

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in the King Edmund Chamber - Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Monday, 21 January 2019

PRESENT:

Councillor: Alastair McCraw (Chair)
Sue Ayres (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Melanie Barrett
Bryn Hurren
Stephen Williams

Barry Gasper
Adrian Osborne

In attendance:

Councillor(s): Margaret Maybury
Jan Osborne
John Ward

Witness(es): None

Officers:

Chief Executive
Strategic Director
Assistant Director - Housing
Assistant Director - Environment and Commercial Partnerships
Assistant Director – Corporate Resources and Section 151 Office
Assistant Director - Assets and Investments
Corporate Manager - Strong and Safe Communities
Corporate Manager - Financial Services
Professional Lead - HRA Accountant
Corporate Manager – Democratic Services
Acting Senior Governance Support Officer

Apologies:

Fenella Swan

40 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- 40.1 Declarations of interests were declared for report BOS/18/25 Community Grant – Health Check for Groups Receiving Revenue Grants from the following Councillors:
- 40.2 Councillor Bryn Hurren in his role as representative on Ipswich and District Citizens Advice.
- 40.3 Councillor Sue Ayres in her role as Director of the Quay Theatre, Sudbury and representative on Sudbury and District Citizen Advice.

40.4 Councillor Adrian Osborn in his role as representative on Sudbury and District Citizen Advice.

41 BOS/18/ 21 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 DECEMBER 2018

It was RESOLVED: -

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 17 December 2019 be confirmed as a correct record with the following amendment:

Minute no. 31 .. the meeting held on the 22 October 2018 be confirmed.....

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

42.1 There were no petitions received.

43 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

43.1 There were no questions received from the public.

44 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

44.1 There were no questions received from Councillors.

45 BOS/18/22 BCA/18/54 DRAFT GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2019/20 AND FOUR YEAR OUTLOOK

45.1 John Ward introduced the report, commending the proposed budget. Katherine Steel – Assistant Director for Corporate Resources and Melissa Evans, Corporate Manager for Financial were available to respond to questions.

45.2 Councillor Gasper had no issues with the Budget, however he expressed concern regarding the investment of a further £25 million in CIFCO as this was included in the Budget as opposed to previously, when it had been a separate item presented to Council.

45.3 He suggested that a 'stress test' against the Council's Budget be provided to determine the financial situation, in case the Council had to sell some of the assets acquired by CIFCO.

45.4 Councillor Gasper proposed that stress testing of CIFCO be included in the recommendations to Cabinet.

45.5 The Assistant Director confirmed that the Council would not be losing any income unless the acquired assets had to be sold, as the income was generated from the rental income.

- 45.6 Councillor McCraw asked what specific impact on the (2019/20) Budget would be if the estimated income within the first year of the proposed CIFCO borrowing were not included.
- 45.7 The Assistant Director responded that if the investment of £25 million were not undertaken then this income would be removed and there would not be a balanced Budget.
- 45.8 The Chief Executive advised Members that the recommendation 3.3 was to approve the borrowing of £25 million for CIFCO to invest.
- 45.9 Councillor Ridley, Director of CIFCO, emphasised that the £25 million could not be spent until the Business Plan had been approved by Full Council.
- 45.10 Members generally agreed that due diligence and stress testing should be conducted before the Business plan was presented to Council.
- 45.11 Councillor Stephen Williams seconded Councillor Gasper's proposal.
- 45.12 Councillor Ayres asked if the any resources left in the 2018/19 Budget for the Disabled Facilities Grant would be carried over to the next year and the Officers responded that was the case.
- 45.13 Members debated the issues around Council Tax Care Leavers Discount, paragraph 11, and how this would be managed. Councillor Osborne, Cabinet Member for Housing, advised that various projects were being undertaken to find ways to help this group of vulnerable people and outlined what District Councillors could do to support this.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorse Recommendations 3.1 to 3.5**
- 1.2 The Committee recommended that 'stress' testing was undertaken of the investment of £25 million and that the information was provided to all Members.**

46 BOS/18/23 BCA/18/55 DRAFT HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET AND FOUR YEAR OUTLOOK

- 46.1 Councillor Jan Osborne, Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report.
- 46.2 Gavin Fisk, Assistant Director for Housing and Tricia Andersen, Professional Lead HRA Accountant were present to answer questions.
- 46.3 Councillor Adrian Osborne enquired how well rent increases and service

charges were explained to tenants.

- 46.4 The Cabinet Member for Housing clarified that the Service Charge was not going up and that this was communicated to tenants.
- 46.5 The Assistant Director added that all tenants received an annual statement which detailed the charges. Staff were to receive a presentation on the current situation to provide support to tenants.
- 46.6 Members queried the graphs on page 52 to 53 and raised questions regarding new built homes. Officers responded that 164 new homes and 19 shared homes had been completed.
- 46.7 In response to Members' questions it was confirmed that the funding gap had been based on the current figures.
- 46.8 Members thank officers for the report.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed recommendations 3.1 to 3.8**

47 BOS/18/26 INFORMATION BULLETIN

Information Bulletin 1 – Review of the Disabled Facilities Grant

This Information Bulletin was deferred to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 14 February 2019.

Information Bulletin 2 - Staff Turnover and Welfare – Six months update

- 47.1 Katherine Steel, Assistant Director for Corporate Resources introduced the Information Bulletin and explained that the data now included the period from April 2018 to September 2018.
- 47.2 She said that the overall reduction in staff absences were reduced. However, there was an increase in absences due to mental health issues. This reason for this could in part be a result of greater awareness of mental health issues and reduce stigma surrounding the issues.
- 47.3 Members were reassured that the issues were being monitored and that each individual returning to work from a long-term absence was offered support and the option of a phased return.
- 47.4 Members debated if the number of days for absences were high or low in comparison to other authorities, but it was generally agreed that the numbers were average.

47.5 Members agreed that an update in six-month's time would be appropriate.

It was RESOLVED:

That an update of the Staff Turnover and Welfare be presented do the Committee in six months' time

48 BOS/18/24 BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK AREA PARKING PLAN

28.1 The Committee received a presentation on the Joint Parking Plan, presented by Chris Fry, Assistant Director for Environment and Commercial Partnerships. He responded to questions, including:

- That Tourism was not included in the policy (page 81b) but was included on page 66;
- That issues around management of disabled parking, had to be managed by the civil parking plan;
- Parking enforcement was questioned, and the response was that this was under the remit of SCC. Suffolk had adopted the Suffolk Parking Management Strategy, which was for parking across the County;
- Questions regarding whom would be enforcing parking regulations and whether it was to be an in-house or outsourced enforcement were raised. This was yet to be determined;
- Civil Parking Enforcement was now the responsibility of SCC;
- If the proposal went to Cabinet, there would be a minimum of 21 days consultation period.
- If the proposal was adopted in February, the consultation would begin in May and run for 6 weeks before going back to Cabinet.
- Clarification of the Policy for the Highway test was provided by the officer, who assured Members that the author of the policy understood the matters involved and that it would for the SCC to implement this;
- An action plan and a time line were discussed to be provided to Members so they could inform the parishes. However, the Chief Executives warned against this and said briefings on the Joint Parkin Policy would be better for Members.

48.2 It was generally felt by Members that issues would be addressed during the consultation period, and that apart from the matters debated above there were not any comments to make on the Joint Parking policy.

49 BOS/18/25 COMMUNITY GRANT - HEALTH CHECKS FOR GROUPS RECEIVING REVENUE GRANTS

49.1 Councillor Margaret Maybury, Cabinet Member for Communities, introduced the report and outlined the reasons for the 'health checks' for the Community

Grants, which was conducted every two years.

- 49.2 Sue Clements – Corporate Manager for Strong and Safe Communities was present to respond to questions.
- 49.3 It was clarified that ‘Health Checks’ were undertaken in relation to the applications and the size of grants to ensure that officers’ time was allocated appropriately.
- 49.4 The support for organisation in the Community was important and Members were informed that grants could provide up to the 20 % core running costs for organisations.
- 49.5 Councillor Maybury informed Members that Citizens Advice (CAB) provided a lot of support to residents and that the funding for this volunteer organisation was important. If the CAB was not available, the Housing Department were likely to be overwhelmed by queried from residents.
- 49.6 Councillor Ayres referred to the Appendix C which detailed the payment log for Grants, and said the it was important to support organisation, which brought tourism into the Districts.
- 49.7 Councillor Welham referred to Appendix B and asked if the CAB would be receiving the same questionnaire and the officer responded that the team and CAB worked closely together on providing support to the community which the grants provided 60% of the core costs. They would be included in the ‘Health Check’.
- 49.8 Councillor Jan Osborne, Cabinet Member for Housing, added that the new tenant engagement questionnaire included a question on how often tenants contacted the CAB for advice.
- 49.9 Members supported the grant application formant and the ‘Health Check’. During the debate it became clear that the Communities team had a good working relationship with community groups.
- 49.10 Community Grants were not the only funding which community groups could apply for and the team sought to support as much as possible the applicants to ensure they received the appropriate grants.
- 49.11 Members agreed that the ‘Health Checks’ should continue to be undertaken.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That the Committee endorsed the continuation with the Health Check process and that these be undertaken bi-annually.

Note: The short recess was taken at 11.39 and the Committee reconvened at 11.50.

50 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

It was RESOVED: -

That the Forthcoming Decisions List be noted

51 BOS/18/27 BDC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN

It was RESOLVED: -

That the BDC Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan be noted.

52 BOS/18/28 MSDC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN

It was RESOVED: -

That the MSDC Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan be noted

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

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

That pursuant to Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the business specified below on the grounds that if the public were present during this item, it is likely that there would be the disclosure to them of exempt information as indicated against the item.

The Committee was also satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

54 BOS/18/26 CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOVED: -

That the Confidential Information Bulletin – Service Level Agreement be noted

The business of the meeting was concluded at 12.03 pm.

.....
Chair