

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

PRESENT:

Councillor: John Ward (Chair)

Councillors: Jan Osborne
David Busby
Alastair McCraw
John Hinton

Clive Arthey
Jane Gould
Mary McLaren

In attendance:

Councillors: John Hinton – Chair of Overview and Scrutiny
Simon Barrett
Peter Beer
Michael Holt
Siân Dawson

Officers: Chief Executive
Senior Governance Support Officer
Assistant Director - Assets and Investments
Assistant Director – Planning and Building Control
Assistant Director - Environment and Commercial Partnerships
Assistant Director - Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer
Corporate Manager - Communities (VM)
Corporate Manager – The Councils’ Companies (HB)
Senior Governance Support Officer (HH)

Apologies:

Councillors: Elisabeth Malvisi

1 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

Councillor Busby declared a non-registrable interest in item 10 as a Board Member of Babergh Growth (Ltd,) which he had received a Dispensation for from the Monitoring Officer.

2 BCA/22/1 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 APRIL 2022

It was RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th April 2022 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

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

There were no petitions received.

4 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

There were no questions received from Councillors.

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

There were no matters referred by the Overview and Scrutiny or Joint Audit and Standards Committees.

6 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

There were no comments on the Forthcoming Decisions List.

7 BCA/22/2 RESPONSE TO NATIONAL GRID NON-STATUTORY CONSULTATION ON THE EAST ANGLIA GREEN OVERHEAD LINE PROJECT

The Chair, Councillor Ward invited the Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor Arthey to introduce the report.

7.1 Councillor Arthey provided a brief summary of the item and proposed the recommendations in the report, and this was seconded by Councillor Busby.

7.2 Councillor Ward advised Cabinet that he had invited Ward Members to present their responses to the Consultation at the meeting. He then read a response received from Councillor Carpendale:

Response received from Councillor Sue Carpendale

Please would you add my following comments to those that will be presented to Cabinet on this matter. I'm unable to be present. I can't offer you any expertise, but my comments reflect my own views and those of residents in my ward. I know that some of these residents will be making their own, very substantial and well-argued objections direct to the consultation. I am completely supportive of their objections. Thanks.

I attended the consultation event and exhibition at Holton St Mary on 17th May 2022, and requested further information, including a set of maps. The event was busy, with many people present. As one might have expected, I didn't hear one positive comment.

The proposed corridor for these massive 50m pylons passes along the edge of my ward. Needless to say, nearby residents are horrified and alarmed by the prospect. However, the proximity of these pylons is not just an issue for people living close by.

The maps illustrating the 180km pylon corridor from Norfolk to Essex demonstrate the appalling intrusion into the area, both visually and in terms of land use and disturbance. I do not believe that undergrounding a short section through the AONB is either sufficient or acceptable, given the impact on the environment, including wildlife and natural habitat.

I am wholly supportive of the lobby gaining traction, at levels from our regional MPs at Westminster through to local residents, that a supply network of this magnitude should be routed sub-sea and river in its entirety. If France can ship power to the UK across the channel, the technology clearly exists.

Furthermore, in view of the number of power cuts suffered as a result of weather-related events, and in a time of climate change when there is a likelihood of more frequent and severe weather events, it surely does not make sense to erect such an important, long term and strategically significant power supply in a manner which will not guarantee continuity of operation.

This proposal is a monstrous imposition on rural East Anglia and dismissive of alternative supply-route technologies.

7.3 The Chair, Councillor Ward invited Councillor Hinton to present his response to Cabinet:

7.4 Councillor Hinton thanked the Chair and continued:

This proposal is, as Councillor Carpendale has pointed out in her written submission, extremely intrusive across a wide swathe of countryside from Norfolk all the way down through into Essex. It chomps through parts of my Ward, and across Stour Vale, and will be extremely intrusive, more intrusive than the power network already in place.

We know that these networks are vulnerable to weather conditions, we saw a few years ago a lightning strike on a gas power station in Bedfordshire that blacked out the whole of northern east Anglia and Ipswich hospital, for the simple reason that it then tripped out a wind farm. So even having wind farms off the coast, is not a reliable source when there is a storm around or anything like that.

Putting energy that's generated off the coast under sea is a logical way to proceed, there are already proposals within this for part of it to be put under the sea around Tilbury. So why on earth can't the whole thing be put under sea up from the start of the operation up in off the north Norfolk coast.

We know that in the possible near future, there is going to be a third nuclear reactor at Sizewell, that will presumably mean they're going to have to put up some more pylons to take the power from Sizewell to where its actually needed. And that will mean further intrusion upon the countryside of Suffolk and North Essex.

We know also that within the plans, I hasten to say, the strategic thinking that the Government has got in place. But it doesn't seem to have an awful lot of strategic thinking in place, as far as power generation is concerned. That the new mini nuclear reactors, if they ever get off the ground, that they're going to be placed near to where the electricity is going to be consumed.

And that will reduce on transmission cost and transmission losses, so putting something underground or under sea now, will give positive benefits in the long term for the whole of East Anglia. Which at the moment is turning into an enormous great pylon farm. So, I support very much the objections of the Council to the overgrounding of the pylon erection of these proposals.

7.5 The Chair proposed that an amendment was made to recommendation 2 to include *'and the Leader of the Council'*.

7.6 This was put to the proposer Councillor Arthey and the seconder Councillor Busby, who both agreed to the amendment.

7.7 Councillor Ward further asked that a new paragraph be inserted into the Council's response to the Consultation on page 16 in the report, between the current 4th and 5th paragraphs in the section titled 'Principle of Development':

The Councils are concerned that National Grid decided, prior to this consultation, to choose a land route for ATNC rather than a viable undersea route, SCD2. There is a lack of transparency about how and why the recommendation for SCD2 was changed to 'Stop' in NOA 2020/21 after it had initially been assessed as viable. This decision should not have been made without public consultation.

7.8 Referencing page 20, Councillor Ward also suggested that the best alternative location for the northern end cable sealing end compound would be at the Notley Enterprise Park on Raydon Road.

7.9 Councillor Arthey stated that Members should be mindful that they were trying to find a solution to a proposal they did not support.

7.10 Councillors McCraw and Councillor Osborne agreed with Councillor Arthey and that the response to the Consultation should state the concerns of residents and should be set out in stronger points and be robust.

7.11 Councillor Busby and Councillor McLaren raised concerns about the impact of the overground pylons on the Areas of Natural Beauty (AoNB) and the effect this would have on tourism.

7.12 In response to Councillor McCraw's question regarding the response being a non-statutory response to the Consultation by National Grid, the Assistant Director – Planning and Building Control responded that if National Grid decided to take the planning application forward the next stage of the process would be a statutory Consultation.

7.13 Members agreed that subsea cabling was preferable, as overhead cabling damaged the scenery and was a blight on the landscape. Pylons would also affect the value of house prices and cause anguish to residents.

It was RESOLVED

- 1.1 To respond to the consultation.
- 1.2 That the Assistant Director for Planning and Building Control, in collaboration with the Cabinet Members for Planning and the Leader of the Council 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.

8 BCA/22/3 COST OF LIVING REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

- 8.1 The Chair, Councillor Ward invited the Cabinet Member for Communities Councillor McLaren to introduce the report.
- 8.2 Councillor McLaren provided an overview of the report and proposed the recommendations, as detailed in the report.
- 8.3 Councillor McCraw seconded the recommendations.
- 8.4 The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Osborne welcomed the report but asked that assurance was given that there would be no duplication of work, and that reports on monitoring progress would be brought to Cabinet on a regular basis.
- 8.5 The Cabinet Member for Communities assured Members that duplications would not occur and that quarterly reports would be presented to Cabinet.
- 8.6 Councillor Ward informed Cabinet that the East Public Sector Leaders Group had provided £1m funding for Suffolk Advice and Support Services, Local Welfare Support service and Food Banks.
- 8.7 Councillor Busby referenced food banks and enquired if the Council had a list of food banks published on its website.
- 8.8 The Corporate Manager – Communities detailed how work was being undertaken to support food banks across the District and the conversations being undertaken between officers and food bank providers.
- 8.9 Councillor Gould queried how the Council would be monitoring progress measures for food banks, many of which were operating on a grass root basis. She also asked that information about allotments were made available on the Council's website.
- 8.10 Councillor McLaren responded that the action plan and the report was the first stage of this Action Plan, and the next stage would be to set out how to monitor

progress.

- 8.11 Councillor Ward stated that the Action Plan was very comprehensive with regards to alleviating the cost of living crisis both in the short and long term.
- 8.12 Councillor McCraw declared that the action plan built on existing programmes and projects already in place. The Local Citizens Advice (LCA) in Sudbury and Ipswich coordinated local food banks. He continued that the additional officer to support work between the Council and the LCA was funded by the levelling up grants from Central Government.
- 8.13 A question from other members attending the meeting regarding any assistance the Council could provide in relation to food banks to any new groups starting up was to be responded to outside of the meeting by the Cabinet Member.

It was RESOLVED: -

- 1.1 **Agree the 5 Point Plan attached at Appendix One.**
- 1.2 **Delegate to the Assistant Director for Communities & Wellbeing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities to keep this Plan under review and to update this in response to emerging need.**

REASON FOR DECISION

Provides assurance and confidence, ensuring that well established systems intra-connect to respond to the emerging needs of people through effective co-ordination and service delivery. The plan includes a range of measures that focus on providing advice and support, maintaining people's good health, building on the investments the Council has already made since the launch of the respective Communities and Wellbeing strategies and bringing forward an initial suite of interventions that will help improve the system long term, including the appointment of a Cost-of-Living Co-ordinator.

9 BCA/22/4 BABERGH FORMER HQ DEVELOPMENT SITE

- 9.1 The Chair, Councillor Ward introduced the report on behalf of Councillor Busby.
- 9.2 Councillor Ward proposed the recommendations, as detailed in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Osborne.
- 9.3 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting the Assistant Director – Assets and Investments, clarified that there had always been a Phase One and Phase Two in the development of the sites. The refurbishment of the existing building continued to be Phase One and the new build formed part of Phase Two. There had been some change to the flood zones. Phase 2 had been sub divided into Phase 2a and Phase 2b. A viability study and further assessment would be undertaken before going

forward with Phase Two. Appraisals had also taken into account the work intended for the site as this was a challenging site. With regards to the financial implications for Phase One, it had never been the aim to deliver this part of the scheme for profit and the projections were for the project to break even. However, the increase and availability of building materials should be taken into consideration. The existing development plans for Phase 2A was expected to deliver a profit to the Council. She reminded Members that the report being presented today was to bring Phase One of the development forward.

- 9.4 The Chair confirmed that the increase in the debt threshold was to enable the delivery of Phase One. The part of the development would either bring a modest profit or break even.

Note: The meeting was adjourned between 3:19 pm and 3:25 pm.

- 9.5 In response to questions from other Members attending the meeting Councillor Busby stated that the Council followed the latest and most up to date advice received for the Former HQ Site.
- 9.6 In response to further questions from other Members attending the meeting the Monitoring Officer informed Members that the decision was not ultra-vires, but an executive decision, and Cabinet was not limited to the amount of funding it could agree, as long as it was within the agreed budget which was set annually by Full Council. The Section 151 Officer had confirmed that the funding was within the agreed budget and therefore Cabinet could make this decision.
- 9.7 The Chair stated that the Grounds of Urgency for the decision had been approved to ensure that an agreement could be progressed to prevent an increase in cost for the development of the site. The deadline was Friday 17 June 2022.
- 9.8 Members debated the options in the report and agreed that Option 2 was consistent with the decision made by Full Council in 2018. The objectives remained the same for Babergh Growth Company, which was to minimise the losses to Babergh Council and if possible, gain a profit. However, the cost of material and work had increased in the past 3 years since the project began and there were challenges which had to be addressed on the site, including the listed buildings.

It was RESOLVED: -

That Cabinet:

- 1.3 **Approves the increase in peak funding threshold for Babergh Growth Ltd to £7m for use to deliver the redevelopment of the former HQ site in Hadleigh.**
- 1.4 **Authorises the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and the Leader, to negotiate and vary the necessary legal**

agreements between Babergh District Council and Babergh Growth Ltd to enable the delivery of housing on the former HQ site within Hadleigh.

REASON FOR DECISION

To enable and support the delivery of housing within the district and support the economic prosperity of Hadleigh as a key market town.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 3:42 pm.

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Chair