

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BABERGH COUNCIL HELD IN KING EDMUND CHAMBER - ENDEAVOUR HOUSE, 8 RUSSELL ROAD, IPSWICH ON THURSDAY, 4 JANUARY 2018

PRESENT: Peter Burgoyne - Chairman

Clive Arthey	Sue Ayres
Melanie Barrett	Simon Barrett
Tony Bavington	Peter Beer
Sue Burgoyne	David Busby
Tina Campbell	Sue Carpendale
Michael Creffield	Luke Cresswell
Derek Davis	Siân Dawson
Alan Ferguson	Barry Gasper
Kathryn Grandon	John Hinton
Michael Holt	Bryn Hurren
Jennie Jenkins	Richard Kemp
Frank Lawrenson	James Long
Margaret Maybury	Alastair McCraw
Mark Newman	John Nunn
Adrian Osborne	Jan Osborne
Lee Parker	Peter Patrick
Stephen Plumb	Nick Ridley
David Rose	Ray Smith
Harriet Steer	Fenella Swan
John Ward	Stephen Williams

The following Members were unable to be present: Tom Burrows and William Shropshire

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tom Burrows and Councillor William Shropshire.

17 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

There were no declarations of interest.

18 THE APPOINTMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

18.1 The Chairman sought nominations for the office of Leader of the Council.

18.2 On the proposal of Councillor Gasper and seconded by Councillor Ridley a nomination for Councillor Ward to become Leader of the Council was **MOVED**.

18.3 The Chairman asked Councillor Ward if he accepted the nomination?

18.4 Councillor Ward confirmed that he accepted the nomination and delivered a short statement in response to his nomination as follows:-

“I wish to start by saying a little about myself, my history and how I believe I can give Babergh the leadership it deserves. I know I have only been a councillor for 2½ years, as many of us here have been, and therefore I am relatively inexperienced. However, I have held two portfolios: the environment for 6 months prior to the new cabinet governance model and the economy portfolio since then. I have built up a good understanding across other areas of the Council’s business. My career has provided me with valuable experience of leading teams – getting the best out of people and working to deadlines – and developing good relations with customers and suppliers, ensuring their requirements, concerns and expectations are met.

I am a native of south Suffolk – born and bred in what is now Babergh and, apart from a couple of periods away, I have lived all my life here. The first school I attended was Raydon primary school (sadly no longer in existence), in the ward I am now fortunate enough to represent. I know this part.

I will be a strong voice within and outside the county for Babergh, working with the Suffolk public sector leaders to ensure we get our fair share of the business rates pool and identify projects of benefit to Babergh that can receive funding from the transformation challenge award that Suffolk has won.

I also want to address the difficulties and challenges we face as highlighted in the recent social mobility report. We must concentrate on the two most important things that will improve this: housing provision and economic growth. We must do more for young people by providing homes and jobs.

For housing, we need to ensure more is available within the reach of people’s incomes. I want to see a substantial increase in the availability of social and affordable housing, which we are committed to do using the HRA. The recent acquisition of affordable housing in Holbrook is good news and I will work to ensure that it is followed by more in the coming months. We also, though, need to increase the supply of market value housing to try to reduce the high price/salary ratio in the district. And we must build more starter homes for first time buyers.

I will also see what we can do to support the government’s recent announcement of an investigation into stalled planning applications.

I will ensure that we are fully geared up to implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act requirements and that we continue to reduce both the number of homeless households and reduce wait times. It is good that we currently have no rough sleepers in Babergh but I will ensure that we react immediately whenever any are identified.

Through our Affordable Homes Development Strategy we are planning to build or purchase up to 210 homes using the HRA over the next 3 years. This is achievable and I will give high priority to ensuring this target is reached. In

addition to the 27 council houses we have built (the final ones in Glemsford will be available for rent from this month) and the 23 we have purchased with RTB receipts, there are further projects that are already underway. These are:

- We have just completed a contract to buy 27 houses off plan in Holbrook. 15 of these will be available for affordable rent and 12 for shared ownership.
- Working with our development partner, Icen Homes, we already have a further 4 sites in the pipeline, including Angel Court in Hadleigh, with up to 34 units.
- Further sites are already being identified – 49 new sites and 26 garage sites for redevelopment.
- £2.7M RTB receipts have been allocated for acquiring new build – approximately 13 properties.

Lastly, I will work to ensure that, dependent on a successful bid for £8.2M of housing infrastructure funding, Haylink Ltd. are given every assistance to make early progress with the redevelopment of the HMS Ganges site.

We need a strong economy, to provide well-paid jobs and also deliver high quality services while keeping taxes as low as possible and provide value for money for our residents. To this end, I will work with the 'Open for Business' team and partners in the county to ensure we deliver measurable economic growth in Babergh. This means:

- Implementing the complementary Babergh and NALEP economic strategies and ensuring we stay on track to achieve the identified targets
- Working closely with Ipswich to encourage early take-up of sites within the Sproughton EZ
- In conjunction with the SS Task Force, ensuring that alternative employment use for the Delphi site is secured
- Ensuring that our discretionary business rate relief scheme is applied in a way that provides real value to the local economy and jobs
- Working with other Suffolk LAs through the Growth PH's group to ensure that we address growth at a county-wide level with a particular emphasis on the visitor economy across the county.

There are some other things I will ensure are either completed or substantially underway with a completion date in sight.

- The first of these is the disposal of Corks Lane, with a reuse plan that maximises the value of the property for Babergh and which provides benefit to Hadleigh.
- The next is to ensure that we have projects underway for Belle Vue – for both the land and the house.
- Lastly, I want to see projects underway, in partnership with South Suffolk Leisure, for the Kingfisher and Hadleigh Leisure centres.

These are all realistic and achievable within the time available until May 2019.

In respect of merger, I accept that we must have a more formal public consultation than the telephone poll. I am mindful of the motion that was passed on the 19th December and that the will of this council is to have a referendum. I will be committed to holding one once we have a full business case, including benefits and costs of merger weighed against other options, to present to residents. There will also be a final debate and vote by the full council. If the evidence is there, residents and councillors will vote for it; if it isn't then it will fail. Let's be driven by the evidence, not emotion. Many of you would like to see a unitary solution one day; so would I. That doesn't seem to be realistic at present, but as Leader I will ensure that this view is represented at the Suffolk PSL group.

As Council Leader I will be totally committed to achieving unity and reconciliation across all groups and reaching workable solutions with you all. I know that there are concerns that this is an inexperienced cabinet, but I believe this to be a narrative that is wrong and only designed to sow doubt about the administration. All of us have worked hard to master our portfolios. However, I do accept that more experience and a broader range of views need to be brought into the cabinet to get us through the next 16 months and address the challenges we face. If elected leader, I will increase the size of the cabinet with additional members to strengthen it and make it more inclusive. I accept that communications have not been as good as they could have been, and the Cabinet has also expressed its frustrations about this. To address this, as Leader I will create a new Communications portfolio, responsible for both internal and external communication of Cabinet and Council business.

No one gets it right all the time, but as leader, I will listen to what you all have to say and come to a considered view when making decisions. I will work hard and I am willing and able to learn quickly.

Thank you.

- 18.4 The Chairman then invited councillors to pose questions to the candidate.
- 18.5 Councillor Bavington asked questions relating to the freehold of Corks Lane and sought confirmation that there would be a referendum on the same basis as 2011.
- 18.6 In response Councillor Ward confirmed that he would be committed to holding a referendum once the full business case including benefits and costs weighed against other options was known.
- 18.7 Councillor Hinton asked why he had changed his mind since the last Cabinet meeting when there had been a steely resolve not to hold a referendum?
- 18.8 Councillor Ward replied that it had always been stated that the possibility of a referendum was neither ruled in or out, however he could not ignore the strong feelings that had been voiced in the Council Chamber.

- 18.9 Councillor McCraw sought more information on the proposal for a new Communications Portfolio Cabinet member and asked what mechanisms would be used to share information?
- 18.10 In response Councillor Ward stated that he would ensure that there would be better information sharing across the Council, with regular email updates and Leaders announcements where the information was not commercially sensitive.
- 18.11 Councillor McCraw suggested that Cabinet Members worked on a personal one to one basis with other councillors or slightly larger groups to share information across the Council.
- 18.12 Councillor Hinton asked Councillor Ward if the result of the referendum and Council vote would be binding?
- 18.13 The Monitoring Officer reminded Councillors, that the final decision before submission to the Secretary of State would be taken by the Cabinet.
- 18.14 Councillor Williams welcomed the acknowledgement that there needed to be a more inclusive relationship with members across the Council and asked if Councillor Ward would agree to a re-examination of the Constitution.
- 18.15 Councillor Ward confirmed that he was committed to reviewing the Constitution.
- 18.16 Councillor Hurren asked how Councillor Ward planned to address the massive amount of constituents who were disenfranchised as only 40% lived near enough to access the Sudbury Customer Access point?
- 18.17 In response Councillor Ward stated that most of the residents who needed that type of access were based in and around that area. However he noted the point raised.
- 18.18 Councillor McCraw queried why Endeavour House could not be a customer access point?
- 18.19 Councillor Arthey sort clarification on Councillor Ward's position on a unitary Council?
- 18.20 In response Councillor Ward confirmed that he would send Councillor Arthey a copy of his presentation and added that his mind was open as to a possible model for a unitary council.
- 18.21 A recorded vote was demanded under Council Procedure Rule 18.5.

For

Cllr Ayres
Cllr Beer
Cllr P Burgoyne
Cllr S Burgoyne
Cllr Campbell
Cllr Creffield
Cllr Ferguson
Cllr Gasper
Cllr Grandon
Cllr Jenkins
Cllr Lawrenson
Cllr Maybury
Cllr Newman
Cllr A Osborne
Cllr J Osborne
Cllr Parker
Cllr Patrick
Cllr Ridley
Cllr R Smith
Cllr Steer
Cllr Swan
Cllr Ward

Against

Cllr Arthey
Cllr S Barrett
Cllr Bavington
Cllr Busby
Cllr Carpendale
Cllr Cresswell
Cllr Davis
Cllr Hinton
Cllr Hurren
Cllr Kemp
Cllr Long
Cllr McCraw
Cllr Nunn
Cllr Plumb
Cllr Rose
Cllr Williams

Abstentions

Cllr M Barrett
Cllr Dawson
Cllr Holt

The nomination was **CARRIED**

It was RESOLVED: -

- (i) That Councillor John Ward be appointed Leader until the Annual Council meeting May 2019.**

18.23 Councillor Ward made a short closing statement in response to his election as Leader as follows: -

I am very grateful for this chance to serve Babergh as leader. I know I am inexperienced but I will work hard to earn your trust. I acknowledge that there has been deep disharmony in the Council and the Conservative Group, and that this is still to be resolved fully. However, this must happen and I hope we can move forward from here. Our electorate expects nothing less.

Finally I wish to say a few words about my predecessor, Jennie. She has been Leader of this Council for many years, voted into office by a broad consensus across all parties. I have great admiration for her and she has been totally committed to Babergh, working very hard within the district and promoting its interests further afield. She is highly respected and liked in the county, region and even at Westminster. In the time I have been here I have found her to be someone who was as loyal to her cabinet as we have been to her. Jennie, you will be a hard act to follow.

18.24 Councillor Arthey congratulated the new Leader of the Council on his successful election and thanked Cllr Jennie Jenkins for everything she had done in her time as Leader.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 6.09 pm.

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Chairman