/22 updating Members' that Central Government had confirmed that on the 3 April 2018 the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) would be implemented.

53.2 The Corporate Manager updated Members' that :

- Any employee of the public sector would have a mandatory duty of referring anyone at risk of homelessness and that a Suffolk Wide referral system was currently being drafted.
- Babergh District Council had received less homelessness appeals and had accepted less cases.
- The predicted workload once the Legislation is enacted would be double what is currently undertaken by the team.
- The team had absorbed the Financial Inclusion Team who are currently rolling out Universal Credit with the expectation of significant issues around the Christmas period.
- There would be an increase of 5 FTE, with 2 Staff Members in Mid Suffolk at risk, and will be advertising vacancies in the team next week.
- The team is continuing work with Solo Lodgings running a lodgings scheme and are working on a press release with the Communications team.
- The team are exploring the issues in around getting clients into private rented accommodation, including incentivising landlords to take on tenants as the DCLG will provide more funding if clients are housed in Private Sector accommodation.
- The team are working to acquire residency in a B&B
- A new code of guidance was being consulted upon as the last code was created 11 years ago.
- A project has been created around the Homeless Reduction Act to monitor progress on a weekly basis.

53.3 The Corporate Manager responded to Members' questions regarding the provision of accommodation available to the team, that the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act incentivised Local Authorities to find private rented accommodation for homeless people. She continued by advising that there had been issues regarding the engagement with private landlords and that they were looking at creating a new role to work with landlords and help find private rented accommodation for clients. In addition to this the Corporate Manager advised that she was also investigating the possibility of providing a cash lump sum for the Landlord or providing a guarantee on the deposit.

53.4 Members' also raised questions regarding the inclusion of Housing Associations, which the Corporate Manager Confirmed; and expanded that they had been in contact to encourage them to engage at an earlier stage with the financial inclusion team.

53.5 In response to Members' questions the Corporate Manager and Assistant Director – Housing, explained that the team had been reorganised to delete the role of one of the professional leads and to would be continuing to make sure that the role of prevention had sufficient resourcing. They also commented that the work with Citizens Advice and worked closely with the branches in Sudbury and Stowmarket.

53.6 Councillor Jan Osborne, Cabinet Member – Housing, responded to Members'

concerns regarding approved planning applications for 1 and 2 bedroom houses, noting that two applications with the said features had been approved in Sudbury and that the team was currently working with Housing Policy to encourage more of these builds.

53.7 Gavin Fisk, Assistant Director- Housing, clarified the challenge of homelessness alongside the introduction of Universal Credit and that delays in payments has caused problems across the country with increased B&B costs. He elaborated that the team had been working on the concept of “electronic jam jars” encouraging people to sign up and guarantees payment of rent.

53.8 Members raised the consideration that Council Tenants could take Homeless people on as lodgers to which the Corporate Manager replied that this was currently under consideration and that work on promotion was being undertaken alongside the Communications Team.

53.9 Members’ requested that all Members of the Council be briefed on the changes and that an update be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 6 months after the implementation of the Legislation (October 2018)

#### **RESOLVED**

That the report be **NOTED** with the following recommendations:

- That all Babergh District Councillors are briefed on the implications of the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017)
- That an update on the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) be provided to Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee six months after the implementation of the Act (October 2018).

#### 54 BOS/17/23 SCOPING - LEGAL SERVICES PARTNERSHIP

54.1 Members’ discussed the scoping document provided by the Assistant Director- Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer concluding that further scoping of the topic would be needed to look at the item in sufficient detail.

54.2 Members’ requested that further details be added to the scoping document and that a survey be conducted of Officers and Councillors for their experiences of the Shared Legal Service and that the head of the Shared Legal Service attend the next meeting on Monday 18 December 2017.

#### **RESOLVED**

**That the scoping of the Shared Legal Service be completed on the meeting of December 18 2017**

- (i) **That a survey be conducted into experiences of Officers and Members regarding the Shared Legal Services with witnesses and evidence to be brought before the committee in the meeting of February 2018.**

**(ii) That the scoping document be updated for the meeting on Monday 18 December 2017.**

55 BOS/17/24 INFORMATION BULLETIN

55.1 Katherine Steel, Assistant Director – Corporate Resources, provided Members' with an updated Business rate relief Summary and presented it to the Committee.

55.2 The Assistant Director responded to Members' questions that there was a sliding scale upon which the relief was available and that some of the discretionary relief is funded by Babergh District Council and agreed to provide further information regarding the criteria for business rates relief after the meeting.

55.3 In response to further questions the Assistant Director said that the Shared Revenues Partnership (SRP) worked hard to make sure that businesses that they knew of that were eligible for relief were offered the option.

55.4 It was noted that the Officer presenting the information bulletin on Customer Access activities was unable to attend the meeting and as such the Committee asked that the item be detailed in the December Bulletin with the additional statistics from November and that the officer attend that meeting.

**RESOLVED**

**(i) That the information bulletin on Babergh's Business rate relief be NOTED.**

**(ii) That the information bulletin on Customer Access activities be updated for the next meeting of the Committee and that the Officer be present to answer any questions.**

56 BOS/17/25 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

**It was RESOLVED:**

**(i) That the report be noted.**

57 BOS/17/26 FORWARD PLAN

57.1 The Committee requested that the Review of the Shared Legal Services be moved to the February 2018 meeting.

57.2 The Committee requested that the 5 year land supply be added to the February meeting.

57.3 The Committee requested that the item “reviewing the impact, the office move has had on staff with the aim of learning points for other future major change activities.

**RESOLVED**

**(i) That the above requests be noted and the Forward Plan updated accordingly.**

58 BOS/17/27 MSDC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FORWARD PLAN

**It was RESOLVED : -**

**(i) That the report be noted.**

59 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC (WHICH TERM INCLUDES THE PRESS)

**It was RESOLVED:-**

**(i) That under section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and the press be excluded from the meeting for item MOS/17/30 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Act in the paragraph registered against the item.**

60 PART II - MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PRESS AND PUBLIC EXCLUDED

Lee Carvell, Corporate Manager – Open for Business, presented the report to the Committee and outlined that the report would be going to the Cabinet in February 2018.

**It was RESOLVED: -**

**(i) That the report be noted.**

The business of the meeting was concluded at 12:12pm.

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Chairman