

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **BABERGH CABINET** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Monday, 7 March 2022

PRESENT:

Councillor: John Ward (Chair)

Councillors:	Jan Osborne	Derek Davis
	Clive Arthey	David Busby
	Elisabeth Malvisi	Alastair McCraw
	Simon Barrett	Siân Dawson

In attendance:

Councillor(s): Mary McLaren

Officers:

- Chief Executive (AC)
- Strategic Director (KN)
- Assistant Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer (EY)
- Assistant Director – Corporate Resource and Section 151 Officer (KS)
- Assistant Director – Housing (GF)
- Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships (CC)
- Assistant Director – Economic Developments and Regeneration (FD)
- Assistant Director – Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement (SW)
- Corporate Director – Finance Operations (RW)
- Professional Lead – Key Sites and Infrastructure (KS)
- Senior Governance Officer (HH)

Apologies:

Michael Holt

86 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

There were no declarations of interests made.

87 BCA/21/40 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2022

It was **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 7 February 2022 be deferred to the next meeting.

88 TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE

COUNCIL'S PETITION SCHEME

None received.

89 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

None received.

90 MATTERS REFERRED BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OR JOINT AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEES

90.1 The Chair invited the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor McLaren to detail the outcome of the Call- in of the Cabinet Decision BCa/21/38 Accommodation and Agile Strategy – Endeavour House.

90.2 Councillor McLaren listed the signatories of the call-in and summarised the concerns of the Committee. She detailed the decision options available for the Committee and concluded that based on the evidence put before Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was resolved that Cabinet Decision be upheld and implemented immediately.

91 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

The Forthcoming Decision List was noted.

92 BCA/21/41 GENERAL FUND FINANCIAL MONITORING 2021/22 - QUARTER 3

92.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Barrett to introduce the report.

92.2 Councillor Barrett proposed the recommendations in the report, and this was seconded by Councillor Busby.

92.3 Councillor Busby queried the level of staff vacancies and what percentage of the underspend of the staffing cost was due to the vacancy rate. The Cabinet Member for Finance referred to Appendix A for the details for where the staff shortages were within each service area. The Assistant Director for Corporate Resources added that there was a 5% staff vacancy rate included in the Financial Monitoring report, however she would provide further details for the figures for the vacancy rate outside of the meeting.

92.4 In response to Councillor Busby's question in relation to Electoral Services and Land Charges in Appendix A, the Assistant Director for Law and Governance clarified that the variation was caused by part of the Land Charges searches being transferred to the Land Registry, which had provided an un-ringfenced new burdens fund for the data transfer, the sum in the Appendix was less the cost for preparing the date to be transferred.

92.5 Councillor Ward referred to paragraph 6.17 and asked for clarification of CIL and Section 106 figures in relation to the figures in Appendix E. The Assistant

Director for Corporate Resources stated she would provide a reconciliation of the figures outside of the meeting.

- 92.6 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting, the Chief Executive stated that there were various reasons for why staff vacancies occurred, and he would provide a comparison of staff vacancy figures for the current year and 2019 for temporary staff and the cost for agency and temporary staff outside of the meeting.
- 92.7 Members debated the issues including that the Council's expenses were fairly accurate in the monitoring report however, the income stream was more difficult to predict and had been exacerbated during the Covid Pandemic. The Council was in a good financial position and had a budget surplus.

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That, subject to any further budget variations that arise during the rest of the financial year, the surplus position of £741k, referred to in section 6.6 and Appendix A of the report, be noted.**
- 1.2 The revised 2021/22 Capital Programme referred to in Appendix E and section 6.15 be noted.**
- 1.3 That the approval of carry forwards from 21/22 into 22/23 be delegated to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance.**

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure that Members are kept informed of the current budgetary position for both General Fund Revenue and Capital.

93 BCA/21/42 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) FINANCIAL MONITORING 2021/22 - QUARTER 3

- 93.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Barrett to introduce the report.
- 93.2 Councillor Barrett provided a summary of the main points in the report and proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report.
- 93.3 Councillor Osborne seconded the recommendations.
- 93.4 In response to Councillor Malvisi's question regarding shortages of raw building material for repairs, the Cabinet Member for Finance responded that there was £1/2m allowance in the budget to accommodate this. The Assistant Director for Housing directed members' attention to paragraph 6.10 in the report and clarified the adverse variance in relation to voids.
- 93.5 Councillor Ward referenced the table in paragraph 6.11 in the report and queried the transfer from Strategic Priorities. In response the Assistant

Director for Corporate Resources stated that a transfer had been made from the Strategic Priorities reserve to capital funding for housing.

- 93.6 In response to Councillor Busby's question regarding the number of Housing Association properties in the District, the Assistant Director for Housing would provide a response outside of the meeting.
- 93.7 In addition, Councillor Osborne detailed the processes for acquiring properties to increase the Council's housing stock and Councillor Busby asked that this be included in future briefings for housing.
- 93.8 Councillor Ward stated that so far in the Current financial year the Council had acquired 94 houses of these 68 were Social and Affordable rent and 26 were Shared Ownership. The Council had delivered 38 properties, 54 properties were built under Section 106 acquisitions and 2 had been under the Right to Buy Scheme.
- 93.9 The Assistant Director for Housing responded to Councillor McCraw's question and stated that the Council was looking to maximise its own building capacity and this formed part of the Business Development Plan.
- 93.10 Councillor Arthey queried the total rolling figures for the Council's Housing Stock and asked that clarification for the increase of housing stock and the loss of housing stock to the Right to Buy Scheme and an up to date rolling total of housing stock to be circulated to Members.

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That, subject to any further budget variations that arise during the rest of the financial year, the adverse variance of £617k, referred to in section 6.5 of the report, be noted;**
- 1.2 The 2021/22 revised Capital Programme referred to in Appendix A and section 6.13 be noted.**

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure that Members are kept informed of the current budgetary position for both the HRA Revenue and Capital Budgets.

94 BCA/21/43 QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE

- 94.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvements, Councillor McCraw to introduce Quarter 3 Performance to Members.
- 94.2 In response to Member's questions the Assistant Director for Corporate Resources stated that as of today no staff were on sick leave due to mental health issues.

- 94.3 Councillor McCraw responded to a question from Councillor Busby on how to convey the Council's performance to parish Councils in a sensible way and would look at the Outcome Performance Framework.
- 94.4 The Assistant Director for Environment and Commercial Partnerships responded to questions and informed members that the Tree Canopy Survey would be available in April and that water filtration systems were installed in January, commissioned in February and were working well. Statistics would be circulated to Members in due course.
- 94.5 Members considered the staff issues including the current employment market, training options for staff, awareness of local authority employment opportunities amongst young people and that the Council needed to be proactive when recruiting for vacancies.
- 94.6 The Assistant Director for Economic Development and Regeneration detailed job fairs and career festivals, which now included public sector careers that had not previously been included.
- 94.7 Councillor Ward referred to the Democracy Project, part of which involved engagement with young people.

The Quarter 3 Performance was noted.

95 BCA/21/44 CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

- 95.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Malvisi to introduce the report.
- 95.2 Councillor Malvisi provided an overview of the report and proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report.
- 95.3 Councillor Arthey seconded the recommendations.
- 95.4 Councillor Dawson queried the financial implications of biodiversity and the Assistant Director for Environment and Commercial Partnerships explained that the Tree Survey would provide data, which would enable an understanding of the financial pressure of trees and not just the sequestration rate when trees were removed. She detailed issues around green tariff for the leisure centres and the current energy crisis.
- 95.5 In a response to further questions from Councillor Dawson the Assistant Director for Environment and Commercial Partnerships stated that whilst £200K to £300K had been allocated for this year, this was more than what was available in the Environmental reserves and the Environment teams had sought to utilise public funding and grants to secure additional funding.
- 95.6 Councillor Davies asked for an update on the progress of the walking and cycling paths in the District and specifically for the Shotley Peninsula. The Assistant Director for Environment and Commercial Partnerships would

provide a response outside of the meeting.

- 95.7 Members considered issues including the use of electric and hydrogen vehicles for public busses and the Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.
- 95.8 Members debated the issues in the report including the number of trees planted in the District, consideration for the cost of maintenance of trees in the next few years and the funding issues for cycling and walking paths.
- 95.9 The draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) would be presented to Cabinet and the Council for noting in due course.

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 That the contents of the report be noted**
- 1.2 That a climate change and biodiversity report be produced annually each year going forward.**

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure that members and the public are kept informed of progress and achievements with regards to the councils' climate change and biodiversity ambitions.

96 BCA/21/45 RESPONSE TO NATIONAL GRID STATUTORY CONSULTATION ON THE BRAMFORD TO TWINSTEAD OVERHEAD LINE PROJECT

- 96.1 The Chair invited the Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor Arthey to introduce the report.
- 96.2 Councillor Arthey asked Members to provide comments on the proposed response to the Consultation and proposed the recommendations in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Barrett.

Note: Councillor Malvisi left the meeting at 3:50pm.

- 96.3 Members considered the proposed response and the options for over or under ground cabling. Members agreed that none of the solutions were completely ideal and would have to be a compromise. Pylons could be seen across the landscape and underground cabling would leave a scar across the land, as trees and hedges were cut down to enable the underground cables to be laid. In Areas of Natural Beauty (AONB) the transition between AONB and surrounding land posed a particular issue, as pylons would still obscure the view across AONB when placed outside of the AONB.
- 96.4 Member debated suggestions for a response in relation to Dedham Vale East Sealing End Compound and the Dedham Vale West and Stour Valley East section. Some Members felt the response was not strong enough while others asked for specific solutions to be included in the response.

96.5 Members continued debating responses and agreed that the following suggestions should be forwarded to the Assistant Director for Planning and Building Control by the Cabinet Member for Planning to be included in the response to the Consultation.

1. *That National Grid considers moving the Dedham Vale East Sealing End Compound from the proposed location near Millfield Wood, Polstead, to an appropriate site in or near the Layham Quarry to take advantage of the natural screening that can be provided by the land contours. This will also facilitate construction access via the purpose-built quarry road from the A1071. This would require an extra 1km of underground cabling.*
2. *That National Grid considers an underground link between the Dedham Vale West and Stour Valley East SECs. This section, whilst not in the Dedham Vale AONB, is still highly visible from many locations within the AONB and local residents are arguing for the protection of this area from the visual impact of the pylons. The cost of this additional 5.5km underground section would be offset by obviating the need for the two SECs.*

It was Resolved: -

1.1 To respond to the consultation.

1.2 The Assistant Director for Planning and Building Control, in collaboration with the Cabinet Members for Planning, consider any proposed amendments to the suggested response and be authorised to make amendments before submitting a response to the Government.

REASON FOR DECISION

To ensure the comments of the Councils are set out for consideration by National Grid in the further stages of the project.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 4:37pm

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Chair