

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **BABERGH COUNCIL** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Tuesday, 21 September 2021 at 5.30pm

PRESENT:

Councillor: Adrian Osborne (Chair)

Councillors:	Clive Arthey	Sue Ayres
	Melanie Barrett	Simon Barrett
	Peter Beer	David Busby
	Sue Carpendale	Trevor Cresswell
	Derek Davis	Mick Fraser
	Richard Hardacre	John Hinton
	Bryn Hurren	Leigh Jamieson
	Robert Lindsay	Elisabeth Malvisi
	Margaret Maybury	Alastair McCraw
	Zachary Norman	John Nunn
	Jan Osborne	Alison Owen
	Lee Parker	Stephen Plumb
	John Ward	

In attendance:

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)
Monitoring Officer (EY)
Assistant Director – Corporate Resources (KS)
Assistant Director – Assets and Investments (EA)
Corporate Manager – Governance and Civic Office (JR)
Head of HR and OD (SH)
Corporate Manager – Strategic Planning (RH)
Neighbourhood Planning Officer (PB)

Apologies:

Councillors: Siân Dawson
Jane Gould
Kathryn Grandon (Vice-Chair)
Michael Holt
Mary McLaren
Mark Newman

32 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

There were no declarations of interests.

33 BC/21/11 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 JULY 2021

It was RESOLVED:-

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2021 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

34 BC/21/12 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER

The Chairman referred Council to his tabled report which was for noting.

The Chairman then invited Councillor Ward to introduce his report.

Councillor Ward introduced his report and informed Council that it was good to be back in the Council Chamber for the Council meeting and whilst there were still some guidelines in place so that everyone could feel safe, it did mark another point on a steady return to normal.

The Leader reported that Covid infection rates locally and nationally remained stubbornly at a moderate level, which was to be expected as people mixed a lot more, but hospitalisations and deaths – also stable – were reasonably low. It did mean that the message of caution and sensible use of masks and sanitisers remained.

The Leader took the opportunity to mention the two awards ceremonies at which Babergh – and Mid Suffolk – were successful.

The Leader had attended the iESE conference and awards ceremony at Church House in London where the Council had won three awards: a gold, silver and bronze. This was really an excellent achievement and the Leader was proud that officers were delivering to a high standard and that what the Council was doing for its residents was being recognised nationally.

The Leader stated that whilst winning bronze in the Council of the year category was very good, the Council shouldn't rest on its laurels and must strive for the gold award.

The Leader also reported that the Housing Solutions team was highly commended in the Community Heroes of the Year category at the Municipal Journal's Achievement Awards for their efforts in keeping vulnerable residents off the streets during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Leader was pleased to accompany Cllr Fleming of Mid Suffolk to the Stowmarket depot to talk to Radio Suffolk about the switch of our vehicle fleet to run on HVO, which took place at the weekend. We are the first rural districts to do this and shows that the Councils are delivering real benefits for residents and their environment as part of the Councils' efforts to reach net zero by 2030.

The Leader was very pleased to announce that the Council's £180k investment in CCTV in Hadleigh and Sudbury was almost fully operational. There are 21 cameras in Sudbury and 8 in Hadleigh. Four are still to go live – Belle Vue Park and Cavendish Road in Sudbury and the cricket ground and Pykenham Way in Hadleigh. There is also one mobile camera and the Council will monitor its use to determine if more are going to be needed.

And finally, the Leader reminded Councillors that the final stage of the Women's Tour will be passing through Babergh on 9th October. The route takes it through several of our communities and will enable many of our residents to watch. It should be a great spectacle.

35 TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

There were no petitions received.

36 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

Question 1 - Laura Knight to Councillor Holt, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth

The council reports that have been released to date relating to the sale of Belle Vue do not reference the impact to Belle Vue House terrace and gardens. The access into that area from the current main entrance of the park is being sold to Churchill as part of the disposal site. You can also get into the gardens through a trampled clearing through the trees to gain access, but this is not suitable for many park users, including those with mobility issues or buggies etc. Please can you confirm that BDC will provide access to this area of the park; that it has been included in costings and confirm that public access will remain to the terrace and steps outside the house which was not included in the sale, which you have categorically stated that land outside the red line would not be disposed of and which is as confirmed by BDC, public accessible open space held on statutory trust for the public.

Response:

Ms Knight thank you for your question to Cllr Holt. Unfortunately, Cllr Holt is not able to join us this evening and he has asked me to respond on his behalf. As has been agreed previously at Cabinet, the capital receipt from the sale of Belle Vue House and part of the old swimming pool site (as defined by the red lined disposal area) will be directed towards the creation of a new park entrance and in fact work is already underway on this project. Plans for the new entrance, new toilets and the proposed new café will be subject to a public exhibition later this autumn alongside enhanced proposals for the park and we will welcome comments and suggestions at that time which will lead to the creation of a planning application for the park and the new access/facilities.

I can confirm that access shall remain to the whole park and in fact our aim is to improve not just the access but the movability around the park for all users. More details of our plans re landscaping will be available at the public engagement event.

Question 2 - Roger Young to Councillor Malvisi, Cabinet Member for the Environment

Would you kindly confirm the detailed brief given to the designer of the Strategic Parking Questionnaire, and the objectives sought from it, that was available on the BDC website and has now apparently been withdrawn?

When will a detailed map, showing all existing car parking facilities, including on-road parking and additional car parking opportunities needed to cater for expansion, be made available to Hadleigh's residents so that they can make a meaningful contribution to the Strategic Parking consultation exercise?

Response:

Mr Young, thank you for your question which I believe is one of many recently.

Babergh is keen to develop a Parking Strategy that provides a comprehensive route map with regard to the long-term approach to the provision of parking across the district. The strategy is at a high level and needs:

- **to identify our parking requirements for the next 5-10 years,**
- **to reflect national policy guidance as it applies to both the future of town centres/high streets**
- **to recognise the need for sustainable transport and travel as well as patterns of demand.**

Ensuring the right level and types of car parking facilities, with the right controls in place for their use, will help to support regeneration and enable development in and around the District's town centres as well as in rural villages.

It is important to ensure that shoppers, tourists, visitors, residents, workers and commuters have access to sufficient, good quality, safe, welcoming parking opportunities. More specifically the parking strategy needs to provide a set of detailed recommendations as to the nature of future parking provision serving both town centres and rural villages, and how they will function operationally.

The parking strategy is building on work previously undertaken in the form of the Joint Area Parking Management Plan and the subsequent Babergh Car Parking Study Report which highlighted the increasing need for a parking strategy for the medium to long term. The strategy comprises of three stages as was published in the timetable and agreed by Cabinet on 2 August 2021 (BCa/21/16).

- **Stage 1 - investigation & data collection.** This includes our parking strategy survey which launched on 31st August for a period of 4 weeks. The purpose of the survey is to give everyone the opportunity to have their say / give their views / thoughts etc on what parking issues are important to them. Alongside the survey will be virtual workshops for targeted stakeholders, again an opportunity to tell us what's wrong / give their views.
- **Stage 2 - creation of the strategy.** This is expected by the end of April 2022. This stage will allow for further opportunity for consultation with stakeholders.
- **Stage 3 – the Governance process, expected completion date of September 2022.**

So, in summary, the consultation currently under way is there to collect your views on how parking, both on street and off street is affecting you right now. It is about the places you use already, what works and what doesn't. These are spaces that you know well and will have experience of that we would like to hear about. We will use all that narrative, along with that exists with regard to future housing and capacity as well as existing Traffic Regulation Order's, and all this will assist us to draft a Parking Strategy. We will then share this with all stakeholders for comment prior to any decisions.

Supplementary Question

At the Babergh District Council meeting on Thursday the 4th February Councillor Malvisi confirmed that she had attended two parking meetings about parking in Hadleigh. And the minutes confirmed that she said that the steer to us was clear, more free time and later implementation date. My supplementary question is why has why has an implementation date of 1st January 2022 been set before we are free of covid restrictions, because this is in direct contravention of the promises given to Hadleigh residents by this council?

Cllr Malvisi to respond in writing outside of the meeting.

37 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

Question 1 - Councillor Beer to Councillor Malvisi, Cabinet Member for the Environment

At the February 2021 full Council Budget Meeting, we approved the maximum increase in Council Tax and increased car parking charges to be applied in our own Babergh carparks. The reasons stated at the time were due to the forecast budget position of a £1.8 million deficit. This was presented at many workshops and by finance officers and the Cabinet Member for Finance.

To help balance this position we were given several options;

Introduce the full allowed council tax increase, introduce car parking charges and close the Sudbury Advice Centre.

I voted against these charges being introduced, based on the information supplied at the time.

We now have the final 2020/21 financial outturn, which shows a rather different position, we now have a £725,000k surplus.

So, in light of this information will the Cabinet withdraw the introduction of any car parking charges?

This will give our town centres of Sudbury and Hadleigh a breathing space to recover from Covid 19, this would certainly send out the correct message to our hard pressed residents of Babergh and show that as a Council we do listen to our traders and the public at large.

Response to Cllr Beer from Cabinet Member for Finance

Thank you for your question Cllr Beer. Before handing over to Cllr Malvisi to answer the specific matter of our car park tariffs, I would like to correct a couple of misconceptions in your question.

Firstly, I would like to point out that we provide an Access Point, not an advice centre. We have never run an advice centre in any of our face-to-face locations. This may seem like a pedantic comment, but it is important as it gets to the nub of some of the criticism of the decision to move it. And I want to provide a further clarification and say that we have moved it, not closed it – it is still very much open and successfully serving our residents. Part of the reason for the move was that it would give us savings, but it needs to be understood also that the contract was due to expire in March and we took the opportunity to design a more appropriate service, aligned with our Customer Strategy and the changing way our residents interact with the Council.

Secondly, I did report, when I presented the budget, that we were forecasting a cumulative three-year deficit of £1.7m. This still stands and I don't expect it will improve in the foreseeable future – indeed, it may well go further in the wrong direction, but officers are currently reviewing the figures as part of the preparation for setting the budget for next year. The favourable outturn of £736k does not change this because most of it was one-off benefits that won't necessarily be repeated in future years. We have used this money to top up some reserves, most notably the Climate Change and Biodiversity Reserve and the Strategic Priorities Reserve, but reserves can only be used once and don't solve our base budget gap.

Response to Cllr Beer from Cabinet Member for the Environment

Thank you for your question Cllr Beer.

The funds generated from car parking have to be ring-fenced to pay for that provision, because as you know it is not a statutory service and currently our car parks run at a substantial loss, which cannot be sustained in the longer-

term. They are sorely in need of investment – we are providing new ticket machines, but our car parks also need resurfacing, they need remarking of bays and, crucially, improved lighting for the safety of users. We must have additional income for this.

Our economy is dependent on tourism and to encourage visitors to our towns we need car parks that are clearly marked and indicating if there is space, many is the time that I go into Girling Street Car park to find it full but nothing to tell me if there are spaces elsewhere, do I drive round wasting fuel – no I go home.

As I've mentioned earlier and as you very well know, provision of parking is not a statutory responsibility and currently it is a drain on council tax, which only forms 29% of our income, and business rates, which is =16% of income – both of which must fund our statutory services.

We most definitely are listening and have ensured that we will still be providing a very generous 1 hour free period, with only modest short-term charges for stays beyond that. We will not be introducing charges until the new year – after the busy Christmas period.

However, people's decisions on where to go for shops and other experiences are determined more by the offering and not on whether they have to pay a pound for parking. Our two towns do very well in this regard and we have supported our high street businesses with the very successful roll-out of the award winning Virtual High Street (now with over 150 businesses on the platform in Sudbury and over 60 in Hadleigh) with an accompanying digital skills for business programme.

In addition, the Welcome Back funding provided to both towns will help to put on local events, enhance the appearance of each centre and seek to draw greater footfall into our places.

These are some of the exciting events and activities that Sudbury and Hadleigh have been doing using the Welcome Back Fund and there's more in the pipeline. Also, we are working on the town centres presentation with new planters/hanging baskets etc.

Sudbury - they have used the welcome Back fund:

- Town centre ambassadors to support businesses and visitors to the town centre
- a new initiative to have "Green" Sundays which are monthly which are to encourage new businesses to attend their market area that support the green agenda
- Heritage open days over 2 weeks earlier this month that had guided tours and activities celebrate the heritage of Sudbury
- Audio trail on the silk heritage of Sudbury

Hadleigh – they have used the welcome Back fund:

- Innovate local – market stall pilot which offered 1 stall for a new business for a free period (usually 4 weeks) which started in July and until December, the stall is now booked out till November.
- They have created a mini tourism info point for a redundant BT box which has been received positively
- They have created their own loyalty cards for the town centre which supports residents using the high street and the cards are put in for a prize once completed. The prize is a voucher of the residents chosen shop in the town centre.

We as a Council, have also run activities including kinetic science with open spaces (Belle Vue park, Beaumont Park and Coxes Park). We have pushed out social media on the activities and supported the towns with their events.

You will know, Councillor, that the date of introduction for the new parking charges will be discussed at Cabinet in October. I would encourage you to attend that meeting, listen to the debate on that item, and of course ask any further questions on this important subject.

Supplementary Question

You have decided not to return the £725,000 surplus to the tax payer and the residents of Babergh District Council. But now instead will you be using this amount of money to help pay for the proposed massive wage increases to our senior officers, so is it more money for senior officers and more taxes for Babergh residents?

Response – Written response outside of the meeting

Question 2 - Councillor Jamieson to Councillor Malvisi, Cabinet Member for the Environment

Although we have been fairly lucky in this country so far, the extremes of weather experienced globally this summer give increased evidence that climate change is happening now. As this is our last Council meeting before cop26, will the Member for environment advise us, and concerned Babergh residents, if the Council are doing anything to encourage a favourable outcome at the conference. I realise we are but a small pebble on the beach but a letter to the government stressing how important this is would not go amiss and would be the least we could do? if every Council did the same, we could make a difference.

Response to Cllr Jamieson from Cabinet Member for the Environment

Cllr Jamieson, thank you for your question regarding COP 26 and what we as a Council are doing to encourage a favourable outcome. As you know Babergh committed to tackling the very real issues relating to Climate Change and Bio-Diversity early on in its tenure.

We are just over mid-way through our term and your question has very kindly enabled me to bring Council up to date on what we have been doing to move the District to a better natural environment all round, that is of benefit to all who live and work in the District.

Just for the record, Climate Change is real as is the damage being done to our natural world on which we depend for our own survival which is why both plans touch on a myriad of initiatives some of which are wholly environmental but many impinge on all the other Portfolios. Humans have the greatest negative impact on the planet.

We've switched the fuel used in our waste freighters, from diesel to HVO, a certificated fuel made from recycled used vegetable oil. In doing this, Babergh is one of the first local authorities to so do demonstrating yet again that we are leading not following.

This will immediately reduce the Fleet Carbon Emissions by 90% and the Council's overall Emissions by 25% and this, fellow Councillors is a big step forward, and as we move forward, we shall move the rest of the fleet to either HVO or Electric Vehicles.

We've started work on improving our planning design guide and are working very closely with BDC Planning Department and Developers to build back better and Greener in line with Government Policy. As an example, in my home village of Long Melford we have successfully negotiated with Bloors to have an area as a wildflower meadow running parallel beside the Melford Walk in a couple of years this will have had a major benefit to the LNR. Bloors are installing Swift Boxes, Hedge Hog runs, Bat Boxes and these are being made by the Scouts thus engaging more of the community. They are also installing water butts in a bid to reduce water consumption on the garden.

We have won funding to put a Solar Car Port into the Car Park at Kingfisher with multiple Electric Vehicle charging points and given that we live in a very sunny part of the country, we will be storing the unused electricity generated by the Solar Panels for onward utilisation. In fact, I do believe that the relevant planning application has been submitted to Babergh.

We are introducing new technology into the Kingfisher Centre to reduce their energy and water usage by recycling the warm water in the pool through a back-wash filtration system.

Very soon we shall see the conclusion of a mapping exercise that has been conducted in conjunction with Suffolk Wildlife Trust. When completed we, as a county as well as a district, will be able to see what nature reserves we have in relation to each other and how they can be linked to provide a 'wildlife highway' nature route. All issues that require planning guidance, which we plan to put into the Planning Supplementary Guide.

By using satellite technology, we have been able to identify what sort of tree canopy exists in our district and what types of trees exist within it.

This means that we will be better placed to plant the right tree in the right place.

We are rolling out a free tree and hedge offer to parishes which has created a lot of interest, however in Babergh we are short of our own land supply to be able to create community woodlands, but we are working on it.

I think it is very important to note that all the trees and hedges will be locally sourced. We need a lot of trees and hedging which will provide local employment.

We will be rolling out wildflower meadow verges towards the end of the year and the beginning of next.

There is more, but the important thing to remember is we are on track to achieve our Carbon Reduction Plan and our Bio Diversity action Plan.

COP26 is the 26th Climate Change Conference and I expect to see from Central Government clear actions and further support on how we can accelerate towards our climate change and biodiversity actions. We will be listening closely and will be sharing highlights of the conference throughout.

My advice to residents on how they can influence the outcomes of the conference, is to get involved. The COP26 conference website has a page on how to be involved. But you can do more than that, you can make changes at home right now. That is what will make a real difference. Decide to cut down on single use plastic, try not to waste water, cut down on your car use, only buy the food you need, switch to buying from environmentally friendly companies, switch to green energy tariffs. These are the things that will really make a difference if each, and everyone one of us committed to them, sadly some are not but I believe most are.

Supplementary Question

The Environmental Task Force was set up as part of the climate emergency motion, that you yourself delivered, was focused very much on getting the Council to carbon zero by 2030. Can we now widen the remit of the environmental task force to look to see what we can do to help the district as a whole get to carbon zero by 2030?

Councillor Malvisi to provide a written response.

38 BC/21/13 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee report was noted.

The Chairman requested that, in the absence of Councillor McLaren, any questions should be emailed directly to Councillor McLaren.

39 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET / COMMITTEES

40 BC/21/14 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT – 2020/21

Councillor Hurren introduced the report and informed Councillors that the Treasury Management 2020/21 outturn report was discussed at Joint Audit and Standards Committee on 26th July 2021.

The report provided details of investment performance, effects of decisions taken during the period and confirmed compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Policy.

The COVID pandemic and the impacts of a global lockdown dominated 2020/21. The start of the financial year saw many central banks cutting interest rates as lockdowns caused economic activity to grind to a halt. The UK Government provided a range of fiscal stimulus measures, the size of which had not been seen in peacetime.

The vaccine approval and subsequent rollout programme were both positives, but there remained much uncertainty in and around the level of losses that banks and building societies would suffer due to the economic slowdown.

The Bank of England held the Bank Rate at 0.1% throughout the year but extended its Quantitative Easing programme by £150 billion to £895 billion in November 2020.

The UK unemployment rate was 5.0% in the three months to January 2021. Unemployment is expected to increase as the various Government job support schemes come to an end.

Inflation has remained low over the 12-month period. Latest figures showed the annual headline rate of UK Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) fell to 0.4% year on year in February, below expectations (0.8%) and still well below the Bank of England's 2% target.

Councillor Hurren then informed Council that specifically for Babergh

1. The Council was able to take advantage of holding additional cash from government grants received relating to Covid-19 until they were paid out to support local businesses. This has increased treasury investment activity during the year.
2. The Council operated within the daily bank account limits.
3. Short-term debt has increased by £15.5m.
4. The Council lent a further £19.3m to CIFCO Ltd.
5. All investment activities undertaken were in accordance with the approved counterparty list.

6. The Councils' investment activities including average returns can be found in Appendix C of the report.
7. The investment in Funding Circle has reduced by £48k as unallocated funds have been reclaimed and existing loans repaid, leaving the balance on 31st March as £166k.
8. The Council was compliant with the upper limits for interest rate exposure. The investment activity undertaken for the year was done so in priority order of security and liquidity over yield as prescribed in the Treasury Management Strategy.

Councillor Hurren then **MOVED** the recommendations in the report which Councillor Plumb **SECONDED**.

Councillor Busby queried why the General Fund borrowing had increased from £50.7m to £71.3m in the previous year?

In response, the Section 151 Officer confirmed that this was due to the finalisation of the CIFCO purchases in that year.

Councillor Ward asked if the net borrowing and total borrowing figures could be separated into the General Fund and the HRA fund and reflected in the report in the same way as the capital financing requirements was.

The Section 151 Officer confirmed that this was possible and would be implemented going forward.

It was RESOLVED: -

1. **That the Treasury Management activity for the year 2020/21 be noted. Further, that it be noted that performance was in line with the Prudential Indicators set for 2020/21.**
2. **That it be noted that both Councils treasury management activity for 2020/21 was in accordance with the approved Treasury Management Strategy, and that the Councils have complied with all the Treasury Management Indicators for this period.**

**41 BC/21/15 CAPITAL INVESTMENT FUND COMPANY (CIFCO CAPITAL LTD)
BUSINESS TRADING AND PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020/21 - PART 1**

The Chairman welcomed Henry Cooke, Director, CIFCO Capital Ltd, Nigel Golder, Director Strategic Asset Management JLL, Helen Rumsey, Partner Ensors and Emily Atack, Assistant Director for Assets and Investments and Managing Director for CIFCO Capital Ltd.

Councillor Busby introduced the report and informed Council that the report detailed CIFCO Capital's performance over the last 12 months and the proposed business plan for the next 12 months. The business plan is a fundamental part of CIFCO's

governance and ensures accountability to its shareholders. He particularly valued the contributions from the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee in June this year, which confirmed that in their view, the business plan is robust and they have sufficient confidence in the management of CIFCO.

Since its inception in 2017, CIFCO has provided Babergh with £3.5m of net income. £1.3m was delivered during the last financial year whilst facing unprecedented challenges as a consequence of the pandemic and certainly providing the Councils with much needed income at this time. CIFCO was able to withstand the challenges of the pandemic and continue to deliver income to the Councils and this is testament to the investment approach and strong management of the CIFCO portfolio since its inception, which has seen rent collection rates above the industry norm.

The business plan identifies that the challenges of the pandemic are not behind us and takes a prudent approach to CIFCO's financial management over the next few years, ensuring that the CIFCO portfolio continues to provide income to the Councils, running about a quarter of council tax, to support the delivery of services and projects locally as well as creating a long-term legacy for the District to benefit from in the future.

Councillor Busby then **MOVED** the recommendations in the report which Councillor Ward **SECONDED**.

Councillor Barrett queried why the recommendations in the Overview and Scrutiny report were for noting only.

In response, the Monitoring Officer informed Council that Scrutiny is not provided with pre-empted recommendations. It would be for Scrutiny to make their own recommendations once the review had been undertaken.

Councillor Lindsay asked about the deferment of the £1.5m for the next three years and what would happen if the money that was owed could not be paid back?

In response, Councillor Busby stated that it was the intention of CIFCO to pay each month and if they didn't, interest would accrue.

The Assistant Director for Assets and Investments added that if the deferred income was not able to be paid back in three years' time, then the amount would be added to the existing loan and would be paid back over a longer period and would incur accrued interest.

Councillor Lindsay asked how much the loan was and when it was scheduled for repayment.

In response, the Assistant Director for Assets and Investments informed Councillor Lindsay that the schedule of loan repayments was detailed in the report. The length of the loan would depend on when the asset was purchased with the average length of the loan being between 45 to 48 years.

Councillor Maybury sought confirmation as to whether the interest on the loan would be compound interest.

In response, the Assistant Director for Corporate Resources confirmed that this was the case.

Councillor Simon Barrett queried whether the Council was receiving a cash flow advantage at the moment, as opposed to just a culmination of a capital sum as CIFCO were not in a position to pay the cash to the Council?

In response, the Assistant Director for Assets and Investments clarified that to date full repayments had been made as per the schedule of payments detailed in the report. The report however made provision for prudent financial management in view of the current pandemic situation. Even with deferred payments the Council does receive a net benefit from CIFCO.

Councillor Maybury asked what the interest rate would be on the compound interest?

In response, the Assistant Director for Finance confirmed that 2% was the figure.

Councillor McCraw stated that he had sat on many Overview and Scrutiny Committees where the business plan had been reviewed and endorsed year after year. The income that the Council had gained had gone up year after year as predicted, despite the tricky circumstances that everyone had faced. Deferment of payments was common because of the current situation. Councillors should be reassured that proper prudential arrangements had been put in place to recover the interest if needed. Councillor McCraw was confident that a robust business plan was in place.

Councillor Jamieson raised concerns about the deferment of payments.

Councillor Busby stated that there had not been any deferment of payments, all payments had been made to date. The measures had been put in place in case there was a need to defer payments at a later date.

Councillor Simon Barrett felt that although the Business Plan was robust, the business model was not sustainable.

Councillor Busby stated that the Market experts had predicted that CIFCO would be back up to full value of the portfolio within ten years.

Councillor Ward stated that CIFCO was providing regular guaranteed income to the Council. The Council was increasingly dependent on this income, four fifths of the Council's investments with CIFCO in total now accounted for 14% of the Council's income. This income allowed the Council to provide services to our residents where Council Tax and business rates only provided 45% of the income to provide them. The money made up for the loss of the Revenue Support Grant as the Council was increasingly expected to stand on its own two feet. CIFCO was doing the job it was designed for and doing it well.

It was **RESOLVED**: -

1. That CIFCO Capital Ltd trading activity and performance for the year to 31st March 2021 be noted.
2. That CIFCO Capital Ltd's 2021/22 business plan for adoption by CIFCO Capital Limited be approved.

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

As Members had completed their discussion of Item BCa/21/15 Capital Investment Fund Company (CIFCO Capital LTD.) Business Trading and Performance Report 2021/21, the Chair refrained from going into closed session.

43 CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX C - CIFCO CAPITAL LTD BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT PLAN 2021/22 (EXEMPT INFORMATION BY VIRTUE OF PARAGRAPH 3 OF PART 1)

44 RE-ADMITTANCE OF THE PUBLIC (WHICH TERM INCLUDES THE PRESS)

45 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

46 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF LICENSING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

On the proposal of Councillor Ward and seconded by Councillor Jan Osborne, a nomination for Councillor Dawson to be Chair of Licensing and Regulatory Committee was tabled.

On the proposal of Councillor Hinton and seconded by Councillor Plumb, a nomination for Councillor Maybury to be Chair of Licensing and Regulatory Committee was tabled.

The nominations were **PUT** to Council

It was **RESOLVED**: -

That Councillor Margaret Maybury be appointed as Chair of the Babergh Licensing and Regulatory Committee.

47 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

48 TO CONSIDER THE MOTION ON NOTICE RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLOR MALVISI

Councillor Malvisi **MOVED** her Motion and informed Council that it was recognised that streetlighting could play an important part in the Council's climate change and bio-diversity plans. Not only can it be controlled to reduce costs and reduce our carbon footprint but by installing the right type of light the Council can protect its nocturnal wildlife.

Currently LED lighting was being fitted and whilst these have reduced costs which was good on the one hand it had a very negative impact on another. As a society, we have moved towards a blue white light. This blue white light has a terrible effect on the behaviour of nocturnal wildlife leaving it confused and affecting reproduction. So much so that it is estimated that 40% of all insects will become extinct within the next decades. Councillor Malvisi asked that the Council approve her Motion so that a new bio- diversity supplementary planning guidance can be produced to help protect our nocturnal wildlife on whom our futures are so dependent.

Councillor Jamieson **SECONDED** the Motion and informed Council that a similar Motion was being put to Mid Suffolk so that both Councils could work jointly to reduce light pollution that would benefit everybody.

Councillor Hinton supported the Motion and stated that he was in favour of streetlighting being turned off as he felt it was nice to have a dark sky. He also stated that he hoped that Suffolk County Council would take account of any provisions that were made in the NPPF.

Councillor Cresswell thought it was a good idea but felt that a balance should be struck where there were areas of anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Plumb stated that his parish council had been pressurised by Suffolk County Council to install LED lighting and asked how it was intended to bring the County Council on board with this?

Councillor Busby asked if the biodiversity planning document would come back to Council? Councillor Arthey confirmed that it would.

Councillor Lindsay addressed the concerns relating to Suffolk County Council and confirmed that the County Council were looking closely at this matter. It didn't mean that the lights would all need to be replaced but would mean using some lower intensity lighting.

Councillor Malvisi confirmed that lighting filters could be installed if needed.

Councillor Fraser confirmed that Suffolk County was working to replace its street lighting with lower intensity lighting.

It was RESOLVED: -

That Babergh District Council recognises that light pollution is increasing and that it causes harm to wildlife and insects as well as being problematical for many people particularly when the light is high in intensity. Therefore, the Council seeks to reduce the intensity and extent of outdoor lighting within its public realm and housing assets as well as in other lighting schemes where it has influence, to the extent practical. The Council will also include firm guidance in its Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document to protect and enhance dark skies for the benefit of wildlife as well as human health and wellbeing.

49 TO CONSIDER THE MOTION ON NOTICE RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLOR JAMIESON

Councillor Jamieson introduced and **MOVED** his Motion and informed Council that details of the scheme had been circulated to Councillors ahead of the meeting. If the Council were to sign up to be a client partner on the Considerate Construction Scheme, it would agree to caring about the appearance of the construction, safety, respecting the community, care for the environment and respect for the workforce.

Becoming a Client Partner is free and demonstrates that the Council is an organisation that is committed to raising standards in the construction industry. It will be recognised by the public and those working on site as an organisation that places huge importance on showing care and consideration towards the local community, the environment and the welfare of the workforce.

Client Partnership member companies agree to recommend Scheme registration to all sites under their control and are expected to encourage conformance with all aspects of the Scheme's Code on their registered sites.

Councillor Lindsay **SECONDED** the Motion.

Councillor Hinton noted that the membership related to sites being registered rather than developers and asked what powers the Council would have to say that they must sign their sites up for this if they were based outside of the county.

In response, Councillor Jamieson confirmed that wording could be put into contracts to encourage them to sign up.

Councillor McCraw asked if it was just our own sites that we could impose this on or could we impose it on developers' sites?

Councillor Jamieson confirmed that it was primarily for our own sites, but wording could be included to encourage others.

Councillor Norman asked if, when we were appointing contractors, could the Council include questions to ensure that they adhered to these principals.

Councillor Ward stated that the Council already asks contractors to sign up for this. Nine local authorities had already signed up, Babergh would be the first district council to sign up.

It was RESOLVED: -

That the Council sign up to be a Client Partner on the Considerate Constructor Scheme - <https://www.ccscheme.org.uk/about-partnership/client-partners/>

50 TO CONSIDER THE MOTION ON NOTICE RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLOR LINDSAY

Councillor Lindsay **MOVED** his Motion that Council consider returning to a Committee system at the earliest opportunity after 20th December 2021.

Councillor Jamieson **SECONDED** the Motion.

Councillor Ward **MOVED** the following amendment

After five years of the current leader/cabinet governance model, the council believes it is time to review how effectively this is working and assess it against a committee governance model. Council will therefore instruct the Constitution Working Group and officers to define the details, including benefits and disadvantages, of an improved cabinet model and a suitable committee model.

The working group should report back to the first full council meeting after 20th December 2021 with these two options to allow council to decide which it prefers, with a view to implementing any changes at the annual council meeting in May 2022.

The Chairman asked Councillor Lindsay if he accepted the amendment.

Councillor Lindsay and his seconder accepted the amendment.

It was RESOLVED: -

After five years of the current leader/cabinet governance model, the Council believes it is time to review how effectively this is working and assess it against a committee governance model. Council will therefore instruct the Constitution Working Group and officers to define the details, including benefits and disadvantages, of an improved cabinet model and a suitable committee model.

The working group should report back to the first full Council meeting after 20th December 2021 with these two options to allow Council to decide which it prefers, with a view to implementing any changes at the annual Council meeting in May 2022.

51 BC/21/16 JOINT WELLBEING STRATEGY

Councillor Davis introduced the report and informed Council that he was delighted to be presenting the first Wellbeing Strategy for Babergh to Council. The document was a high-level document developed by councillors, officers, key partners and key community stakeholders. The strategy focuses on identified needs which are and will be dealt with in the associated delivery plan.

Councillor Davis said that the wellbeing of our residents is probably the most important aspect of our role as councillors. Everything we do impacts and affects the wellbeing of our residents. The vision for this strategy will mean that our residents

will have the best possible conditions for good wellbeing and have lives that are happy, healthy and rewarding.

Developing a Wellbeing Strategy has enabled the Council to set out its strategic vision and approach to support the wellbeing priorities of its local communities. Understanding our wellbeing priorities will also enable us to make the most effective use of our resources.

Addressing the wellbeing of our communities has rarely never been more important than at present as we live in the shadow of a global pandemic.

Wellbeing, put simply, is about ‘how we are doing’ as individuals, within communities and society. It provides a holistic view of people’s lives, taking in not just health, but our opportunities, engagement and success in other areas of life including social, civic, economic and the built and natural environment.

Councillor Davis went on to say it is well recognised that the broader determinants of health are particularly important in ensuring a healthy and happy population and these are also the types of wellbeing issues over which Councils have some control and influence; for example, stimulating our local economy, managing our environment, developing and managing our homes or providing leisure facilities. This strategy therefore does not duplicate the wellbeing impacts already contained within our Economy, Housing, Environment and Communities Strategies. These other strategies will however be reviewed to ensure wellbeing outcomes are being optimised through those strategies; and performance in relation to those aspects will be included when we are reporting on our performance in respect of wellbeing.

The Strategy sights the 10 [Measures of National Wellbeing](#), developed by the Office for National Statistics which organises nationally surveyed and gathered data into different areas of life affecting wellbeing. We have adopted the 10 areas with a focus on: personal wellbeing, relationships, Health, the local communities where we live and what we do with our time.

Our long-term outcomes will focus on enabling:

- *Families to lead active, healthy, safe, and independent lives and manage their own health & wellbeing;*
- *All communities to have sustainable and inclusive places and spaces, which maximise health & wellbeing opportunities and benefits; and*
- *A reduction in Health inequalities.*

As this strategy spans the period to 2027, our long-term outcomes are supported by a set of shorter-term outcomes that will focus on the next two years and are accompanied by more detailed objectives which are set out in the Strategy and where it makes sense to, will be delivered in partnership with both internal and external stakeholders.

While developing the strategy we haven’t stood still and have delivered a number of projects and supported many of our communities.

Councillor Davis then **MOVED** the recommendations in the report which Councillor McCraw **SECONDED**.

Councillor Hinton sought clarification on what activities had taken place in his ward.

In response, Councillor Davis confirmed that Active Suffolk had held several sessions at the Constable Medical Practice.

Councillor Simon Barrett asked if free swims were planned to be reintroduced as part of this programme.

Councillor Davis responded by confirming that a reduced programme had been held across the summer with a wider return planned for the future.

Councillor Busby welcomed the paper but felt that this was an ambitious strategy where several elements of it were reliant on other partners delivering the outcomes, and asked about the risk?

In response, Councillor Davis confirmed that this was an ambitious strategy but one that had been developed with the involvement of partners and stakeholders. There was recognition that the Strategy could not be delivered by the Council on its own and the delivery plan would be informed by the constant dialogue with partners. The implementation of the Strategy would be monitored closely.

Councillor Hurren was worried about the poverty within his own ward and across the district and felt that the ambition was good but that the Council needed to ensure it got the basics right.

Councillor Maybury stated that there was already a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Suffolk and asked why Babergh needed a separate one. She also felt that the free-swimming offer should be directed at the right people, as adults still needed to pay to go in to supervise their children and many could not afford to pay for this. She supported the free cookery classes and welcomed the proposals to support carers.

Councillor Melanie Barratt felt that residents could be supported better to deal with anti-social behaviour around tenancy issues and hoped that the Strategy would help that move in the right direction.

Councillor Ward informed Council that the ASB Team had been beefed up following feedback from the Stella Maris enquiry. Multi agency response for complex cases was far more robust and was initiated a lot earlier. Councillor Ward also said that the delivery plan was flexible enough to allow the Council to do what it could and what it could afford. The Strategy was ambitious and will be delivered working with partners and stakeholders.

Councillor Jan Osborne responding to the concerns about ASB, welcomed the Strategy aspirations and was looking forward to aligning the aims and aspirations with the Housing Teams, however she was concerned about the delivery plan from

a partner perspective and hoped that Suffolk County Council and the police raised their game to enable the plan to be delivered.

Councillor Beer welcomed the Strategy and hoped that both Babergh and Suffolk County Council worked together to deal with ASB issues and tenancy issues in a more timely manner.

Councillor Arthey highlighted page 11 of the Strategy and the “Where we Live” theme and our approach to planning discussions and said that the new emerging Joint Local Plan would lead this.

Councillor Davis in his summing up, said that anti-social behaviour was an issue that the Council was already working to address, using many different tools including enforcement notices, noise abatement orders and notices to seek possession. When it came to partnership working, it would be clear who would be funding the project, and partners would be expected to pay up. Councillor Davis said he recognised that this was an ambitious Strategy it was not a cut and paste job but bespoke in its own way to fit the district’s needs.

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1. That the Joint Wellbeing Strategy, attached as Appendix 1 to the report be approved.**
- 2. That the Assistant Director for Communities and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, be delegated authority to make future amendments and updates to the Strategy, in response to changing needs.**
- 3. After the Strategy has been approved, that the Assistant Director for Communities and Wellbeing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, be delegated authority to develop and implement a Delivery Plan.**

52 BC/21/17 PAY POLICY REPORT

The Chairman welcomed Michelle Kirk, Director, East of England Local Government Association Government Association and Suzanne Hughes, Head of HR and OD to the meeting.

Councillor Ward introduced the report and informed Council that some Councillors had informed him that they believed that the report had been rushed so he intended to present a brief chronology by way of introduction.

Senior salaries were last reviewed ten years ago in 2011 when Babergh first started working jointly with Mid Suffolk. The levels that were set then have stood the test of time.

It was highlighted in the risk section of the Pay Policy Statement that was debated in March 2021, where it was recognised that senior salaries had fallen behind the market. No changes were proposed at that time.

Despite not having to carry out senior officer recruitment to the Senior Leadership Team in the previous two years, officers were hopeful that they could still successfully recruit to the newly formed Assistant Director for Communities and Wellbeing post within the existing pay structures. Despite extensive marketing and strong interest in the four-way shared role, it became very clear when discussing the role with candidates, many did not consider the salary level competitive or appropriate compared to similar or existing roles. Fourteen people applied, none of which were considered to have the necessary experience to undertake the role.

Based upon this feedback, EELGA were commissioned to undertake an independent review on senior leadership pay in order to determine the extent of which the Council's pay scales were uncompetitive. Finally, Councillor Ward referred to 5.2 of the report which drew directly from the Pay Policy Statement.

Councillor Ward then **MOVED** the recommendations in the report which Councillor Arthey **SECONDED**.

Michelle Kirk, Director of EELGA delivered a short presentation on the content of her report.

Councillor Melanie Barrett asked whether the Director of EELGA had been asked to give an opinion on the job design and job description or on providing a different approach or was the commissioned report based on one unfilled vacancy.

In response, the Director of EELGA informed Council that she was not asked to look at the job description but the overall job package. The package was configured correctly but the offer was too low.

Councillor Melanie Barrett sought confirmation that the figures were based on the current year and asked how many increments members of staff could progress to if they had met all of their targets?

In response, the Head of HR and OD confirmed that staff could only progress one increment point per year. Staff would start on the nearest point to their salary and progress one increment a year until they reach the top of the scale subject to them reaching their performance targets. The EELGA recommendations were based on staff naturally progressing through the incremental points.

Councillor Melanie Barrett asked why the scales had been reduced to only three incremental points rather than five.

In response, the Director for EELGA stated that five years was now very unusual for progression scales. It was assumed that staff would start at the lowest point of the scale and would as they developed into the role, naturally progress over a three-year period. A five-year period indirectly discriminated against women as they were more likely to have shorter time in the workplace compared to men.

Councillor Melanie Barrett asked if a market supplement could be applied to address the issue of attracting candidates to the post of Assistant Director of Wellbeing and Communities.

In response, the Head of HR and OD stated that when asked, candidates had indicated that the post was being advertised at least £50k below the salary indicative for this post. A market forces supplement could be applied to the post, but this would only be in place for two years before being reviewed and could be taken away at any point. This would also not address the long-term problem of the salary levels being too low.

Councillor Hinton asked what the impact would be on the rest of the work force if the cap was removed from the top salaries and what comparisons had been taken with other Councils outside of Suffolk.

In response, the Head of HR and OD stated that individual salaries on the lower scales could be reviewed at any time and individuals could move from one band to another if their job warranted an increase in salary whereas at the top of the scale there was no flexibility to be able to do this.

The Director for EELGA informed Council that benchmarking comparisons had been made with all 39 Councils in the East of England, the three examples used were the Councils' most comparable Councils. The salary levels that were currently being paid were far lower and the Council was vulnerable to having their staff head hunted.

Councillor Lindsay asked if the salaries for the rest of the work force would need to be reviewed?

In response, the Head of HR and OD stated that she could not ever rule out a review of all salaries due to the environment we were currently working in and the vulnerability to the private sector. Whilst the public sector did have a good pension scheme, the private sector were able to offer large bonuses, car allowances, private health care and other benefits. The Council did have various different bands and staff could move up these bands. The Council hasn't looked at senior pay scales since 2011 but other salaries have been regularly reviewed.

Councillor Davis sought clarification on the number of current vacancies at senior management level.

In response, the Head of HR and OD confirmed that there were currently two vacancies although the Assistant Director for Wellbeing and Communities had been filled on an interim basis. This position was funded on a four-way basis with partners.

Councillor Ayres asked what the equivalent salary would be if the post was based in Greater London, Kent or Sussex and whether the Council offered a relocation package for staff that would be willing to move here?

In response, the Director from EELGA said that the configuration for London Councils was completely different and whilst attracted a lot higher salaries, the jobs were not comparable.

The Head of HR and OD confirmed that the Council did have a relocation policy which offered payments for relocation, this was currently being reviewed as people were able to work more flexibly from a distance.

Councillor Beer asked about the challenges that were detailed in the slides and said that he expected to be undertaking those challenges already and also asked if the Council should be undertaking efficiency savings first before suggesting pay increases.

In response, the Head of HR and OD clarified that the challenges detailed in the slides were the priorities that Members had identified going forward. Currently the Council did not have all of the skill set to be able to deliver these and they would not be able to be delivered if the Council could not attract staff and retain them at a senior level. The situation that the Council was currently in was that it had two vacancies at senior level that could not be filled, and any efficiency savings could not be realised until we have those staff in place.

On the proposal of Councillor Busby and seconded by Councillor McCraw it was **MOVED** that the meeting be extended to allow all business to be conducted.

This was **PUT** to the meeting and **CARRIED**.

It was RESOLVED:-

That the meeting be extended to allow all business to be conducted.

Councillor Maybury queried whether the salary points in the recommendations included on costs?

In response, the Head of HR and OD confirmed that the recommendations did not include on costs. The details of the financials were included in the slides. The full cost was £47,856.00 which included pensions and national insurance.

Councillor Parker sought clarification on how a low paid Chief Executive depresses the wages of directors and also asked about the report that was mentioned in page 271 of the report which referred to a recent survey undertaken by EELGA on salary levels 1 to 4 and why it was not included as a background paper?

In response, the Director for EELGA informed Councillor Parker that she would be happy to share the whole report. Councillors did have in front of them the pertinent parts of the report which compared like for like salaries.

Councillor Carpendale asked about the impact and cost implications on the whole of the organisation bearing in mind that there was a salary multiplier in place?

Councillor Cresswell recognised that there had not been a pay review since 2011 but queried whether there had been an annual percentage rise for the Senior Leadership Team?

In response, the Head of HR and OD confirmed that all staff had a NJC negotiated pay rise every year but the pay scales and pay spine for the Senior Leadership Team had not been reviewed since 2011. The Chief Executive's pay had been reviewed when he came into post.

Councillor McCraw referred to pages 64 to 67 of the report and sought clarification that if the multipliers that were currently set up changed, would the Pay Policy need to be amended?

In response, the Head of HR and OD confirmed that the Pay Policy Statement would need to be amended.

Councillor Fraser asked what the increase was in percentage terms?

In response, the Head of HR and OD stated that it would depend on individual salaries but could potentially be looking at a percentage increase of 10%.

Councillor Melanie Barrett raised concerns about the figures quoted in the report and sought clarity on what the cost would be for the Council in four years' time.

Councillor Simon Barrett stated that the Council had difficulty to recruiting other jobs including planning officers and felt that the whole process should be included as part of the budgetary process.

Councillor McCraw emphasised that this was an independent report produced from EELGA and had been benchmarked against similar Councils. The risks were high for the Council if their recommendations were not carried out. One interim will cost more than a Chief Executive. Councillor McCraw felt that if we did not do this now, we will have to do it sooner or later and in the meantime the Council could lose a lot of senior staff.

Councillor Arthey asked what would happen if Babergh and Mid Suffolk came to different decisions?

In response, the Chief Executive (who had been called back into the meeting to answer the question) stated that he did not have a definitive answer at this time but it would leave both Councils in a very difficult position with a joint workforce currently on single pay scales.

Councillor Maybury was concerned about the perception from residents as she felt that as a Council, the proposals to spend more money on salaries was being done at the wrong time.

Councillor Davis felt that officers deserved as much money as they could get but was worried about the gap between the highest and the lowest paid and the perception of residents.

Councillor Lindsay stated that the ratio of the top paid to the lowest paid would mean that the Pay Policy would need to be changed to accommodate an out of proportion pay rise that would see a huge increase for people who were already some of the highest paid in the district, he was concerned about the effect of this on the moral of lower paid staff and would like to see a pay review at all levels.

Councillor Beer felt that it was morally wrong to suggest such a high increase to already highly paid staff at a time when parking charges have been introduced and council tax increased.

At the proposal of Councillor Beer and supported by four other Councillors, a request for a recorded vote was submitted.

Councillor Busby stated that it was a case of supply and demand and that when the Council ran out of staff and don't have the senior staff to deliver our objectives it would run into a lot of trouble. Councillor Busby also agreed with Councillor Lindsay that all the pay scales needed to be reviewed and asked what could be done about increasing supply through training and development.

Councillor Melanie Barrett felt that the Council should not be scared if Assistant Directors decided to move on as it would encourage more junior staff to be promoted.

In his summing up, Councillor Ward clarified the figures in the presentation and confirmed that they illustrated the costs over a period of four years and that 9.6 clearly stated the figures including on costs.

Councillor Ward said that he understood Members concerns about the figures being large, but this was because the matter had not been addressed over a number of years. Residents he knew, also shared the concerns of Members but he felt that they would be concerned more when the Council started to be unable to deliver services because of a lack of good staff.

Councillor Ward informed Council that the Council was currently struggling to fill all jobs but particularly senior jobs. He referred to the market economy of supply and demand and this was hitting the Council particularly hard. It would cost the Council more if it had to rely on interims to cover the vacancies and would blow the budget out of the window.

The recommendations were **PUT** to the Council and were **LOST**

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Cllr C Arthey	Cllr S Ayres	Cllr D Busby
Cllr S Carpendale	Cllr M Barrett	
Cllr B Hurren	Cllr S Barrett	
Cllr E Malvisi	Cllr P Beer	
Cllr A McCraw	Cllr T Cresswell	
Cllr A Osborne	Cllr D Davis	
Cllr J Osborne	Cllr M Fraser	

Cllr J Ward	Cllr R Hardacre	
	Cllr J Hinton	
	Cllr L Jamieson	
	Cllr R Lindsay	
	Cllr M Maybury	
	Cllr Z Norman	
	Cllr J Nunn	
	Cllr A Owen	
	Cllr L Parker	
	Cllr S Plumb	
Total	8	Total 17
		Total 1

53 BC/21/18 REVISIONS TO INTERNAL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING PROCEDURES

Councillor Arthey introduced the report and informed Council that it had come a long way since the first few parishes began the neighbourhood planning journey. Our internal decision making procedures have served us well, and the Council had continued to find ways to improve on the way we interact with Neighbourhood Planning, including placing greater emphasis on the earlier informative stages. Most importantly of all, we continue to think about what we can do better.

The report before Council looked at two key regulatory processes that fall to this Council:

- our decision making on the recommendations set out in the independent examiners report, and our advancement of that Plan to referendum (Regulation 17A), *and*
- subject to a majority yes vote, our adoption of the Plan (Regulation 18A).

The report proposed changes to the agreed procedures which, with appropriate checks in place, should ensure that the Council can be 'better, smarter and swifter' in the way it guides neighbourhood plans through these stages.

In Babergh to date, 10 NPs have been through the examination process. Of those, 5 have now been adopted and 5 are in the final stages of being modified prior to being made ready to go to referendum.

In all cases, no objections were raised by either the District or Parish Council to implementing in full the examiners recommendations. That would suggest that our earlier and on-going engagement with these groups is working.

Councillor Arthey hoped that the Council would agree that the proposed changes to how Regulation 17A and 18A stages were managed were both sensible and practical.

In simple terms, they would remove the need for Cabinet to specifically approve the progression of a neighbourhood plan to referendum and would simplify the process by which this Council adopts a Neighbourhood Plan where it has received a majority yes vote.

Cllr Arthey **MOVED** the recommendations in the report which Councillor Busby **SECONDED**.

It was RESOLVED: -

1. **That the procedure for automatically taking a post-examination Neighbourhood Plan to Cabinet seeking approval to proceed to Referendum be changed. The proposal would automatically allow a Plan to proceed to referendum where the parish and district council have agreed to implement any required modifications. Where there are other considerations, a report will still be presented to Cabinet. The revised procedures would allow prompt publication of a decision notice, reduced administrative work, and ensure closer compliance with the relevant regulations.**

2. **That the procedure that requires taking a post-Referendum Neighbourhood Plan with a majority 'yes' vote to Council seeking formal adoption be changed. The new proposal, which would be to obtain Chief Executive approval endorsed by the Cabinet Members for Planning, would enable a Neighbourhood Plan agreed at Referendum to be formally adopted quickly, efficiently, and within the eight-week statutory time limit.**

The business of the meeting was concluded at 9.46pm

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Chair