

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Monday, 23 January 2023

PRESENT:

Councillor: John Hinton (Chair)
Adrian Osborne (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Melanie Barrett Siân Dawson
Kathryn Grandon Robert Lindsay

In attendance:

Councillors: Dave Busby – Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments
Jan Osborne – Cabinet Member for Housing

Officers: Deputy Chief Executive (KN)
Director for Corporate Resources (ME)
Director for Operations (ME)
Director for Housing (DF)
Corporate Manager for Finance, Commissioning & Procurement (RH)
Service Improvement Advisor (SB)
Corporate Manager for Governance and Civic Office (JR)
Lead Officer for Overview and Scrutiny (AN)
Governance Officer (BW)

36 APOLOGIES / SUBSTITUTIONS

36.1 None received.

37 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

37.1 None declared.

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

38.1 None received.

39 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

39.1 None received.

40 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

40.1 None received.

BOS/22/02 GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (2023-24) - REVIEW OF SAVINGS, PROPOSALS AND UPDATED POSITION

- 41.1 Councillor Busby – Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments - introduced the report to the Committee outlining before Members the changes to the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account since the assumptions came before Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2022.
- 41.2 Councillor Grandon questioned how the General Fund would be impacted if business rates reduced. The Director for Corporate Resources responded that the Council constantly monitors changes in business rates, that any reductions in the business rates would impact the following budget in 2024/25, and that there was a business rate equalization reserve which could mitigate any significant deficits.
- 41.3 Councillor Barrett questioned if the pay award, increments, and pay review Housing Revenue Account pressure figure incorporated the current staffing review which will take effect in the next year. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments responded that the figure did include this review.
- 41.4 Councillor Barrett further queried if the chargeable amount for CIL admin still accounted for 5% of the total CIL income. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments responded that this was correct.
- 41.5 Councillor Lindsay questioned what changes had been made since the original budget assumptions to reduce the deficit. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments responded that the main change was an increase in business rates. The Director for Corporate Resources further responded that the Government would be compensating for the inflationary increase in business rates.
- 41.6 Councillor Grandon questioned the reasons for an anticipated decrease in planning income. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments responded that it is assumed there will be less demand on planning services over 2023/24 due to the impact of the wider economy.
- 41.7 Councillor Grandon further questioned the balance between the overall increase in Band D Council Tax and the reductions in tax awarded to certain residents within Band D. The Director for Corporate Resources responded that there was a £50k pressure for the banded scheme but that this was being funded through the COVID reserves so there was no impact on the General Fund.
- 41.8 Councillor Dawson queried the reasons for the increase in waste contract inflation and disposal costs. The Director of Operations responded that it was a result of a contractual uplift based on changes to the number of households in the District and other inflation factors such as petrol and labour costs

- 41.9 Councillor Dawson further questioned if the recharge to the Housing Revenue Account for grounds maintenance was separate to what is covered within public realm and the reasons for the value provided. The Director of Operations confirmed that grounds maintenance had been brought in-house and that the increased figure was a result of correcting historic undercharging and an increase in the level of dedicated resources working on housing.
- 41.10 Councillor Lindsay questioned if there had been savings from bringing the grounds maintenance service in-house. The Director of Operations responded that this would be looked at and an answer provided outside of the meeting.
- 41.11 Councillor Grandon requested that extra information be provided to the committee regarding public realm and that an appropriate item be added to the committee work plan.
- 41.12 Councillor Lindsay questioned the reasons for the significant increase in payable interest. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments responded that most short-term loans are coming to an end and that the interest rates on these loans have increased.
- 41.13 Councillor Lindsay further questioned the reasons for the increase in repair costs within the Housing Revenue Account. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets and Investments responded that this was due to staffing costs, resource costs, and the need to modernise the existing housing supply. Councillor Jan Osborne, Cabinet Member for Housing, followed up by stating that there was a backlog of changes to the existing housing supply due to the COVID pandemic.
- 41.14 The report was noted.

42 BOS/22/03 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

- 42.1 No comments.

43 BOS/22/04 BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN

- 43.1 Councillor Hinton suggested that an item on Public Realm be added to the work plan.
- 43.2 Councillor Grandon suggested that the Public Realm item be considered in March.
- 43.3 Councillor Hinton agreed with the proposal for March and confirmed that he would be in talks with Officers to ensure it is considered then.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 10:32am.

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Chair