

BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS

Minutes of the meeting of the **JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Friday, 30 September 2022

PRESENT:

Councillors:	Susan Maria Ayres B.Ed Hons	Terence Carter
	James Caston	Derek Davis
	Paul Ekpenyong	John Hinton (Co-Chair)
	Robert Lindsay	Keith Scarff
	Keith Welham (Co-Chair)	

In attendance:

Councillor(s): David Busby
Jessica Fleming

Officers: Director of Environment and Commercial Partnerships (FD)
Parking Services Manager (SG)
SRP Operations Manager (AW)
Corporate Manager – Finance Operations (RH)
Shared Revenues Partnership Operations Manager (AM)
Shared Legal Service - Business Partner (ND)
Deputy Monitoring Officer (JR)
Assistant Manager – Governance (HH)
Lead Officer - Overview & Scrutiny and Projects (AN)
Governance Officer (BW)

Apologies:

Melanie Barrett
Siân Dawson
Kathryn Grandon
David Muller BA (Open) MCMI RAFA (Councillor)
Adrian Osborne

13 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Terence Carter declared an Other Registrable Interest in respect of item number JOS/22/9 due to being a Council Tax reduction recipient. However, the item under discussion did not directly relate to the finances or wellbeing of that interest or affect the finances or wellbeing of that interest to a greater extent than the majority of inhabitants. Therefore, Councillor Carter was not prevented from participating in the debate and vote in respect of this item.

Councillor Derek Davis declared an Other Registrable Interest in respect of item number JOS/22/8 due to being a Cabinet Member at the time the strategy was formed. Therefore, Councillor Davis left the room, and was prevented from participating in the debate and vote in respect of this item.

14 JOS/22/7 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 JUNE 2022

It was **RESOLVED**: -

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 27 of June 2022 be confirmed as a true record.

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

None received.

16 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

None received.

17 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

None received.

18 JOS/22/8 BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS PARKING STRATEGY

18.1 Councillor Davis left the meeting at 9:40am.

18.2 Councillor Fleming introduced the report to the committee outlining that the strategy was the result of consultation and stakeholder engagement, consultation process included a residents' survey and roadshows to gather data. The process was supported by 2020 Consultancy which provided national expertise. A Department for Transport traffic forecasting tool was also utilised to predict future traffic needs in the district. This had allowed for a greater understanding of the public, residential, and commercial needs in the districts. The resulting schemes from this data will be assessed for their viability and may involve other organisations such as Suffolk Highways. She thanked the officers involved for their work on the strategy.

18.3 Councillor Ekpenyong questioned whether the predicted growth had been on the usage of existing car parks. The Parking Services Manager responded that this had been based on current usage of the car parks. Councillor Fleming added that the strategy did not rule out the possibility of adding additional car parks.

18.4 Councillor Lindsay queried how the Council's parking ambitions had been decided, and whether this was linked to the Joint Area Management Plan and the climate goals. The Parking Services Manager responded that the consultants and portfolio holders had decided what the ambitions would be, and these ambitions were linked to the climate emergency declaration.

- 18.5 Councillor Ayres raised concern that the survey had been done in August 2021 and may not reflect current needs. Councillor Fleming responded that the Council were aware of the effects of Covid-19 when the survey was taking place. The Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships added that when projects within the strategy were being developed that further evidence would be gathered.
- 18.6 Councillor Caston questioned how the online survey had been promoted and how was it ensured that the responses were diverse. The Parking Services Manager responded that the survey had been promoted through social media and QR codes at in person events. Virtual and in person workshops were also utilised and a QR code was provided to allow attendees to complete the survey and paper copies were provided to those who could not access the online survey. Local businesses were also provided with QR codes and paper copies of the survey.
- 18.7 Councillor Ekpenyong questioned who would be creating the implementation plan and what the timeframe for implementation would be. Councillor Fleming responded that the implementation plan would be started once the strategy had been approved at Cabinet. It would be an ongoing plan as there would be long term and shorter-term projects. The Director – Environmental and Commercial Partnerships added that the implementation plan itself would not take very long to put together and a delivery group formed of officers from different services would be involved in delivering the plan.
- 18.8 Councillor Carter questioned whether the strategy was a living document. Councillor Fleming responded that the strategy itself was not a living document, however the implementation plan would be.
- 18.9 Councillor Scarff questioned how the strategy would inform the planning process. Councillor Fleming responded that planning decisions would need to take into account the strategy and it would be used in pre-planning advice and committee decisions.
- 18.10 Councillor Scarff queried what the process for the strategy was going forward and whether it would go to Overview and Scrutiny or Cabinet. Councillor Fleming responded that information may go to Overview and Scrutiny for information and noting. The Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships added that the business case and proper process would go to Cabinet but smaller changes such as sign changes would not go to committee.
- 18.11 Councillor Welham questioned how the strategy would be developed towards a new normal. Councillor Fleming responded that the strategy would be available to be reviewed every 3-5 years.

- 18.12 Councillor Welham queried whether Suffolk County Council had been involved in the process of preparing the strategy. The Parking Services Manager responded that regular briefing sessions took place with Suffolk County Council and that they would be involved in street parking matters.
- 18.13 Councillor Welham questioned whether the prediction method took into account cost of fuel and whether the predictions would be accurate due to recent economic changes. Councillor Fleming responded that the most current available government model had been used.
- 18.14 Councillor Ekpenyong questioned what process would be adopted and whether this would be one overarching plan, or a series of supplementary plans. The Director – Environment and Commercial Partnerships responded that this would be within the implementation plan, and that this would contain longer and shorter-term priorities.
- 18.15 Councillor Lindsay queried the evidence base used to inform the strategy including the figures showing that 40-50% of journeys had been less than 1.5 miles and whether in relation to this that the strategy could be used to try and change the behaviour of residents. Councillor Fleming responded that within the survey cycle parking in addition to car parking so this may have an impact on distances. In addition to this there may be effects in terms of the age of residents and weather conditions when it comes to length of journeys. The model took into account the demographic of the area and was not based on national statistics.
- 18.16 Councillor Lindsay questioned how parking would be provided whilst reducing the environmental impact. Councillor Fleming responded that it was the Council's duty to provide parking and accommodate cars despite the friction.
- 18.17 Councillor Caston questioned how much weight had been given to existing issues and what data was there on these previous issues. The Parking Services Manager responded that there was data from Ipswich Borough Council and West Suffolk Council on penalty notices that had been issued in car parks, additionally payment machines showed how many cars had parked and for how long.
- 18.18 Members debated the issues and made the following observations:
- The effects of car sharing on roadside parking should be included in the strategy.
 - That there needed to be a balance between parking provision and alternative means of transport.
 - That in relation to on street parking pedestrian access needs to be considered.
 - That an update on the new normal circumstances should be brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
 - That disabled parking placements in car parks needed to be considered

18.19 Members raised concern about the environmental impact of the strategy and that case studies on reduced parking to reduce parking to aid environmental issues should be looked at.

18.20 Councillor Ekpenyong proposed the recommendations as detailed in the report.

18.21 Councillor Ayres seconded this motion.

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED: -

1.1 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the content of the report and that a verbal presentation of the comments made at this meeting be provided to Cabinet

1.2 That Cabinet is requested to carry out further work to replace carparking demands with alternatives by looking at other areas that have done so successfully.

1.3 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee asks that a report be provided to the Committee in due course to review the progress on the Parking strategy implementation plan.

19 JOS/22/9 SHARED REVENUES PARTNERSHIP - COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

19.1 A short break was taken between 11:22 -11:32am.

19.2 Councillor Davis returned to the meeting at 11:32am.

19.3 The Corporate Manager – Finance Operations introduced the report to the committee outlining that the current scheme allowed for a reduction of up to 95%, the options that had been considered, and that Option 3 for a 100% reduction was the recommended option to go out to consultation.

19.4 The Shared Revenues Partnership Operations Manager presented to the committee that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme was means tested which required Universal Credit customers' council tax payments to be reviewed on a monthly basis. The introduction of a 100% reduction would allow for this system to be automated and would remove administrative costs from Universal Credit recalculations.

19.5 Councillor Carter questioned whether the scheme only applied to Universal Credit recipients. The Shared Revenues Partnership Operations Manager responded that the intention was to currently look at Universal Credit customers, however the legacy scheme would continue until those customers were also on Universal Credit.

19.6 Councillor Scarff queried what the other members of the Shared Revenues

Partnership were doing. The Shared Revenues Partnership Operations Manager responded that Ipswich Borough Council had consulted on Option 3.

19.7 Councillor Davis queried whether all of the options would go out to consultation or just the option agreed by Cabinet.

19.8 Councillor Ekpenyong queried whether the change to a 100% reduction would be a one-off cost or a reoccurring cost. The Shared Revenues Partnership Operations Manager responded that the scheme would be an annual cost and would need reviewing yearly.

19.9 Councillor Caston questioned whether the change to a 100% reduction would effect Suffolk County Council services as savings in administrative costs would only benefit the district councils. The Shared Revenues Partnership Operations Manager responded that there would be little loss to the County Council as often the 5% did not have the means to pay and debt would be collected as the money had not been generated.

19.10 Councillor Welham queried whether the additional cost calculations took into account the savings in administration. The Shared Revenues Partnership Operations Manager responded that additional costs did not currently take into account admin savings, this was calculated on an annual basis retrospectively and were based on the churn. A reduced churn would reduce the cost on the authorities.

19.11 Councillor Davis thanked officers for their report and Member briefing.

19.12 Councillor Davis proposed that the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet Option 3 as the preferred option for the Consultation for the Council Tax Reduction (Working Age) Scheme.

19.13 Councillor Lindsay seconded this motion.

By a unanimous vote.

It was RESOLVED: -

That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet Option 3 as the preferred option for the Consultation for the Council Tax Reduction (Working Age) Scheme.

20 JOS/22/10 INFORMATION BULLETIN - SHARED LEGAL SERVICE PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND SPLIT OF NEW LEGAL MATTERS

20.1 Councillor James Caston left the meeting at 12:15pm.

20.2 The Shared Legal Service Business Partner introduced the information bulletin to the committee highlighting that there had been an even split in

cases, however it was not possible to split the cases until April 2022. Performance data of the service was monitored on a six-monthly basis and used data from the case management system which provided information on the number of new legal instructions received from each Authority, which legal team the instructions were assigned to, and the percentage of complexity levels.

20.3 Councillor Ekpenyong queried whether with the even split of instructions, if there were there equal cost levels across the authorities. The Shared Legal Service Business Partner responded that the service did not charge for each matter, the only charges to the councils were in regard to employment and ensured that a fair amount was being paid by each authority.

20.4 Councillor Hinton queried the churn in terms of staff. The Shared Legal Service Business Partner responded that all posts within the service were filled and that there were no gaps in the service causing issues, and this was always under review.

20.5 Councillor Welham questioned whether uncomplicated cases could take a lot of time. The Shared Legal Service Business Partner responded that it is a balance, however many complexity 1 matters do not get registered and are dealt with as phone calls before they can be logged.

20.6 Councillor Welham queried the staff time recording system. The Shared Legal Service Business Partner responded that the system had been used since 2017 and gave details on what time had been spent on each case, and what had been done on that matter.

21 JOS/22/11 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP FOR RURAL TRANSPORT

21.1 Councillor Welham introduced the report to the committee outlining that the Task and Finish Group for Rural transport had its first meeting in September 2021, and that it had discovered that there were different needs for each district. Additionally, the group found that community transport across the districts had not been well advertised. With the addition of 2 electric mini buses in Mid Suffolk's budget it became clear that each Council would need separate recommendations.

21.2 Councillor Lindsay questioned why it had not been suggested that Babergh do a survey of residents. Councillor Welham responded that this had been suggested for Mid Suffolk as they have the electric minibus provision and have the means within their budget to carry out this work.

21.3 Councillor Lindsay proposed for the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee only:

- That Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Babergh

Cabinet that an analysis of the unmet demand for community transport in the district be carried out.

- That the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet that Suffolk County Council be informed of the apparent lack of publicity of community transport across the district, and to encourage joint working between Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and Suffolk County Council to promote community transport services.
- That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that the feasibility of providing an electric bus project throughout the district, similar to that being implemented by Mid Suffolk be investigated.

21.4 Councillor Davis seconded this motion.

21.5 The vote was put to the Babergh Members only:

By a unanimous BDC vote

It was RESOLVED : -

1.1 That Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Babergh Cabinet that an analysis of the unmet demand for community transport in the district be carried out.

1.2 That the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet that Suffolk County Council be informed of the apparent lack of publicity of community transport across the district, and to encourage joint working between Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and Suffolk County Council to promote community transport services.

1.3 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that the feasibility of providing an electric bus project throughout the district, similar to that being implemented by Mid Suffolk be investigated.

21.6 Councillor Scarff recommended the recommendations as detailed in the report for Mid Suffolk Members only.

21.7 Councillor Carter seconded this motion.

21.8 The vote was put to the Mid Suffolk Members only:

By a unanimous MSDC vote

It was RESOLVED: -

1.1 That Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Mid Suffolk Cabinet that, as part of the development of the electric bus project, local consultations to elicit unmet transport needs should be carried out – one covering an urban area and one covering a rural area.

1.2 That the Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committees recommend to Cabinet that Suffolk County Council be informed of the apparent lack of publicity of community transport across the district, and to encourage joint working between Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and Suffolk County Council to promote community transport services.

22 JOS/22/12 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ACTION TRACKER

22.1 Councillor Ekpenyong suggested that a feedback mechanism was needed to see if Overview and Scrutiny recommendations were implemented.

23 JOS/22/13 FORTHCOMING DECISIONS LIST

The Forthcoming Decisions List was noted.

24 JOS/22/14 BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN

The Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan was noted.

25 JOS/22/15 MID SUFFOLK OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN

The Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan was noted.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 12:58pm.

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Chair