



AGENDA

COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY, 18TH JULY 2023 – 5.30 PM

Members of the Council are summoned to a meeting of the Babergh District Council at King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Tuesday, 18th July, 2023 at 5.30 pm.

For those wishing to attend, there will be time for reflections 5 minutes prior to the commencement of the Council meeting.

Arthur Charvonja
Chief Executive



BABERGH COUNCIL	
DATE:	TUESDAY, 18 JULY 2023 5.30 PM
VENUE:	KING EDMUND CHAMBER, ENDEAVOUR HOUSE, 8 RUSSELL ROAD, IPSWICH

This meeting will be broadcast live to YouTube and will be capable of repeated viewing. The entirety of the meeting will be filmed except for confidential or exempt items. If you attend the meeting in person, you will be deemed to have consented to being filmed and to the possible use of the images and sound recordings for webcasting/ training purposes.

The Council, members of the public and the press may record/film/photograph or broadcast this meeting when the public and the press are not lawfully excluded.

**PART 1
MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PRESS AND PUBLIC PRESENT**

Page(s)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive apologies for absence.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

3 BC/23/6 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 MAY 2023 9 - 20

4 BC/23/7 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER 21 - 22

In addition to any announcements made at the meeting, please see Paper BC/23/7 attached, detailing events attended by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

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

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 11, the Chief Executive will report the receipt of any petitions. There can be no debate or comment upon these matters at the Council meeting.

- 6 **QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**
- The Chairman of the Council to answer any questions by the public of which notice has been given no later than midday three clear working days before the day of the meeting in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 12.
- 7 **QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**
- The Chairman of the Council, the Chairmen of Committees and Sub-Committees and Portfolio Holders to answer any questions on any matters in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affect the District of which due notice has been given in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 13.
- 8 **BC/23/8 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23 AND DRAFT WORK PLAN 2023/24** 23 - 48
- Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 9 **BC/23/9 CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION** 49 - 52
- The Monitoring Officer
- 10 **BC/23/10 GREENHOUSE GAS REPORT 2021-22** 53 - 70
- Cabinet Member for Environment
- 11 **BC/23/11 REVIEW OF THE DELIVERY OF THE 2023 DISTRICT, TOWN & PARISH ELECTIONS** 71 - 104
- The Returning Officer

12 **COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS**

To agree the following appointments:

JOINT AUDIT & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Simon Dowling (replacing Ruth Hendry)

SHARED REVENUES PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

Jessie Carter
Alastair McCraw
Derek Davis (Sub)
Daniel Potter (Sub)

EAST WEST MAIN LINE PARTNERSHIP

Tim Regester

IPSWICH STRATEGIC PLANNING AREA BOARD

Dave Busby (Sub)

SUFFOLK COASTAL FORUM

Derek Davis

SUFFOLK FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Daniel Potter (Sub)

SUFFOLK HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Sallie Davies
Deborah Saw (Sub)

ARMED FORCES CHAMPION

Derek Davis
Simon Dowling (Sub)

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW WORKING GROUP

Margaret Maybury

13 **MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

13a **TO CONSIDER THE MOTION ON NOTICE RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLOR JAMIESON**

In July 2019, Babergh District Council declared a climate emergency and committed to investigating ways to reduce its emissions and contribute toward the Suffolk-wide ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030. Shortly afterwards Babergh council declared a biodiversity emergency and made similar commitments to species and habitat conservation.

And since then, councillors approved a number of proposals in support of this motion such as,

- 1) Creating a joint Sustainable Travel Action Plan with Mid Suffolk District Council, to encourage a permanent shift towards sustainable transport such as cycling, walking and public transport throughout the district.
- 2) To reduce the intensity and extent of outdoor lighting
- 3) Making commitments to enhance and protect biodiversity

This Council notes that since the carbon emergency acknowledgment, made in 2019, an election has occurred – with 14 new Cllrs across all parties now in post.

With no improvement in the Climate or biodiversity emergencies I would like to take this opportunity for this Council and new councillors to reiterate, once again, its commitment to make its services carbon neutral by 2030.

Proposer: Cllr Leigh Jamieson
Secunder: Cllr Daniel Potter

13b **TO CONSIDER THE MOTION ON NOTICE RECEIVED FROM COUNCILLOR WARD**

For the avoidance of doubt, Babergh District Council considers its role of protecting and promoting the interests of the district's communities, businesses and environment to be of utmost importance and we recognise the contribution Babergh makes to the unique character and quality of Suffolk and the wider eastern region.

The Council acknowledges the national importance of strategic energy infrastructure for the transition to net zero. We have previously stated a preference for a coordinated, offshore approach to the delivery of transmission reinforcement, import and export objectives including consolidation of offshore connections and onshore infrastructure together with appropriate management of construction activities to effectively minimise and mitigate harm to Suffolk's communities and environment.

While the Council will be making a formal response to the non-statutory consultation on the Norwich to Tilbury overhead line project (formerly East Anglia Green) in due course, through this motion we re-state publicly, on behalf of our communities, our objection to the proposed pylon line, and our strong preference for an integrated offshore approach.

We therefore agree that the Chair of the Council will write to the relevant government minister to communicate these objections.

Proposer: Cllr John Ward
Seconder: Cllr David Busby

Date and Time of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 19 September 2023 at 5.30 pm.

Webcasting/ Live Streaming

The Webcast of the meeting will be available to view on the Councils YouTube page:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSWf_0D13zmegAf5Qv_aZSg

For more information about this meeting, including access arrangements and facilities for people with disabilities, please contact the Committee Officer, Committee Services on: 01473 296472 or Email: Committees@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Introduction to Public Meetings

Babergh/Mid Suffolk District Councils are committed to Open Government. The proceedings of this meeting are open to the public, apart from any confidential or exempt items which may have to be considered in the absence of the press and public.

Domestic Arrangements:

- Toilets are situated opposite the meeting room.
- Cold water is also available outside opposite the room.
- Please switch off all mobile phones or turn them to silent.

Evacuating the building in an emergency: Information for Visitors:

If you hear the alarm:

1. Leave the building immediately via a Fire Exit and make your way to the Assembly Point (Ipswich Town Football Ground).
2. Follow the signs directing you to the Fire Exits at each end of the floor.
3. Do not enter the Atrium (Ground Floor area and walkways). If you are in the Atrium at the time of the Alarm, follow the signs to the nearest Fire Exit.
4. Use the stairs, not the lifts.
5. Do not re-enter the building until told it is safe to do so.

Agenda Item 3

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, 23 May 2023

PRESENT:

Councillors:	Peter Beer	David Busby
	Jane Carruthers	Jessie Carter
	Paul Clover	Helen Davies
	Sallie Davies	Simon Dowling
	Ruth Hendry	Michael Holt
	Bryn Hurren	Leigh Jamieson
	Elisabeth Malvisi	Margaret Maybury
	Alastair McCraw	Mary McLaren
	Mark Newman	John Nunn
	Adrian Osborne	Alison Owen
	Lee Parker	Stephen Plumb
	Daniel Potter	Isabelle Reece
	Tim Regester	Brian Riley
	Deborah Saw	Laura Smith
	John Ward	John Whyman

In attendance:

Officers:	Chief Executive (AC)
	Monitoring Officer (IA)
	Deputy Chief Executive (KN)
	Corporate Manager – Governance & Civic Office (JR)
	Director – Customers, Digital Transformation, and Improvement (SW)
	Director – Assets and Investments (EA)
	Director – Operations (ME)
	Director – Economic Growth and Climate Change (FD)
	Director – Corporate Resources and Section 151 Officer (ME)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

- 1.1 On the proposal of Councillor Plumb and seconded by Councillor Jamieson, Councillor Elisabeth Malvisi was nominated for the position of Chair of the Council.
- 1.2 On the proposal of Councillor Beer and seconded by Councillor Reece, Councillor Margaret Maybury was nominated for the position of Chair of the Council.
- 1.3 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting.

It was RESOLVED:-

That Councillor Elisabeth Malvisi be elected as Chairman of the Council for the municipal year 2023/24.

1.4 Councillor Malvisi thereupon made her Declaration of Office.

1.5 Councillor Malvisi thanked everyone that had voted for her, paid tribute to the outgoing Chairman, Councillor Grandon, for her hard work during a “demanding” year and expressed her well wishes to the Councillors who were not returned at the election.

1.6 The Chairman announced that her chosen charity would be decided at a later date but would be connected to male mental health, male suicide, and child sexual abuse.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

2.1 On the proposal of Councillor Jamieson and seconded by Councillor Plumb, Councillor Simon Dowling was nominated for the position of Vice Chair of the Council.

2.2 On the proposal of Councillor Maybury and seconded by Councillor Clover, Councillor Brian Riley was nominated for the position of Vice Chair of the Council.

2.3 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting.

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Simon Dowling be elected as Vice Chairman of Babergh District Council for the municipal Year 2023/24.

2.4 Councillor Dowling thereupon made his Declaration of Office.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3.1 None received.

4 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

4.1 None declared.

5 BC/23/1 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 MARCH 2023

It was RESOLVED:-

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd March 2023 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

6 ELECTION OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

6.1 On the proposal of Councillor Jamieson and seconded by Councillor Plumb, Councillor Dave Busby was nominated for the position of Leader of the Council.

6.2 This nomination was **PUT** to the Council for voting.

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Dave Busby be elected as Leader of Babergh District Council for the municipal year 2023/24.

7 BC/23/2 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER

7.1 The report from the Chairman was noted.

7.2 The Chairman invited Councillor Busby to present his report as Leader of the Council.

7.3 Councillor Busby made the following announcements:

“I had no ambition to become leader but am honoured to represent you all and I promise to do my very best. However, this isn’t about me, it is about you. 25,613 residents voted for you to work on their behalf to ensure that we deliver the best for Babergh that we can.

Well done Councillor Nunn on getting the most votes of any of us – 1069. 14 of you are new to the process and the challenges that lie ahead. For us to succeed in our endeavours (note the name of the building) we will need to work diligently and together. We have many challenges – climate change and housing energy inefficiencies; numerous ugly infrastructure projects; changes to waste collection; the Joint Local Plan; inappropriate housing developments – volume, size, and location; struggling high streets; the high cost of living and inflationary pressures on our services.

Unlike Mid Suffolk we don’t have huge reserves to call upon to help us to deliver solutions and in fact you will be frequently reminded of the financial challenges that we face. Fortunately, we have a great team of officers to assist us and I recommend that you lean on them – certainly not on me.

With no party getting anywhere near a majority – congratulations to the Greens for polling 31% of the votes – we will have to continue to work as a coalition – it is the Babergh way after all. Group leaders have devised a unique plan for the 4 years. The leadership will rotate on an annual basis – me for the first year, Councillor Deborah Saw for the second and fourth and Councillor John Ward for the third.

As my first action I would like to appoint Councillor Deborah Saw and

Councillor John Ward as deputy political leaders. Together we will lead the cabinet of 8 – 4 Greens, 3 Independents and 1 Lib Dem. We will be announcing the other Cabinet members and their portfolios shortly.”

7.4 Councillor Busby invited Councillor Ward and Councillor Saw to make announcements as Deputy Political Leaders.

7.5 Councillor Saw made the following announcements:

“I think we are all ambitious for our District and we all want to do the best for our residents and our communities. I think this is a very exciting and innovative approach – one that I am sure will get a lot of attention from other Councils around the country.

We start off looking at our joint priorities together, but I know we are all united with one purpose which is the prosperity, success, and wellbeing of our residents and their communities.”

7.6 Councillor Ward made the following announcements:

“I wish to congratulate Cllr Busby on his election as Leader of the Council. It is a great responsibility and privilege to hold that office and I am sure he will be a great ambassador for Babergh. I am particularly pleased that we have agreed an innovative coalition arrangement for the council. The consensus that will be needed to make that coalition work will be necessary as we face our biggest challenges. Cllr Busby has provided his view of these.

For me, the immediate ones are:

- Improving and retrofitting our housing stock to meet our energy saving commitments
- Resources And Waste Strategy, particularly The Recycling Consistency component and its impact on our waste collection operations
- Planning policy and the Joint Local Plan
- And, of course, the ever-present pressures on our budgets

I look forward to working with Councillors Busby and Saw to make the coalition a strong one that delivers excellent services for our residents and businesses.”

8 DESIGNATION OF COMMITTEES AND JOINT COMMITTEES

8.1 On the proposal of Councillor Plumb and seconded by Councillor Parker,

It was RESOLVED:

That the following Committees and Joint Committees be appointed:

- **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
- **Planning Committee**
- **Licensing and Regulatory Committee**

- **Joint Audit and Standards Committee**
- **Joint Appointments Committee**

9 BC/23/3 POLITICAL BALANCE AND COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEES

9.1 The Monitoring Officer introduced the report to Full Council.

9.2 On the proposal of Councillor Holt and seconded by Councillor Maybury,

It was RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the Committees' size and numerical allocation of seats be approved as detailed in Appendix A to the report.**
- 1.2 That Committee members be appointed as set out in Appendix B to the report.**

10 ELECTION OF CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS OF COMMITTEES

10.1 On the proposal of Councillor Maybury and seconded by Councillor Beer, Councillor Brian Riley was nominated for the position of Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

10.2 On the proposal of Councillor Plumb and seconded by Councillor Parker, Councillor Mary McLaren was nominated for the position of Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

10.3 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Mary McLaren be elected as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

10.4 On the proposal of Councillor Parker and seconded by Councillor Jamieson, Councillor John Whyman was nominated for the position of Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

10.5 The nomination was **PUT** to the Council for voting,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor John Whyman be elected as Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

10.6 On the proposal of Councillor Ward and seconded by Councillor Parker, Councillor Stephen Plumb was nominated for the position of Chair of the Planning Committee.

10.7 On the proposal of Councillor Clover and seconded by Councillor Newman,

Councillor Peter Beer was nominated for the position of Chair of the Planning Committee.

10.8 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Stephen Plumb be elected as Chair of the Planning Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

10.9 On the proposal of Councillor Parker and seconded by Councillor Plumb, Councillor Helen Davies was nominated for the position of Vice Chair of the Planning Committee.

10.10 The nomination was **PUT** to the Council for voting,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Helen Davies be elected as Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

10.11 On the proposal of Councillor Jamieson and seconded by Councillor Plumb, Councillor Lee Parker was nominated for the position of Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee.

10.12 On the proposal of Councillor Newman and seconded by Councillor Beer, Councillor Paul Clover was nominated for the position of Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee.

10.13 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Lee Parker be elected as Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

10.14 On the proposal of Councillor Plumb and seconded by Councillor Parker, Councillor Leigh Jamieson was nominated for the position of Vice Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee.

10.15 The nomination was **PUT** to the Council for voting,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Leigh Jamieson be elected as Vice-Chair of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

10.16 On the proposal of Councillor Jamieson and seconded by Councillor Plumb,

Councillor Bryn Hurren was nominated for the position of Co-Chair of the Joint Audit and Standards Committee.

10.17 On the proposal of Councillor Maybury and seconded by Councillor Riley, Councillor Isabelle Reece was nominated for the position of Co-Chair of the Joint Audit and Standards Committee.

10.18 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Bryn Hurren be elected as Co-Chair of the Joint Audit and Standards Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

10.19 On the proposal of Councillor Beer and seconded by Councillor Clover, Councillor Margaret Maybury was nominated for the position of Co-Chair of the Joint Appointments Committee.

10.20 On the proposal of Councillor Ward and seconded by Councillor Plumb, Councillor Leigh Jamieson was nominated for the position of Co-Chair of the Joint Appointments Committee.

10.21 The nomination was **PUT** to the Council for voting,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Leigh Jamieson be elected as Co-Chair of the Joint Appointments Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

11 BC/23/4 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES FOR 2023/24

11.1 The Chair referred to Paper BC/23/4 and Appendix A in the Tabled Papers and declared that votes would need to be taken for over-nominated bodies.

11.2 Councillor Nunn and Councillor Reece were nominated as the representative for the Association for Suffolk Museums.

11.3 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor John Nunn be appointed as the representative for the Association of Suffolk Museums for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.4 Councillor Smith, Councillor Osborne, and Councillor Maybury were nominated as the representative for the Gainsborough's House Society.

11.5 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Adrian Osborne be appointed as the representative for the Gainsborough's House Society for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.6 Councillor Maybury and Councillor McLaren were nominated as the representative for the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee.

11.7 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Mary McLaren be appointed as the representative for the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.8 Councillor Maybury nominated herself as the substitute representative for the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee.

11.9 The nomination was **PUT** to the Council for voting,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Margaret Maybury be appointed as the substitute representative for the Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.10 Councillor Potter and Councillor Maybury were nominated as the representative for the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership.

11.11 The nominations were **PUT** to the Council for voting,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Daniel Potter be appointed as the representative for the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.12 The Chair nominated Councillor Maybury as the substitute representative for the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership.

11.13 The nomination was **PUT** to the Council for voting,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillor Margaret Maybury be appointed as the substitute representative for the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership for the municipal year 2023/24.

11.14 Councillor Busby **MOVED** recommendation 2.1 in the report as amended, which was **SECONDED** by Councillor Ward.

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillors be appointed to the Outside Bodies detailed below:

NAME OF BODY / PANEL	NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVE TO BE APPOINTED	NAME OF MEMBER(S) NOMINATED
Association for Suffolk Museums	1	John Nunn
East of England Assembly of Leaders	1 (Leader)	Dave Busby
Gainsborough's House Society	1	Adrian Osborne
Greenways Countryside Project JAC	2	Jane Carruthers Helen Davies
Ipswich and District Citizens Advice Bureau	1 (Observer)	Mary McLaren
Ipswich Strategic Planning Area Board	1 (+1 substitute)	(Sub: Leigh Jamieson)
Joint Advisory Committee and Partnership to Dedham Vale (AONB)	2	Jane Carruthers Isabelle Reece
Joint Advisory Committee and Partnership to Suffolk Coast and Heath	2	Derek Davis
Local Government Association - SPARSE	1	Deborah Saw
Local Government Association Assembly	1 (Leader)	Dave Busby
Sudbury and District Citizens Advice Bureau	1 (Observer)	Adrian Osborne
Suffolk Coastal Forum	1	-
Suffolk Flood Risk Management Scrutiny Sub-Committee	1 (+1 substitute)	Alastair McCraw
Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board	1 (+1 substitute)	Cabinet Member for Communities
Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee	1 (+1 substitute)	Mary McLaren (Sub: Margaret

		Maybury)
Suffolk Police and Crime Panel	1	John Ward
Suffolk Violence and Abuse Partnership	1	Elisabeth Malvisi
Suffolk Waste Partnership	1	Cabinet Member for Environment
The Quay Theatre Sudbury Board of Trustees	1	Laura Smith
Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership	1 (+1 substitute)	Daniel Potter (Sub: Margaret Maybury)

12 BC/23/5 APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS TO THE BOARD OF BDC (SUFFOLK HOLDINGS) LTD

12.1 On the proposal of Councillor Busby and seconded by Councillor Maybury

It was RESOLVED:

That Council approve the appointment of Councillors Dave Busby, Deborah Saw, Brian Riley, and John Ward as Directors to BDC (Suffolk Holdings) Ltd.

13 APPOINTMENT OF COUNCILLORS TO THE SHARED REVENUES PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

13.1 Councillor Maybury raised that Councillors appointed to the Shared Revenues Partnership Joint Committee must be on the Cabinet and that the item should not be voted on due to the Cabinet Members not yet being announced.

13.2 Councillor Busby requested that the item be deferred to a later date following the announcement of the composition of the Cabinet.

14 APPOINTMENTS TO THE SUFFOLK JOINT STANDARDS BOARD

14.1 On the proposal of Councillor Parker and seconded by Councillor Plumb,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillors Simon Dowling, Stephen Plumb, Bryn Hurren, and Brian Riley be appointed as members of the Suffolk Joint Standards Board for the municipal year 2023/24.

15 APPOINTMENTS TO THE JOINT GYPSY AND TRAVELLER STEERING GROUP

15.1 On the proposal of Councillor Jamieson and seconded by Councillor Regester,

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillors Ruth Hendry, Lee Parker, and Alison Owen be appointed to the Joint Gypsy and Traveller Steering Group for the municipal year 2023/24.

16 APPOINTMENTS TO COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS

16.1 Councillor Maybury put herself forward as a nomination for the Constitution Working Group.

16.2 Councillor Jamieson put forward Councillor Carruthers as a nomination for the Community Governance Review Working Group.

16.3 Councillor Maybury put herself forward as a nomination for the Member Learning and Development Working Group.

It was RESOLVED:

1.1 That Councillors Elisabeth Malvisi, Lee Parker, and Jane Carruthers be appointed to the Community Governance Review Working Group.

1.2 That Councillors Leigh Jamieson, Dave Busby, John Ward, and Margaret Maybury be appointed to the Constitution Working Group.

1.3 That Councillors Simon Dowling, Alastair McCraw, Bryn Hurren, and Margaret Maybury be appointed to the Member Learning and Development Working Group.

1.4 That Councillors Sallie Davies, John Ward, Helen Davies, and Michael Holt be appointed to the Local Plan Working Group.

17 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12

17.1 None received.

18 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 13

18.1 None received.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 6:48pm.

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Chair

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BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL - 18 JULY 2023

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

EVENT	LOCATION	DATE	CHAIRMAN	VICE CHAIR
JUNE 2023				
Felixstowe Mayor's Civic Service	St John's Church, Felixstowe	18-Jun	✓	
Ipswich Mayor's Proclamation of Suffolk Day 2023	Cornhill, Ipswich	21-Jun	✓	
JULY 2023				
RHS Prize Giving, Divisions and Commemoration Service	Royal Hospital School, Holbrook	01-Jul	✓	
Ipswich High School Speech Day and Prize Giving	Ipswich High School, Woolverstone	06-Jul	✓	

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Agenda Item 8

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: BC/23/8
FROM: Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	DATE OF MEETING: 18 July 2023
OFFICER: Alicia Norman – Lead Officer for Overview and Scrutiny	

BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23 AND DRAFT WORK PLAN 2023/24

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 In accordance with the constitution, the Committee must report annually to the Council on its work during the last municipal year.
- 1.2 Inclusion of the draft work plan provides the Council with initial oversight of the statutory items due to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee over the next municipal year.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options were considered.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report for 2022/23 (Appendix A) and Draft Work Plan 2023/24 (Appendix B) be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee comply with Constitutional requirements.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 The role of the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee is defined as having the key purposes of:
 - Scrutinising the work of external stakeholders and service providers.
 - Holding the Cabinet to account.
 - Being the home of "call in".
 - Being the home of Member Call for Action.
- 4.2 The Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee has one Chair and meets every month. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council conduct joint committees on a regular basis when similar topics have been deemed suitable to be scrutinised jointly. The chairing of these committees is alternated between the two Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

5.1 This report itself does not link directly to the Joint Corporate Plan. Links to the delivery of the Joint Corporate Plan are considered in the selection of topics for review and included on the work plan where suitable.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The main financial implications have been the costs of officer time, normal allowances for Members, and Member and officer training costs that are included in the budget.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 There are no inherent risks associated with this report. The Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee takes account of the Council's key risks when determining its work plan and carrying out its reviews.

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 Members of the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been consulted on a monthly basis regarding topics to be included in the future work plan.

9.2 The review of the Scrutiny function has involved consultations with a range of Members and officers including scrutiny Members, Leaders, Cabinet Members, and the Senior Leadership Team.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

10.1 There are no inherent equality implications within this report.

10.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required. Equality analysis considerations for individual topics will be included in reports to Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the year progresses.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2022/23	Attached
(b) Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee Draft Work Plan 2023/24	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

13.1 None.



Babergh

Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report 2022/23

An annual review of the work undertaken by Babergh District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2022/23

Foreword

By the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman

As this is my first report as Chairman of the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee, I will first of all make a conditional apology for the length of the report.

When elected to the position by the Council I stated that I would like to see all reports made more concise in nature and ideally just a "couple of sides of A4"! As this an Annual Report, I will make an exception as the content is too great and important to be cut down to just a couple of sheets of A4.

The Joint meetings with Mid Suffolk continue to be very productive and the mix of Councillors lends a widened perspective to the discussions. There are some items that are pertinent to individual Councils and these have been heard separately. I am sure that this will continue to be the case and perhaps there will be more items that need to be heard separately.

I would like to thank my Vice Chairman, Adrian Osborne, for his support as well as all of the committee members, from both Babergh and Mid Suffolk, for their valuable input. All this would not have been possible without the support of our officers, particularly Alicia Norman, Bethany Webb, and Jan Robinson. Without their preparation and input we would be like fish out of water.

The work plan and the outcomes reports have been essential to keeping us on track and the use of Microsoft Teams meetings to discuss strategy with the Leaders and guide Officers with the scope of their reports has also been essential. The tend for home working can be a limitation, but we have, as a committee, been able to get together for face to face meetings and this is vital if the committee is to be able to fulfil its function effectively.

The new Council will appoint its own personnel to the new committee and they will no doubt have a challenging but also rewarding time ahead of them.

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr John Hinton
Chair

East Bergholt



Cllr Adrian Osborne
Vice-Chair

Sudbury South-East



Cllr Melanie Barrett

Bures St. Mary &
Nayland



Cllr Siân Dawson

Hadleigh North



Cllr Kathryn Grandon

Hadleigh South



Cllr Robert Lindsay

North West Cosford

Introduction

In May 2017, Babergh District Council formerly adopted a Leader/Cabinet model of governance. As per the Local Government Act (2000), all Councils that operate under this model are required to have at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee plays a vital part in Babergh's democratic decision-making processes. Whilst the Committee cannot make any of its own decisions, it can exercise influence and direction over decisions, both before and after they are implemented, to ensure that the Council is delivering its services efficiently and effectively. This is done by:

- Conducting pre-decision scrutiny on key issues and making recommendations for improvement
- Reviewing the Council's budgets annually and the direction of strategic policies
- Monitoring the performance of different services and strategies

The Committee consists of six members (as listed on Page 4) who can be any Member of the Council except for those who are part of the Cabinet. No member of the Committee is allowed to scrutinise a decision where they have been a key part of the decision-making process (i.e. an ex-Cabinet Member). It is crucial that Overview and Scrutiny is independent of the Cabinet in order to maintain its ability to hold the Council's decision-makers to account.

In 2022, members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet Members agreed to a new "Cabinet and Scrutiny Protocol". The purpose of the protocol is to promote a culture of accountability, openness, and transparency within Babergh District Council and sets out how both groups will work together to deliver effective and outcome-focussed scrutiny. Full details of the protocol can be found [here](#).

Due to working in partnership, the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee often combines with the Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee to undertake Joint meetings where there are items for consideration that affect both Councils to equal measure. Each Council is still able to convene an independent meeting to scrutinise specific items (e.g. the budgets) where appropriate.

A full terms of reference for Babergh's Overview and Scrutiny Committee can be found in Part 2: The Responsibilities of Functions in the Constitution as linked [here](#).

Scrutiny in Numbers

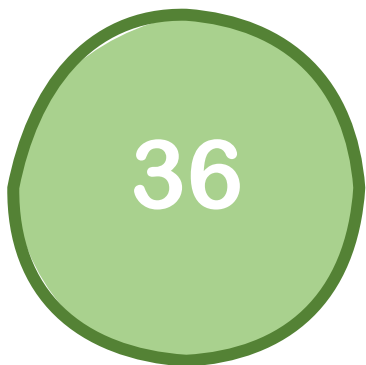
During 2022/23 the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in partnership with the Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee, was responsible for the following:



Committee Meetings



Reports



Recommendations



Recommendations to
Cabinet/Council



YouTube Views

All meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are open to public attendance and streamed to YouTube. Recordings of the Committees held in 2022/23 can be found [here](#).

Organisation of the Work Plan

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee sets out a work plan at the beginning of the year that provides Members with key areas to focus on and review. These workplans are put together through considering:

- The Corporate Plan
- The Forthcoming Decisions List
- Statutory Items
- Requests from Councillors
- Requests from the Public
- Call-ins of Cabinet decisions



The Work Plans are reviewed at monthly meetings between the Chairs, Vice Chairs and Officers and are then agreed monthly by the Committee.

Any Member can propose possible items for consideration for the Work Plan. Each item proposed is evaluated to determine its relevance and purpose by the Chairs. If added to the Work Plans, the Lead Officer for Overview and Scrutiny will work with Officers to ensure that the appropriate information is presented to the Committee for review.

Other items included on the Work Plans are Information Bulletins, brief updates on specific topics and areas of interest, or fact-finding pieces of work for items the Committee may wish to scrutinise in the future.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to consider specific statutory items on an annual basis, such as the Budgets and the Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership, and these must be factored into the Work Plans appropriately.

Work Plan Workshop – April 2022

In April, members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to a workshop with the purpose of identifying topics for review in 2022/23.

Members were encouraged to pick out topics from all areas of the Corporate Plan for a balanced approach. The topics that received the most support from Members at the workshop were considered for addition on the 2022/23 Work Plan.

2022/23 Work Plan

TOPIC	LEAD OFFICER	CABINET MEMBER
27 JUNE 2022		
CIFCO Performance Report and Business Plan	Director – Assets and Investments	Cabinet Member – Finance, Assets, and Investments
19 SEPTEMBER 2022		
Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils Parking Strategy	Director – Economic Growth and Climate Change	Cabinet Member - Environment
Shared Revenues Partnership – Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Director – Corporate Resources	-
Information Bulletin – Shared Legal Service Performance Monitoring and Split of New Legal Matters	Director – Shared Legal Service	-
24 OCTOBER 2022		
Annual Review of Joint Homes & Housing Strategy and Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Reduction Strategy	Director - Housing	Cabinet Member - Housing
21 NOVEMBER 2022		
Draft General Fund and Housing Revenue Account	Director – Corporate Resources	Cabinet Member – Finance, Assets, and Investments
Review of Local Citizens Advice and the Cost of Living Crisis	Director - Communities	Cabinet Member - Communities
19 DECEMBER 2022		
Review of the Suffolk Association of Local Councils	Director - Communities	Cabinet Member - Communities
Information Bulletin – Is the Organisation Protected Against Cyber-Attacks?	Corporate Manager - ICT	-

TOPIC	LEAD OFFICER	CABINET MEMBER
23 JANUARY 2023		
General Fund and Housing Revenue Account – Review of Savings, Proposals, and Updated Position	Director – Corporate Resources	Cabinet Member – Finance, Assets, and Investments
Review of the Culture, Heritage, and Visitor Economy Strategy	Director – Economic Growth and Climate Change	Cabinet Member – Economic Development (MSDC)
20 FEBRUARY 2023		
“Are Planning Pre-Application Advice Customers Getting a Valuable Service?”	Chief Planning Officer	Cabinet Member - Planning
Private Sector Housing Enforcement and Civil Penalties Policies	Director - Housing	Cabinet Member - Housing
Information Bulletin – Education, Skills, and Employment: What More Can the Councils do to Raise Opportunities and Attainment?	Director – Economic Growth and Climate Change	-
20 MARCH 2023		
A Review of the Impact of Bringing the Public Realm Service In House	Director - Operations	-

The 2022/23 Work Plans have included topics from most key strategic areas of the Corporate Plan. At each Committee meeting, the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are often requested to make recommendations based on the items before them.

All recommendations have the purpose of adding value to the organisation and providing benefits to our residents by improving and strengthening our strategies and outputs.

Economy

JOS/22/02 CAPITAL INVESTMENT FUND COMPANY (CIFCO CAPITAL LTD) BUSINESS TRADING AND PERFORMANCE REPORT



On the 27th of June, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the annual performance report on CIFCO Capital Ltd. The Director for Assets and Investments outlined a summary of the business plan, the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for the upcoming year, the split of the portfolio between sectors, and the Council's income for the previous year.

Members asked questions on topics including:

- The impact of the pandemic on the service
- Improvements to the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings of properties
- Differences in borrowing strategies and interest paid between the two Councils
- Use of funding for sustainability updates

The following recommendations were reached:

- 1.1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Full Council that future CIFCO business plans continue to be scrutinised by the Councils' Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then reported to Council.
- 1.2. That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the CIFCO Business Plan and Business Trading and Performance Report and ask that the minutes of this meeting be taken into account at Full Council.
- 1.3. That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee is satisfied that the CIFCO Business Plan and Business Trading and Performance Report is robust for 2022 – 2023.

Value Added

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee retained their role in scrutinising the CIFCO business plan on an annual basis.

This retention was approved by both Councils at their October meetings. The minutes of this item were attached as an appendix to the official CIFCO report that was presented to both Councils and the recommendations thoroughly considered by all Members.

JOS/22/09 SHARED REVENUES PARTNERSHIP – COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

On the 30th of September, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the proposed changes to the 2023/24 Council Tax Reduction (Working Age) Scheme. The Corporate Manager for Finance Operations outlined details of the current scheme, automation of the new system which would reduce administrative costs, and the 4 options considered for recommendation.

Members asked questions on topics including:

- What neighbouring Councils have agreed as the best strategy
- Whether the scheme only applied to Universal Credit recipients
- If changes would result in a one-off or recurring cost
- The potential benefits for Suffolk County Council
- The additional costs as outlined in the report

The following recommendations were reached:

- 1.1. 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.

Value Added

The Chair provided an update report to Babergh Cabinet on 3rd of October and detailed the questions, debate, and recommendation made by the Committee on this item before formal decision was made.

Babergh Cabinet voted unanimously to consult on Option 3 as recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

BOS/22/01 DRAFT GENERAL FUND (GF) AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) 2023/24 AND FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK

On the 21st of November, the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee looked at the assumptions and expectations for the 2023/24 Budgets before the final numbers were presented for further review by the Committee and a decision made by Cabinet and Council. This approach was requested by members of the Committee when the Budgets came for review in 2021.

The Corporate Manager for Finance, Commissioning and Procurement, alongside the Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments, presented the assumptions to the Committee outlining the Council's current financial positions, the assumed costs and funding to both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account, and the predicted draft budget deficits.

Members asked questions on topics including:

- Impact of staff salaries and employee costs within the overall Budgets
- Fixed term contracts for gas prices
- Review and renewal of the refuse contract
- Predicted long-term and short-term borrowing in 2023/24 and repayments
- Increase in expenditure for contractors
- The assumed 100% increase for gas and electricity expenditure
- The assumption of no new rental builds in the District in 2023/24

Members debated the item on the following issues:

- The effectiveness of bring the assumptions to the Committee for review
- The potential differences between the assumptions and the final accounts and the impact on the Council
- The influence of the Government and the national economic markets on the financial assumptions made

The following recommendations were reached:

- 1.1. That the draft budget assumptions as set out in the report for the 2023/24 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account be noted.

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

On the 23rd of January, the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the final position of the 2023/24 General Fund and Housing Revenue Accounts. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments introduced the report and set out the differences between these accounts and the assumptions presented to the Committee in November 2022.

Members asked questions on topics including:

- The changes made since the original assumptions to reduce the deficit
- The potential impact on the General Fund if business rates were reduced
- The anticipated decrease in planning income
- Band D Council Tax Reductions
- Savings from bringing the public realm service in house
- Increase in repair costs within the Housing Revenue Account

The following recommendations were reached:

- 1.1. That the draft revenue budgets set out in the report for the 2023/24 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budget be noted.

Value Added

The Committee's decision to look at the assumptions for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account early on in the process allowed for the Committee to influence the final accounts and provide guidance to Officers for areas that should be looked at in more detail.

Having looked at the Budgets whilst they were being developed, many of the questions asked at Committee were able to be answered at a point where appropriate changes could be made to the accounts if necessary and more information could be supplied to Councillors if required before they came to a formal decision.

After being raised during questions to Officers, an item to review the impact of bringing the Public Realm service under Council operation was added to the Joint Committee work plan and was considered in March 2023.

Environment



JOS/22/08 BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS PARKING STRATEGY

On the 30th of September, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the process of the development of the Councils' first parking strategy. The Director for Economic Growth and Climate Change outlined the consultation, key stakeholder engagements, and collaborations with organisations that had taken place.

Members asked questions on topics including:

- The Joint Area Management Plan
- The potential impact of Covid-19 on the results of public consultation
- Virtual and in-person public engagement workshops
- The timeframe for implementation of the Strategy
- The impact on the Councils' planning processes
- Reducing environmental damages within the Districts

The following recommendations were reached:

- 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 the 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.

Value Added

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had the opportunity to request to strengthen, if necessary, the engagement that had taken place to develop the Strategy before being signed off and the implementation phase began.

The Director for Operations and the Cabinet Members have confirmed that regular progress reports will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny for review, further feedback, and directional steer.

Communities

JOS/22/23 REVIEW OF LOCAL CITIZENS ADVICE AND THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS



On the 21st of November, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the effectiveness of the Districts' Local Citizens Advice centres and their service in assisting residents with the Cost of Living Crisis.

Members asked questions on topics including:

- Total volunteer hours at both Citizens Advice Centres
- The increase in under 25s using the Citizens Advice service
- Support offered to residents for dealing with their heating and electricity bills
- The delivery of community supermarkets and their mobility within the Districts
- The distribution of the Household Support Grant

The following recommendations were reached:

- 1.1. That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the contents of the report.
- 1.2. That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports the 30% uplift to Local Citizens Advice and the work being conducted as a result and recommends that this support continues for a further 2 years.
- 1.3. That the Councils facilitate a more collaborative approach between organisations by encouraging the promotion of joint working.
- 1.4. That Officers work with relevant agencies to understand the situation for young people under 25, specifically men, to build a proactive response to support them as an at-risk group.
- 1.5. That Cabinet and Officers explore how we can embed the Cost of Living into the culture of the organisation for all staff when working with residents across all departments as part of a more integrated system of support.
- 1.6. That a Joint All Member Briefing be arranged for all Councillors on the Cost of Living crisis with input from Local Citizens Advice.

Value Added

As per the Committee's recommendation, a cross-Council steering group including the Citizens Advice Centres has been set up to deal with the Cost of Living Crisis and partnerships are being explored to provide additional support to younger residents.

JOS/22/32 REVIEW OF SUFFOLK ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (SALC)

On the 19th of December, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee invited the CEO of the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) to attend and provide an update on the work undertaken to provide effective support to our Town and Parish Councils to ensure that they are delivering the best service possible to our communities.

The CEO of the Suffolk Association of Local Councils provided the Committee with a presentation outlining the purpose of the association, the support services offered to all involved with the running of Town and Parish Councils, the Association's business plans and objectives, the outcomes of the latest annual report, and the specific training and development modules offered.

Members asked questions on topics including:

- Liaison and collaboration between SALC and Babergh and Mid Suffolk
- Uptake on training courses by both Councillors and Clerks
- Financial support for Town and Parish Councils
- Involvement from SALC regarding Code of Conduct issues
- The impact of face-to-face training on the costs of services provided

Members debated on the item and raised the need for more collaboration and communication between the Suffolk Association of Local Councils and both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils. The Councils' role as a key disseminator of information and provider of key support to Town and Parish Councils, through liaison with Members, was highlighted.

The report was noted.

Value Added

Having external companies and associations present to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee provides the Councils with the opportunity to ensure that our residents are receiving a good quality level of service and support across the board.

Our Councillors play a key role in supporting our Town and Parish Councils through their role as Ward Members. Inviting the Suffolk Association of Local Councils to the Committee gave our Councillors a better understanding of the services that the Association provides and key information to relay to our Town and Parish Councils to ensure that they are receiving an appropriate level of support in delivering their services for our residents.

JOS/22/39 REVIEW OF THE CULTURE, HERITAGE, AND VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY

On the 23rd of January, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the work undertaken in the development of the above Strategy including internal and external stakeholder and public engagement. This Strategy has been developed as part of a response to several recommendations within the Corporate Peer Review.

Members asked questions on topics including:

- A planned Food Enterprise Zone for Stowmarket at the Gateway 14 site
- Hotel accommodation available to support increased tourism in the Districts
- Collaboration and consultation with other Local Authorities
- Support for those travelling through the Districts using sustainable methods i.e. walking, cycling, etc.
- Consultation on existing accessibility issues within the Districts
- The impact on the Councils' planning processes
- Consultation with appropriate heritage, history, churches, nature, and sustainability organisations / associations.

The following recommendations were reached:

- 1.1. That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the report and requests that Officers take account of the comments made by Members.
- 1.2. That a review of the implementation plan's progress be undertaken by the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2024.

Value Added

Reviewing the development of the Strategy has allowed Overview and Scrutiny to ensure that all of the appropriate consultee bodies have been communicated with before the implementation of the Strategy. Officers have agreed to have further consultation with the organisations and associations that Members of the Committee identified as being missing in this engagement phase and feed in findings to the final Strategy proposal.

Officers have also agreed to bringing the Strategy back before the Committee at various stages for further review and input.

Housing



JOS/22/17 ANNUAL REVIEW UPDATE OF THE JOINT HOMES AND HOUSING / HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY (2019 – 2024)

On the 24th of October, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny carried out their annual review of the above Strategies. The Housing Strategy and Policy Officer outlined the progress of the Strategy to date, the re-focussed delivery plan, and the actions still to be delivered.

Members asked questions on topics including:

- Whether houses are being designed with lifelong use in mind
- The amount of smaller properties available for downsizing
- The number of homeless people within the Districts
- Accommodation provisions for homeless people, refugees, and those escaping domestic violence
- Partnership between the Housing Strategies and the Communities Strategy

The following recommendations were reached:

- 1.1. That Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Members have reviewed the contents of report JOS/22/17, including the appendices, and requests that the Portfolio Holders and Officers take account of verbal comments made by members of the Committee. Also, that Cabinet bears these comments in mind when debating the refocussed delivery plan, the refreshed Joint Homes and Housing Strategy, and the Joint Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 1.2. That the Committee members support the strategic aims of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy and agreed that the newly refocussed plan is reflective of the current challenges facing the housing sector whilst continuing to deliver the aims set out in the strategy.
- 1.3. To ask Portfolio Holders and Officers to consider further provision of financial and physical support to all residents wishing to downsize.

Value Added

Minutes of the meeting were provided to both Cabinet Members for Housing who have agreed to give significant consideration to the comments and recommendations made by the Committee when moving forward with the delivery of the Strategies to ensure their effectiveness.

JOS/22/46 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ENFORCEMENT AND CIVIL PENALTIES POLICY

On the 20th of February, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the new Private Sector Housing Enforcement and Civil Penalties Policy as presented to the Committee for questioning before going to Cabinet for a final decision.

Members asked questions on topics including:

- The number of prosecutions within the last 18 months
- The types of enforcement action that could be taken and when
- The starting points and band ranges for financial penalties
- Identifying landlords linked to bad practices and criminal activities

The following recommendations were reached:

- 1.1. That Overview and Scrutiny recommend to Cabinet to adopt the new private rented sector housing enforcement policy including the use of civil penalties as an alternative to prosecution. Agree a fair charging regime to recover the costs of housing enforcement action taken by the Council.
- 1.2. To recommend that Cabinet approve and authorise the use of civil penalty and financial penalty powers provided by the Housing and Planning Act 2016 (Appendix 2), Electrical Safety Regulations (Appendix 3) and Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) Regulations (Appendix 4).
- 1.3. To recommend to Cabinet the proposed charges for relevant housing enforcement action based on officer time taken and that any revenue arising from civil penalties will be retained within the service to meet the legal or administrative costs and expenses incurred under the relevant housing law.
- 1.4. To recommend to Cabinet that comments made at this meeting be made available to them when they discuss implementing the Private Sector Housing Enforcement & Civil Penalties Policy

Value Added

The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny attended Babergh Cabinet in March and presented the recommendations reached by the Committee to Members before a decision was made.

The Cabinet implemented both the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy and the Civil Penalties Policy exactly as recommended by the Committee.

Customers

JOS/22/45 “ARE PLANNING PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE CUSTOMERS GETTING A VALUABLE SERVICE?”



On the 20th of February, the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the results of the annual survey of pre-application advice customers. The Chief Planning Officer invited users of the service to attend the Committee to answer questions, detail their experiences with the service, and suggest areas for improvement.

Members asked questions on topics including:

- Changes in Officer recommendations concerning approval / refusals of applications
- Training and mentoring of new Planning Officers
- Communication between Planning Officers and planning agencies
- The customer satisfaction rating and potential future targets
- The quality differences between different types of advice given

The following recommendations were reached:

- 1.1. That the contents of the report be noted by the Committee.
- 1.2. That Officers be requested to alter the frequency and content of the survey of customer experience of the pre-application service to “open” rather than annual.
- 1.3. That Officers be requested to undertake an annual survey of Development Management Planning Officers of their experience of customer service.
- 1.4. That Officers develop a model for quarterly audit of timeliness, quality and customer service including to assess the effectiveness of the pre-application advice process in the validation of applications and correlation of advice with outcome.
- 1.5. That the Corporate Director for Planning and Building Control and the Chief Planning Officer review the results of the above-mentioned surveys and audit with the Client Side Panel and report at least bi-annually to the Cabinet Members for Planning.
- 1.6. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee requests the Director for Planning and Building Control and the Chief Planning Officer consider arrangements to provide adequate training and mentoring opportunities for all planning staff with a view to providing an improved level of pre-app service.

- 1.7. That the Corporate Director for Planning and Building Control and the Chief Planning Officer aim for an overall quality of advice level of satisfaction of 60% by 30th April 2025.

Value Added

Through the above recommendations, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were able to influence change across many different areas of our Planning service to ensure that our customers are getting the best service possible.

The survey has now been changed to an open survey, with customers encouraged to fill it out after every interaction with the Councils, and further training opportunities for Officers are currently being explored with the intention of improving expertise and providing customers with more in-depth advice.



Information Bulletins

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered several Information Bulletins over the last year. These bulletins are short reports, often without any pre-set recommendations, that have the purpose of updating the Committee on the progress of certain strategies and schemes.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee received Information Bulletins on the following topics:

- Shared Legal Service Performance Monitoring and Split of New Legal Matters
- "Is the Organisation Protected Against Cyber-Attacks?"
- Education, Skills, and Employment – What More Can the Councils Do to Raise Opportunities and Attainment?
- A Review of the Impact of Bringing the Public Realm Service In-House

These Information Bulletins were noted by the Committee.

Call-Ins

One of the powers of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the ability to “call-in” a decision that has been made by the Cabinet. This is one of the key ways in which the Committee provides a check-and-balance to those making the decisions and ensures that resolutions have been made with all the facts present and will deliver the best service for our residents.



The Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee did not exercise their call-in function during the 2022/23 municipal year.

Action Tracker



In 2022/23, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee saw the introduction of an action tracker as a statutory item on the agenda. This was brought about as part of the Cabinet / Overview and Scrutiny Protocol with an aim of improving the communication between both bodies.

This action tracker is updated monthly by the Lead Officer for Overview and Scrutiny and details all the recommendations reached by the Committee over the last year. Key Officers and Cabinet Members are required to give frequent updates on the progress of the implementation of the Committee’s recommendations into strategies and policies.

Updates to the action tracker are taken to the Committee at every meeting to allow members of the Committee to track such progress and see how they have successfully added value to the Council and its strategic outputs.

Report Authors

Cllr. John Hinton

Chair of Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee
(2022-23)

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BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2023/24:

TOPIC	PURPOSE	LEAD OFFICER	CABINET MEMBER
24 JULY 2023			
Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership	The Committee conduct a scrutiny review of the WSCSP to fulfil the Councils statutory requirements.	Director – Communities	Cabinet Members for People and Place
21 AUGUST 2023			
CIFCO Performance Report and Business Plan 2022/23	To conduct the Committee’s annual review of the CIFCO service before reporting to Full Council.	Director – Assets and Investments	Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments
Cost of Living: Review of 6 Month Plan and Beyond	To review the progress of work to tackle the Cost of Living crisis and scrutinise the upcoming plan of action.	Corporate Manager – Customer Operations	Cabinet Members for People and Place
18 SEPTEMBER 2023			
Review on current levels of untreated sewage discharges to waters in Babergh and Mid Suffolk	For Anglian Water, the Environment Agency, and Natural England to provide an update on river quality as per the motion passed by Council in November 2022.	Director - Operations	Cabinet Member for Environment
23 OCTOBER 2023			
Annual Review of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy	To conduct the Committee’s annual scrutiny of the progress towards the Strategy’s objectives and outputs.	Director - Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing
20 NOVEMBER 2023			
Draft General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – A review of the 2024/25 Assumptions	To scrutinise the draft versions of the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account before the final figures are presented to the Committee in January.	Director – Corporate Resources	Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments

18 DECEMBER 2023			
22 JANUARY 2024			
General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2024/25	To scrutinise the Budgets before recommendation and approval by the Cabinet and Full Council.	Director – Corporate Resources	Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments
Review of the Implementation of the Culture, Heritage, and Visitor Economy Strategy	To review the progress of the Strategy’s implementation plan – requested to come to this Committee by Members in January 2023.	Director – Economic Growth and Climate Change	Cabinet Member for Economic Growth
19 FEBRUARY 2024			
18 MARCH 2024			
22 APRIL 2024			
20 MAY 2024			

Topics still to be timetabled:

- **Planning Enforcement** – Review of cases and consultations with external organisations
- **Social Housing** – Review of existing caseload and resources needed for repairs to meet new and improved standards
- **Town Regeneration** – Identifying issues regarding our town centres and how we can increase footfall / use of services in key areas through extra support
- **Accessibility to services** – Reviewing what barriers are in the way of the public contacting us via the website, telephone, and customer service points.

Agenda Item 9

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: COUNCIL	REPORT NUMBER: BC/23/9
FROM: Monitoring Officer	DATE OF MEETING: 18 July 2023
OFFICER: Ifty Ali - Interim Director Law and Governance	KEY DECISION REF N/A

CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks approval from full Council to make the changes to the Constitution to reflect the intention of the Council that the appointment of the Leader be made on an annual basis.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 It is a statutory requirement under the Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000 (as amended) for all Local Authorities to have in place and maintain an updated Constitution.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Council approves the following words to be added “or as the Council shall decide” to Articles 2 and 6 of the Constitution. The relevant sections will read as follows:

Election and Terms of Councillors “2.2 Election and term. The regular election of councillors will be held on the first Thursday in May every four years. The terms of office of councillor will start on the fourth day after being elected and will finish on the fourth day after the date of the next regular election with the exception of the Leader who will hold office in accordance with the statutory provisions until the next scheduled election **or as the Council shall decide**. Provisions for the resignation or removal of the Leader at other times are set out in Article 4.”

The Leader “6.3.1 The Leader will be the Councillor elected to the position by the Council at its first annual meeting following the district’s local government elections. The Leader will hold office until a) The next post-election annual meeting of the Council **or as the Council shall decide** ;.....”

- 3.2 That the Monitoring Officer makes all consequential changes to the Constitution to give effect to the decision of the Council to appoint a Leader on an annual basis or as the Council shall decide.

REASON FOR DECISION

To enable the Council to meet its obligations under the Local Government Act 1972 and 2000 (as amended) to have in place and maintain an updated Constitution.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 At its Annual Meeting on 23rd May 2023, Babergh District Council agreed to appoint a Leader with the intention that the appointment was for an annual term.
- 4.2 The Council Constitution did not allow for the appointment of a Leader for anything other than a four year term but local government legislation does allow such an appointment to a term as the Council shall decide up to a four year period.
- 4.3 Due to the above situation the Monitoring Officer was asked by Council to bring back a report to the next full council meeting with the required changes to the Constitution to put in effect its wishes.

5. LINKS TO JOINT STRATEGIC PLAN

- 5.1 The core of an Enabled and Efficient organisation is Good Governance. The Constitution is a key document reflecting the strength of our Governance.
- 5.2 It is recognised that the purpose of the Constitution is to set out clearly how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures it follows to ensure it is well organised, transparent and accountable to local people.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial consequences of adopting these revisions to the Constitution.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000 (as amended) require all Local Authorities to have in place and maintain an updated written Constitution.
- 7.2 A Local Authority must prepare and keep up to date a document (referred to as its Constitution), which contains –
 - (i) a copy of the authority's Standing Orders (to govern the general function of that authority),
 - (ii) to maintain Contract Standing Orders,
 - (iii) a copy of the authority's Code of Conduct for Members (under section 28 of the Localism Act 2011),
 - (iv) such information as the Secretary of State may direct, and
 - (v) such other information (if any) as the Authority considers appropriate.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 The key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
It is a high risk not to regularly review the Constitution and ensure it reflects current practice and Legislation	Unlikely - 2	Bad - 3	The Monitoring Officer will ensure that the Council will keep its Constitution under regular review and amend it, both to reflect experience and changing circumstances.

9. CONSULTATION

9.1 N/A

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

10.1 There are no equality or diversity implications arising directly from this report. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is not required.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report.

12. APPENDICES

None.

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

The existing version of the Constitution can be found here:

[Babergh Constitution](#)

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Agenda Item 10

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: BC/23/10
FROM: Cabinet Member for Environment	DATE OF MEETING: 18 July 2023
OFFICER: Fiona Duhamel	KEY DECISION REF NO. N/A

GREENHOUSE GAS REPORT 2021-22

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out the Council's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report for 2021-22 and the progress made by the Council in reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Do nothing.
- 2.2 Create a task and finish group to review and refresh the Council's Carbon Reduction Management Plan in order to meet Greenhouse Gas targets.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the contents of the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report 2021-22 at Appendix A to the report be noted.
- 3.2 That a Task and Finish group is established to review and refresh actions in the Carbon Reduction Management Plan.

REASON FOR DECISION

Since 2011, the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has required local authorities to measure and report greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from their estate and operations. Each Local Authority has been requested to publish their Greenhouse Gas reports locally online each year.

The Council is therefore required to note this report prior to publication on the Councils website.

Over 4 years since the Council declared a climate emergency it is timely to review and refresh the Carbon Reduction Management Plan.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 This report provides a comprehensive carbon footprint for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' operations in 2021/22. It provides detail on the trajectory of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions since the establishment of a baseline in 2018/19 and provides supporting information for policy making and action planning to enable the Councils to respond to the declaration of a Climate Emergency and the commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030.

- 4.2 This report uses as its baseline the 'Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report – 2018/19 Financial Year' as this was the first comprehensive GHG report the Councils prepared. The report measures progress in terms of carbon emissions against the baseline and provides a trajectory which will need to be met to achieve the Councils' carbon neutral ambition.
- 4.3 Each activity that the Council operates has been assessed for its direct and indirect energy use. The electricity and gas use of buildings, direct fuel use in Council-owned vehicles and mileage in private vehicles whilst undertaking Council operations have been assessed.
- 4.4 The report is based on emissions of the 'basket of six' GHGs as defined by the Kyoto Protocol and include: carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), F-gases (hydrofluorocarbons and perfluorocarbons) and sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆). All values are given as CO₂ equivalent (CO₂e), which is a measure of the range of GHG as measured against the warming potential of CO₂. This is standard practice and better reflects the climate impact of the Council's emissions.
- 4.5 This report uses a location-based methodology to calculate the CO₂e emissions from electricity usage. The location-based method reflects the average emissions intensity of the national grid.
- 4.6 The GHG Protocol advises that in setting organisational boundaries, an organisation should select an approach for consolidating GHG emissions and then consistently apply the selected approach to define those business activities and operations that constitute the organisation for the purpose of accounting and reporting GHG emissions. A 'control approach' has been used to evaluate the Council's GHG emissions i.e., all GHG emissions from operations over which Councils have control. GHG emissions from operations in which the Councils have an interest but have no control have not been included. Control can be defined in either financial or operational terms.
- 4.7 The organisational boundary has been taken to be those emissions from the Council's headquarters, touchdown points, leisure centres, streetlighting operated by the Council, vehicles owned by the Council, third parties delivering Council services, and internal Council policies that result in emissions of GHG.
- 4.8 To help delineate direct and indirect emission sources, improve transparency, and provide utility for different types of organisations, three "scopes" (Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3) are defined by the GHG Protocol for accounting and reporting purposes (see Table 1.0).

Scope

- 1 These are emissions from fuels that the Council directly consumes e.g., gas, diesel, and petrol in the direct delivery of Council business by Council employees.
- 2 These are indirect emissions such as electricity use in Council premises.
- 3 These are emissions derived from third party contractors supplying services on behalf of the Councils.

- 4.9 There is some discretion within the Protocol on what to include in each scope, for example where information is not recorded, where third party data is unavailable, or where the accuracy of data cannot be relied upon. The following have not been included for such reasons:

- The impact of the Council's supply chains. Only those services that are delivered directly by the Councils or through third party suppliers on the Councils' behalf have been assessed.
- Contracts where the impact would be regarded as minimal e.g., the collection of a small number of abandoned vehicles by third party service providers.
- GHG emissions associated with the air conditioning within Endeavour House.
- Embedded carbon resulting from water use.

4.10 Since the pandemic, the practice of homeworking has increased significantly and the Council will look at evaluating the associated emissions in the next GHG report.

5. REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

5.1 The Council committed to become carbon neutral by 2030, using 2018/19 as its baseline, calculated as 5,804 tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e).

5.2 Emissions in 2021/2022 are calculated as 4,755 tCO₂e, a reduction against the baseline of 1,049 tCO₂e (18.1%) - see chart 3.1, p9 in Appendix A

5.3 At 1,637 tCO₂e (34.4%), the leisure centres are the single biggest emissions source.

5.4 These buildings, together with Wenham Depot, are expected to see significant emission reductions following the installation of roof mounted solar PV (photo-voltaic) panels, solar car ports and electric heat pump and improved controls – however the cumulative effect of such intervention will not be recognised until 2022/23

5.4.1 Existing solar PV panels on the social housing estate continue to reduce scope 2 emissions.

5.5 Emission reductions of 593 tCO₂e (58.2%) a year may be realised using hydro-treated vegetable oil (HVO) in waste refuse collection vehicles.

5.6 Installing publicly accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure is providing residents wider (car) choice, which together with the switch from diesel in Council waste refuse vehicles, is reducing emissions and improving air quality locally to give health benefits.

5.7 The Council's journey to Net Zero has been disrupted by Covid but large scale interventions since 2021 will support further reductions in emissions. It is also encouraging that emissions have not risen to pre pandemic levels.

5.8 In 2020 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils approved a Carbon Reduction Management Plan to support the Net Zero ambition.

5.9 It is now recommended that this report be refreshed to reflect current activity and outline future plans.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Table 3.0 in the Greenhouse Gas report identifies that to decarbonise heating in the built estate will require a capital investment of circa £11 Million and will reduce the Councils' overall emissions by a further 45%.

This figure is an estimate only and further work is required to better understand future costs of decarbonising the Councils estate.

- 6.2 Since the previous report over £2.62m has been invested in decarbonisation the Councils estates. This has largely been from external funding such as the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 The inability to meet Net Zero targets is a key risk in the Councils' Strategic Risk Register. Mitigation is already underway through the investments over the last 2 years, but further work is ongoing to identify next stage actions

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 No consultation has been carried out in respect of the Greenhouse Gas report as this is a factual evidence based study. However projects identified within the report have been subject to consultation and engagement with a range of stakeholders.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

- 10.1 If any of the protected grounds may be affected as a result of the recommendations in this report a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will need to be carried out. Initial screening has concluded that a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required at this point.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 This report identifies Council carbon emissions as of 2021-2. It is likely that the next report, currently under development, will show a further decrease in carbon missions as the Councils work towards Net Zero.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Greenhouse Gas Report 2021-2	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None other than Appendix above.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report – April 2021 to March 2022

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Glossary

Air-Source Heat Pump	ASHP
Carbon Dioxide Equivalent	CO ₂ e
Greenhouse Gas	GHG
Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil	HVO
Kilowatt Hour	kWh
Kilowatt Peak	kWp
Megawatt Hour	MWh
Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin	REGO
Solar Photovoltaic	Solar PV



Introduction

This report provides a comprehensive carbon footprint for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' operations in 2021/22. It provides detail on the trajectory of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions since the establishment of a baseline in 2018/19 and provides supporting information for policy making and action planning to enable the Councils to respond to the declaration of a Climate Emergency and the commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030.

This report uses as its baseline the 'Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report – 2018/19 Financial Year' as this was the first comprehensive GHG report the Councils prepared. The report measures progress in terms of carbon emissions against the baseline and provides a trajectory which will need to be met to achieve the Councils' carbon neutral ambition.

Methodology

The methodology in this report is in accordance with the following guidance:

- HM Government, Environmental Reporting Guidelines: Including streamlined energy and carbon reporting guidance, March 2019 (Updated Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2).
- WRI / WBSCD - The Greenhouse Gas Protocol: A Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard (Revised Edition), March 2004.
- WRI / WBSCD - The Greenhouse Gas Protocol: Scope 2 Guidance, An amendment to the GHG Protocol Corporate Standard, 2015.
- UK Government Conversion Factors for Company Reporting (2022) - DBEIS / DEFRA

Each activity that the Councils operate has been assessed for its direct and indirect energy use. The electricity and gas use of buildings, direct fuel use in Council-owned vehicles and mileage in private vehicles whilst undertaking Council operations have been assessed. Standard conversion factors have been used to assess the carbon footprint of each activity and building. The conversion factors are published by DEFRA on an annual basis and reflect the carbon intensity of a range of carbon sources.

The report is based on emissions of the 'basket of six' GHGs as defined by the Kyoto Protocol and include: carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), F-gases (hydrofluorocarbons and perfluorocarbons) and sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆). All values are given as CO₂ equivalent (CO₂e), which is a measure of the range of GHG as measured against the warming potential of CO₂. This is standard practice and better reflects the climate impact of the Councils' emissions.

The electricity supplies for the four leisure centres were moved to an EDF Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGO) backed electricity supply in March 2021, however it is still contentious whether this consumption is allowed to be reported as zero carbon under the 'market based' approach. The 'grid average' emissions factor, which is applied to all electricity the Councils use, incorporates emissions derived from low carbon energy generation across the UK, therefore by reporting REGO-backed electricity, potentially from the same renewable sources, may lead to double counting. This is currently under review by the UK Government and therefore for the purposes of this report, a record of the REGO-backed CO₂e emissions will be included in the footprint under the title 'green tariffs', however this total will not be deducted from the overall footprint.

This report uses a location-based methodology to calculate the CO₂e emissions from electricity usage. The location-based method reflects the average emissions intensity of the national grid.



Organisational boundary and scopes

The GHG Protocol advises that in setting organisational boundaries, an organisation should select an approach for consolidating GHG emissions and then consistently apply the selected approach to define those business activities and operations that constitute the organisation for the purpose of accounting and reporting GHG emissions. A ‘control approach’ has been used to evaluate the Councils’ GHG emissions i.e., all GHG emissions from operations over which the Councils have control. GHG emissions from operations in which the Councils have an interest but have no control have not been included. Control can be defined in either financial or operational terms.

The organisational boundary has been taken to be those emissions from the Councils’ headquarters, touchdown points, leisure centres, streetlighting operated by the Councils, vehicles owned by the Councils, third parties delivering Council services, and internal Council policies that result in emissions of GHG.

An example of what has not been included in the organisational boundary would be emissions related to the disposal, treatment or sorting of waste from the point of transfer from the refuse collection vehicles to the waste handler. Furthermore, the personal commuting miles of staff to Endeavour House or other offices have been excluded as these are not within the organisational boundary. However, the emissions associated with mileage incurred by councillors attending Endeavour House on Council business, which can be claimed as expenses under standard HMRC rules, do fall within the organisational boundary and are therefore included in the report.

To help delineate direct and indirect emission sources, improve transparency, and provide utility for different types of organisations, three “scopes” (Scope 1, Scope 2, and Scope 3) are defined by the GHG Protocol for accounting and reporting purposes (see Table 1.0).

Scope

- 1 These are emissions from fuels that the Councils directly consume e.g., gas, diesel, and petrol in the direct delivery of Council business by Council employees.
- 2 These are indirect emissions such as electricity use in Council premises.
- 3 These are emissions derived from third party contractors supplying services on behalf of the Councils.

Table 1.0 – Definitions of scopes included within the organisational boundary

There is some discretion within the Protocol on what to include in each scope, for example where information is not recorded, where third party data is unavailable, or where the accuracy of data cannot be relied upon. The following have not been included for such reasons:

- The impact of the Councils’ supply chains. Only those services that are delivered directly by the Councils or through third party suppliers on the Councils’ behalf have been assessed.
- Contracts where the impact would be regarded as minimal e.g., the collection of a small number of abandoned vehicles by third party service providers.
- GHG emissions associated with the air conditioning within Endeavour House.
- Embedded carbon resulting from water use.
- Since the pandemic, the practice of homeworking has increased significantly and the Council will look at evaluating the associated emissions in the next GHG report.



Scope change

In March 2021, the responsibility for payment of electricity and gas invoices was transferred from the two leisure centre contractors (Everyone Active and Abbeycroft Leisure) to the Councils. As the Councils are now directly responsible for paying the energy invoices for most of the sites the emissions from delivered electricity have been transferred from scope 3 to scope 2 and the emissions derived from gas consumption have been moved from scope 3 to scope 1 except for emissions derived from gas consumption between September 2021 and March 2022 at Kingfisher and Hadleigh leisure centres where the payment of invoices was transferred back to Abbeycroft Leisure and these emissions will be part of scope 3.

In April 2021, the grounds maintenance contract with ID Verde was brought back in house and emissions associated with grounds maintenance have been moved from scope 3 to scope 1. It should be noted the changes in scope will not affect the overall carbon emissions figures.

Data gaps and reliability

Scope 3 emissions from the supply chain have not been included in this report, however the Councils are looking into developing a standard reporting mechanism for all the Councils' suppliers/contractors to provide a more comprehensive report in the future. This is a prominent issue as the CO₂e emissions that the Councils may have influence over are likely to be significantly higher than emissions limited to the scopes of this report.

Data has been verified as far as possible, but the reliability is nevertheless dependent on the data collection practices of third-party providers. It would therefore seem reasonable to assume an error margin of +/- 5% on all values within this report.

Results

To help provide context and scale when reading the results, it may be useful to understand that an average resident of our district is responsible for the emission of 0.24 tCO₂e per annum.

The total emissions attributable to the Councils' operations were 4,754.9 tCO₂e for the 2021/22 financial year.

The breakdown of emissions by scope are shown in Chart 2.0. Scope 1 emissions, arising from the use of gas in owned and leased buildings and the four leisure centres, heating oil in sheltered housing schemes and fuel used in Council-owned vehicles, accounted for 46.6% of overall emissions. Scope 2 emissions accounted for 17.3% of overall emissions and were largely derived from electricity use in the Councils' estate and the four leisure centres. 36.0% of emissions were derived from contracted services – the Serco waste contract and the emissions from the gas consumption at Hadleigh and Kingfisher leisure centres and are therefore Scope 3.

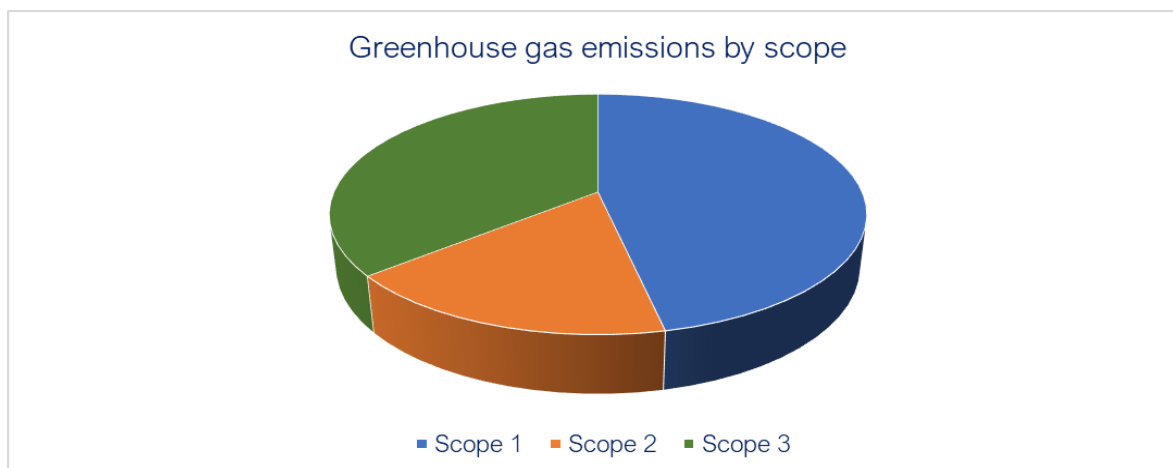


Chart 2.0 –Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council GHG emissions by scope

Table 2.0 provides a summary of the Councils GHG emissions by scope and includes the provision for reporting on carbon offsets and dual reporting on green (low carbon) tariffs.

Reporting period 2021/22	Units	Consumption	Greenhouse Gas Emissions (tonnes CO ₂ e)
Scope 1			
Oil boilers ¹	Litres	85,926	23.0
Premises gas	kWh	4,792,321	969.3
Leisure centre gas	kWh	2,980,000	602.8
Petrol ²	Litres	481	1.0
Diesel ²	Litres	118,052	302.0
Diesel - Grounds	Litres	124,000	317.2
GasOil	Litres	11,780	3.0
Scope 2			
Premises electricity	kWh	1,988,157	384.5
Street/highways lighting	kWh	183,296	35.4
Leisure centre electricity	kWh	2,083,220	402.9
Scope 3			
Staff and member business travel	Miles	397,978	109.3
3rd Party contracted diesel	Litres	318,805	815.5
3rd Party contracted HVO	Litres	317,694	11.3
T and D premises electricity ³	kWh	4,071,377	72.0
T and D Street/highways lighting electricity	kWh	183,296	3.2
Leisure centre gas ⁴	kWh	2,937,626	594.2
Endeavour House - gas	kWh	221,742	44.9
Endeavour House - electricity	kWh	300,655	63.5
Total Gross Emissions			4754.9
Carbon offsets ⁵		0	0.0
Green tariffs ⁶	kWh	2,083,220	439.7
Total Net Emissions			

Intensity measurements ⁷			
Tonnes of CO ₂ e per resident	Resident	195000	0.024

Table 2.0 – Summary of Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council GHG emissions

Data explanations (footnote references):

1. Oil and Gas: Not weather corrected compared to 2018/19 baseline year.
2. Business travel: Staff and members' car and motorcycle journeys including staff owned and car club vehicles. Train and bus travel not included.
3. Transmission & Distribution of electricity: the carbon footprint of electricity consumption is split between Scope 2 and Scope 3, with the proportion of energy losses that occur in delivering the electricity from power plant to the organisations that purchase it being reported as Scope 3 rather than Scope 2.
4. Scope 3 emissions for gas consumed at Hadleigh and Kingfisher leisure centres between September 2021 and March 2022.
5. Carbon offsets: We have reported on the contribution of on-site renewable energy generation that we consider as carbon offsets through our export of renewable energy to the national grid.
6. Green tariff: This includes carbon emissions which can be reported on as the Councils hold the generation certificates.
7. Intensity measurement: We are required to define a result using an 'intensity measurement', which is a ratio of GHG impact per unit of activity or other business metric. We have selected CO₂e emissions per resident.

Chart 2.1 provides a breakdown of CO₂e emissions by sector. Emissions from the leisure centres are still the greatest source, with emissions derived from the owned and leased estate now making up the second largest sector, with 75% amount of these emissions coming from sheltered housing.

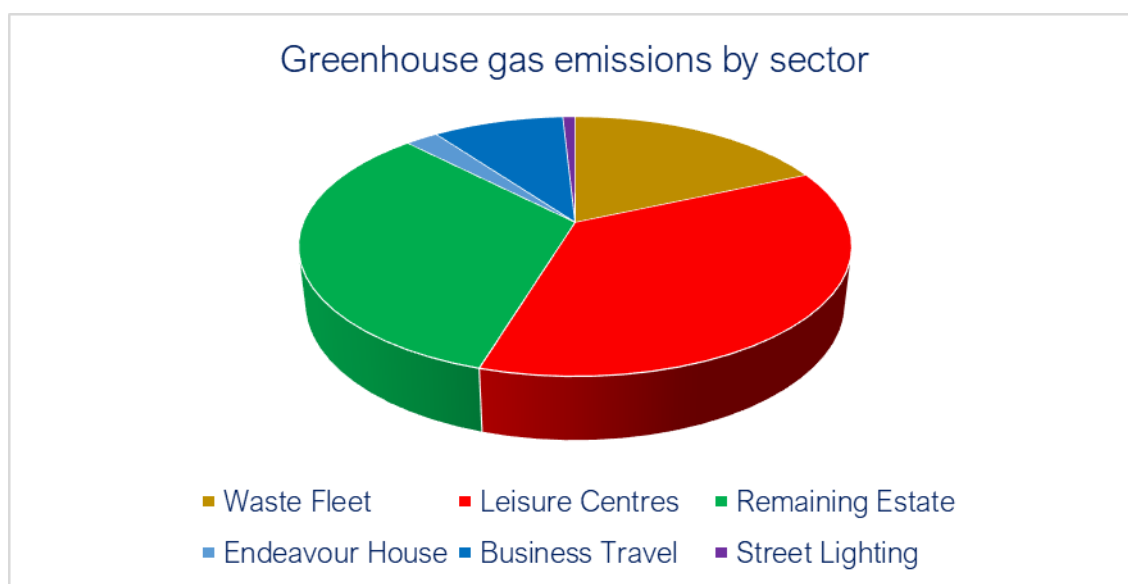


Chart 2.1 –Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils GHG emissions by sector

Leisure Centres

The largest source of emissions came from the four Council-owned leisure centres, which are run by Abbeycroft Leisure and Everyone Active. Collectively these contributed 1,636.7 tCO₂e to the Councils' carbon footprint, or 34.4% of the total carbon emissions from Council activities, as shown in table 2.1.

Site	Operator	GHG Emissions from gas - tCO ₂ e	GHG Emissions from electricity - tCO ₂ e	Total - tCO ₂ e
Kingfisher Leisure Centre	Abbeycroft Leisure	103.7	600.2	703.9
Hadleigh Leisure Centre	Abbeycroft Leisure	75.6	208.9	284.5

Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre	Everyone Active	130.0	387.9	517.9
Stradbroke Leisure Centre	Everyone Active	130.4	0	130.4
Total		439.7	1,197.0	1,636.7

Table 2.1 – Summary of Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council Leisure Centre Emissions

Electricity and gas use in the Councils' leisure centres accounted for 439.7 tCO₂e and 1,197.0 tCO₂e, respectively. There is no gas grid supply for Stradbroke Leisure Centre and so the facility relies on the electricity supply. Electricity consumption in this building was higher than would be expected as all water heating is undertaken using electric immersion heaters.

Chart 2.2 provides a summary of the CO₂e emissions from the four leisure centres over the past four years. The effects of the pandemic on electricity and gas consumption are clear to see however while electricity consumption has only seen a marginal increase since the end of pandemic restrictions the emissions from using natural gas have almost returned to pre-pandemic levels.

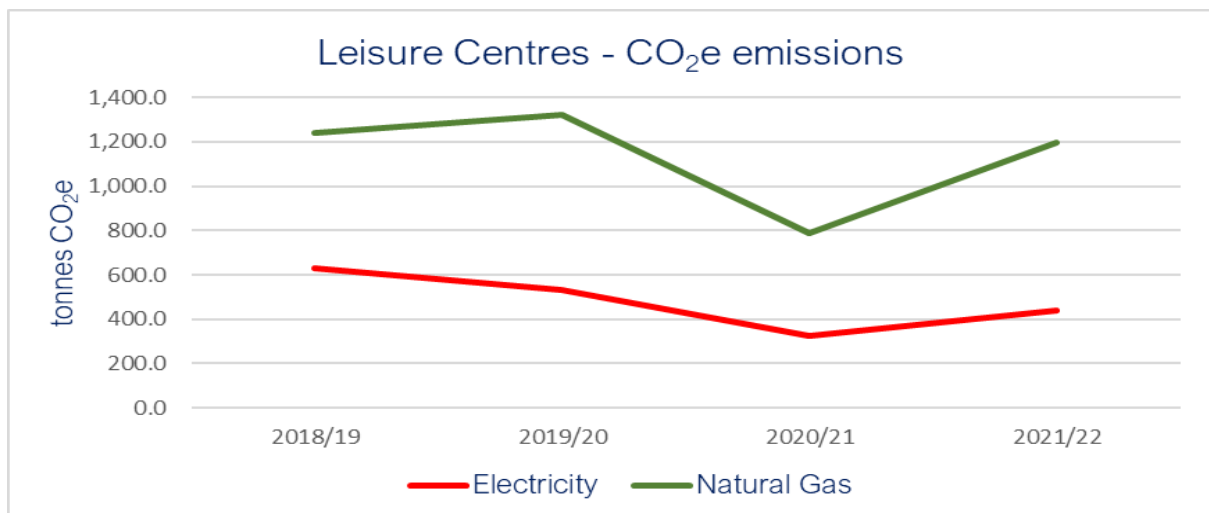


Chart 2.2 – CO₂e emissions from the four leisure centres

Owned and leased estate

The second largest source of emissions of 1,487.6 tCO₂e can be attributed to the council's built estate, which includes depots, touchdown points and sheltered housing. Sheltered housing contributes to 70.9% of these emissions.

Chart 2.3 provides a summary of the CO₂e emissions from the built estate over the past four years.

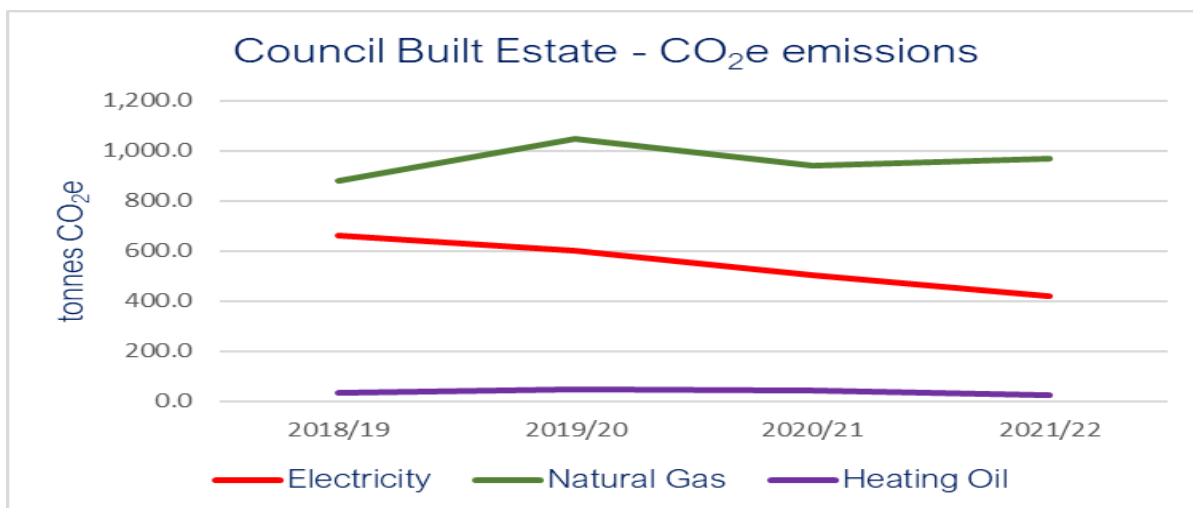


Chart 2.3 – CO₂e emissions from the built estate

Waste and Refuse Collection

The third largest source of emissions within the Council portfolio was the waste refuse collection service at 826.8 tCO₂e per annum, accounting for 17.4% of the total emissions. This was significantly lower than the previous year's total of 1,464.6 tCO₂e due to a change in the primary fuel source. From August 2021 the waste fleet started to use Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO), which has a far lower emissions factor than standard diesel. The emissions factor associated with HVO may not fully reflect the true CO₂e emissions as the transport of the HVO is not included in the calculation. Therefore, the use of HVO as a fuel source is seen as a temporary measure to reduce emissions and a longer-term, low-carbon, solution is being sought.

Chart 2.4 provides a summary of the CO₂e emissions derived from waste services over the past four years. The impact of moving to HVO can be clearly seen in the decrease in emissions over the past year.

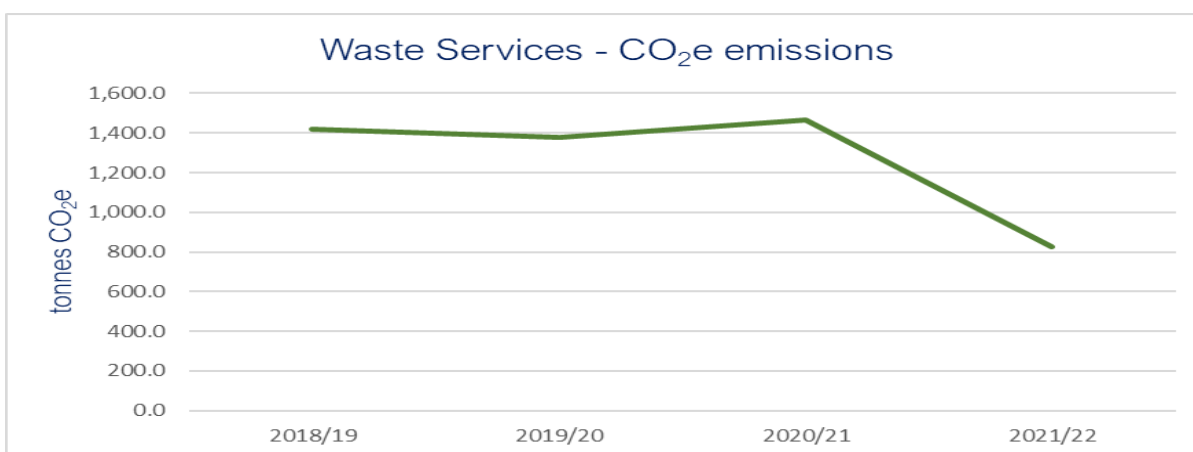


Chart 2.4 – CO₂e emissions from waste services

Other Emissions

The Council offices at Endeavour House accounted for 103.0 tCO₂e which equates to 2.2% of the Councils' total carbon emissions (this is based on the Councils' floorspace occupancy as a proportion of the whole building).



The office at Endeavour House currently has a Display Energy Certificate rating of E, which is below the standard expected of a building of its size, age, and nature of occupation. As tenants, the Councils have no control over the heating, air conditioning and lighting of the space within the building beyond the decision to base the Councils within the building. As such, these emissions are reportable but outside of the Councils' direct control.

Council staff claimed travelling expenses for 376,214 miles in the 2020/21 financial year using private vehicles for undertaking council business. This accounted for 103.3 tCO₂e. Staff mileage has increased by 30% since last year due to the lifting of restrictions associated with the CoVid pandemic.

Councillors claimed travelling expenses for 21,162 miles in the 2020/21 financial year using private vehicles undertaking council business, which accounted for 5.8 tCO₂e of GHG emissions. Councillor mileage has seen a nineteen-fold increase since the previous year due to the lifting of pandemic restrictions.

Pool car use by Council staff and councillors during 2020/21 totalled 336 miles, which resulted in 0.1 tCO₂e. Pool vehicles, whilst currently underused, have a marginally lower carbon footprint per mile than the private "grey" fleet owing to the size of vehicle, the provision of electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. The shift in the pool car fleet towards electric is likely to track ahead of the general fleet and as such the gap between the grey fleet and the pool cars is likely to grow – for example, an electric vehicle has a 68% lower carbon footprint than the grey fleet. Pool cars are currently only accessible to those not in receipt of Essential Car User Allowance. Encouraging a shift to the use of pool cars should be considered with the acknowledgement that the use of private vehicles whilst undertaking tasks on behalf of the Councils is only a minor part of its carbon footprint. A shift to pool car use may also increase carbon emissions overall if staff must drive from the districts to Endeavour House to collect and return a pool vehicle.

Investment in a publicly accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure is currently contributing to the Councils' carbon emissions either through direct electricity procurement or from host suppliers (e.g., Kingfisher Leisure Centre). The carbon emissions from the electric vehicle charging infrastructure are minimal, however it is expected to rise as the adoption of electric vehicles increases. The Councils are preparing a bid for partial grant funding of £400,000 from the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles to increase the provision of electric vehicle charging points at Council car parks.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils actively procure energy for the leisure centres and have entered REGO-backed electricity contracts with EDF for the four leisure centres. These contracts will also be available to the Councils for all Council-owned property from April 2022. The Councils are also exploring their options with regards to procuring 'green tariffs' for the gas supplies.

Any further upgrade plans will be required to fully address and minimise energy use if the Councils are to achieve their ambitions of being carbon neutral by 2030. The current buildings, either in use or under construction, have a lifespan beyond 2030 and so will require significant investment in either upgrades and/or replacement plant, or offsetting elsewhere within the Council estate to account for these emissions.

The transition to carbon neutrality

Chart 3.1 depicts the trajectory from a 2018/19 baseline of 5,804.1 tCO₂e to a carbon neutral target in 2030 and compares actual emissions against the trajectory. In 2019/20 carbon emissions rose to 5,820 tCO₂e before falling to 4,821.9 tCO₂e in 2020/21.



The year 2021/22 saw a marginal decrease on the previous year to 4,754.9 tCO₂e however this must be seen against the backdrop of the lifting of pandemic restrictions and the re-opening of the leisure centres and it is very encouraging the CO₂e emission levels have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

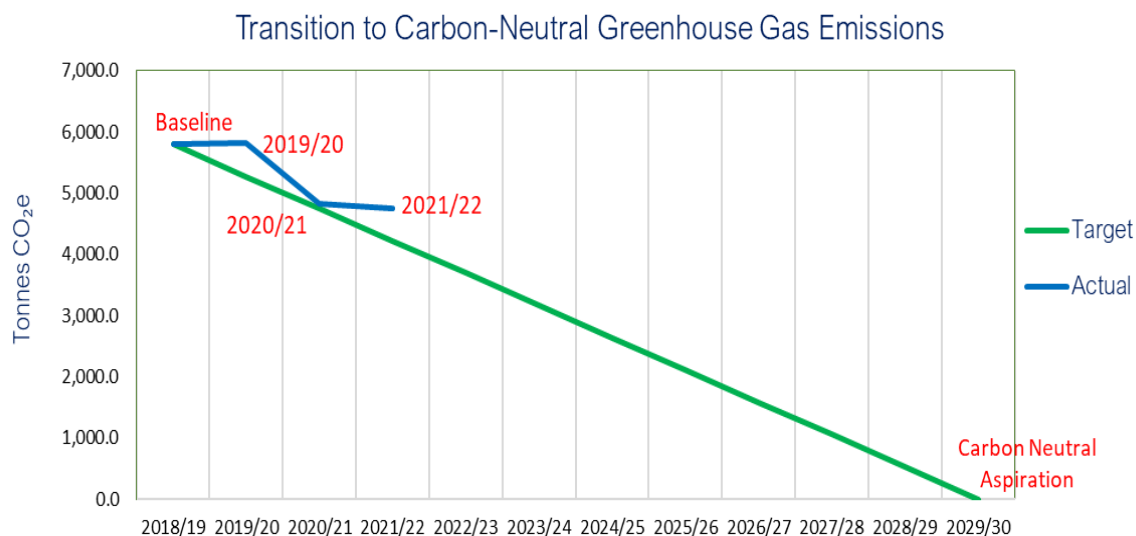


Chart 3.1 – Transition to carbon neutral GHG emissions

It will now prove to be very challenging to maintain this level of reduction as the economy begins to recover and activities return to pre-pandemic levels. Meeting the carbon neutral target by 2030 will rely on the successful implementation of the Councils' 'Carbon Reduction Management Plan', which will require a significant level of funding.

Forecasting decarbonisation

It is not possible to determine a highly accurate picture of the level of funding required and these determinations will need to be made on a project-by-project basis however it is possible to give a general idea by using various tools.

The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) sets a funding cap limit of £500/tCO₂e over the lifetime (15 years) of the project to determine if projects are worthwhile. The recent project the Councils delivered using the PSDS grant delivered lifetime savings of £330/tCO₂e. As the carbon neutral target is static and not cumulative it is necessary to measure overall capital investment against the annual CO₂e saved. The PSDS grant was £1.4 Million and will deliver annual savings of circa 280 tCO₂e. Table 3.0 provides a summary of forecast level of investment needed and using the following assumptions:

- Prices are at 2021 levels.
- As the PSDS evaluation tool is designed for evaluating projects to retrofit buildings therefore only emissions from buildings are included in the forecast.
- It is assumed that carbon saved will only come from decarbonising the heating of the leisure centres and the built estate. Solar PV has now been fitted to most roof spaces in the leisure centres and systems to decarbonise heating such as air-source heat pumps will see an uplift in electricity consumption so reducing CO₂e from delivered electricity has been excluded.
- Endeavour house has been excluded as the Councils has no control over the building's development strategy.
- It is assumed that it will be feasible to decarbonise the heating of all buildings.



	tCO ₂	Assumed lifetime cost - £/tCO ₂ e	Assumed cost capital cost- £/tCO ₂ e	Forecast capital cost @ £2021
Leisure centre gas (2021/22)	1,197.0	333	4995	£5,978,806
Built estate gas and oil (2021/22)	992.3	333	4995	£4,956,752
Total	2,189.3	333	4995	£10,935,558

Table 3.0 – Forecast capital costs for decarbonising the built estate

Table 3.0 identifies that to decarbonise heating in the built estate will require a capital investment of circa £11 Million and will reduce the Councils' overall emissions by a further 45%.

Carbon reduction projects

Over the past year the Councils have carried out several projects aimed at reducing CO₂e emissions.

Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme project

In February 2021 the Councils were awarded a £1.39 million grant from Phase 1 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme which provided £1 billion in grants as part of the Government's 'Plan for Jobs 2020' commitment to support the UK's economic recovery from Covid-19, supporting the low carbon and energy efficiency sector. The grant was used to install solar PV on the four leisure centres and Wenham depot as well as install low carbon heating, using an air-source heat pump, in the Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre.

Table 3.1 (overleaf) provides a summary of the electricity generation at the four leisure centres.

Solar Generation - Leisure Centres

	Consumption (kWh)	Import (kWh)	Self-Consumption (kWh)	System Production (kWh)	Emission savings (tCO ₂ e)
Hadleigh	226,916	188,155	38,761	40,161	8.5
Kingfisher LC	462,772	128,449	334,358	338,662	71.5
Stowmarket LC	183,753	153,904	29,849	31,554	6.7
Stradbroke LC	340,530	328,402	12,129	12,159	2.6
Total	1,213,972	798,910	415,097	422,536	89.2

Table 3.1 – Overview of roof-mounted solar generation at the leisure centres

The projects have all been successfully completed and are now helping towards the Councils' aim of becoming carbon neutral. Between August 2021 and the end of March 2022 the solar PV arrays have generated a total of 422,536 kWh, saving 89.2 tonnes CO₂e.

The air-source heat pump (ASHP) did not come online until March 2022 and therefore emission reductions associated with the ASHP are not included in this report.

Kingfisher and Mid Suffolk leisure centre solar car port project

A £1.23 Million project to install 110 solar car ports at Kingfisher and Mid Suffolk leisure centres has almost been completed. Table 3.2 provides a summary of the project and shows that the solar car ports are forecast to save 53.4 tCO₂e per annum.



Solar Generation - Car ports		
	Kingfisher LC	Mid Suffolk LC
System capacity (kWp)	103.3 kWp	194.9 kWp
Grand funding	£400,000	£400,000
Capital cost	£109,292	£324,370
Total installed cost	£509,292	£724,370
Number of bays	40	70
CO ₂ e emissions saved	27.3 tCO ₂ e	53.4 tCO ₂ e

Table 3.2 – Overview of solar car port project for Kingfisher and Mid Suffolk leisure centres

Kingfisher leisure centre water filtration system

Babergh District Council has invested £25,000 in a prototype water filtration system at Kingfisher leisure centre. The system replaces a typical sand filtration system and uses the process of electrocoagulation to remove impurities from the pool. Under the old system the treated water would be sent to sewer and the pool would be backfilled with mains water, which would have to be heated to pool temperature (28°C). The new system maintains water quality and allows for treated water to be returned directly to the pool at 28°C, thus saving water and the energy needed to heat the mains water. The system was commissioned in September 2022 and an evaluation of the systems' performance will be carried out once the system has been running for six months.

Decarbonising the grid

The Councils have made a significant investment, installing approximately 5 MWp of solar photovoltaic panels on around 2,000 Council-owned properties. Under the Government's standard reporting guidelines, the emissions saved are not reportable as an offset against wider Council emissions because they are claimed by the electricity companies as part of the purchase transaction. However, the investment does help to decarbonise grid electricity by replacing grid electricity with local, renewable power.

Table 3.3 provides a summary of the electricity generated by the Councils' solar PV systems over the past four years and shows the carbon emissions that have been saved during this period. Since 2018/19 the Councils have saved 4,215.6 tCO₂e, an average of 1,053.9 tCO₂e per year.

Solar PV Energy Generation - Social Housing					
Year	Authority	Units	Generation	Conversion Factor	tCO ₂ e
2018/19	DC	kWh	2,404,821	0.2773	666.9
2018/19	MSDC	kWh	2,091,746	0.2773	580.0
2019/20	BDC	kWh	2,331,689	0.25319	590.4
2019/20	MSDC	kWh	2,009,840	0.25319	508.9
2020/21	BDC	kWh	2,242,679	0.23112	518.3
2020/21	MSDC	kWh	1,893,176	0.23112	437.6
2021/22	BDC	kWh	2,410,964	0.21107	508.9
2021/22	MSDC	kWh	1,917,544	0.21107	404.7
Cumulative total					4215.6

Table 3.3 – Summary of electricity generation and carbon emissions reductions from installed Solar PV



Carbon offsetting and green tariffs

The Councils moved the electricity contract for the four leisure centres to a REGO-backed contract in April 2021 and although under the current reporting guidelines the Councils cannot deduct the CO₂e emissions saved from their annual emissions it has helped to further decarbonise the grid by ensuring the purchase of power generation, which saves 439.7 tCO₂e.

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Agenda Item 11

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: BDC Council MSDC Council	REPORT NUMBER: BC/23/11
FROM: The Returning Officer	DATE OF MEETINGS: 18 July 2023 19 July 2023
OFFICER: Arthur Charvonia, Chief Executive	KEY DECISION REF NO. N/A

REVIEW OF THE DELIVERY OF THE 2023 DISTRICT, TOWN & PARISH ELECTIONS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 As a result of a number of particular issues that arose during delivery of the 2023 district, town and parish elections across Babergh and Mid Suffolk, the Returning Officer decided on 2 May 2023 to commission the Chief Executive of the Association of Electoral Administrators ('AEA') to conduct an immediate external post-election review. The outcome of this independent review is attached at Appendix A.
- 1.2 The scope of the review, as agreed with the AEA and with the Electoral Commission, was to:
- i) investigate the circumstances surrounding the issues faced with the receipt and processing of nomination papers at the district, parish and town council elections on Thursday 4 May 2023; and
 - ii) evaluate the robustness of the delivery of Electoral Services in the two district councils, particularly in respect of the skills and knowledge of the core Electoral Services team and the support it receives corporately.
- 1.3 After each election the Councils' Electoral Services team conduct an internal 'wash-up' of the process in order to learn lessons and make iterative improvements. Again, as a result of the particular issues that arose delivering the 2023 election, this process has been expanded, so instead the Elections Project Team commissioned a wider internal review. The outcome of this broader internal review is attached at Appendix B.
- 1.4 The internal review was guided in its approach by the [Performance standards for Returning Officers | Electoral Commission](#). In summary these are:
- Electoral services are robust and support the delivery of well-run elections
 - Everybody who is eligible and wants to vote is able to do so and has confidence in the voting process
 - Everybody who is eligible and wants to stand for election is able to do so and has confidence in the process
 - Everyone can have confidence that the election process is well managed and in the accuracy of the results
- 1.5 Both Appendix A and B have been shared with the Electoral Commission.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Returning Officer did not consider any other options as he considered it essential to conduct a thorough review of the Councils' performance against the Electoral Commission's standards and in particular to ensure that 'Electoral services are robust and support the delivery of well-run elections' and 'Everyone can have confidence that the election process is well managed'.

3. RECOMMENDATION
3.1 To note the content of Appendices A and B, and request that the Joint Audit & Standards Committee review the draft action plan arising from those reviews.
REASON FOR DECISION
To learn the lessons from the errors made in the delivery of the 2023 district, town and parish elections and improve procedures ahead of the next scheduled elections and the further changes in electoral legislation.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 The election results for the 2023 district, town and parish councils were delivered safely and accurately. However, there were issues with the receipt, processing and communication of the 1500 candidate nominations. These errors caused inevitable confusion for the candidates, election agents and created the risk of eroding the confidence of some electors in the democratic process and the eventual results of the elections. Although no issues were experienced with the implementation of Voter ID, this created a heightened focus on trust in the democratic process and voting.
- 4.2 The errors with the Statement of Persons Nominated also had knock on impacts upon the production of ballot papers as additional manual checks were implemented to ensure each draft ballot paper was checked back against the originally submitted nomination forms. Despite these checks a further error was made with a postal ballot paper for a parish ward – incorrectly advising the electors in that ward to vote for up to 2 candidates rather than 4 candidates. This error once identified was quickly resolved by reissuing a corrected ballot paper (on different coloured paper) to the 625 affected electors. These errors were all reported in a timely manner to the Electoral Commission, who endorsed the actions taken to remedy the issues.
- 4.3 Although these errors had no bearing on the election results – which were delivered safely and accurately, and a limited bearing on the experience of those voting; the Returning Officer and Elections Project Team decided that a comprehensive external and internal review should be commissioned to look at the delivery of the elections as a whole. The scope of these reviews, as agreed with the Electoral Commission, are outlined in paragraphs 1.2 (i) and (ii) above. The results of these reviews are attached at Appendix A and B.
- 4.4 The summary of the external review are that “despite the challenges, safe and secure elections were delivered...We are satisfied there are no inherent failings in the delivery of elections in Babergh and Mid Suffolk. There are clearly areas that require improvement, but we have not identified any need for an entire re-design of the service.”

The external and internal reviews were conducted independently of each other but reach common conclusions that improvements can and need to be made in relation to:

- Nominations and notices
- IT
- Communication with candidates & agents and internal engagement
- Corporate support
- Project planning
- Resource
- Team development
- Ongoing corporate learning
- Access to physical space

4.5 An action plan is being developed in response to the reviews. The Joint Audit & Standards Committee will be asked to consider and comment on the draft action plan. It is intended that the action plan will be in three sections:

- i) Lessons learned from the delivery of the district, town and parish elections which need to be captured, implemented and embedded where possible now, in recognition that this particular set of elections and scale of nominations will not take place again until 2027.
- ii) Lessons learned and improvements that will relate to all types of elections but particularly ahead of the next scheduled elections – Police & Crime Commissioner (May 2024) and the General Election (before January 2025).
- iii) Implementation of the changes needed in response to the further changes in electoral law.

5. FINANCIAL & LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct financial or legal implications arising from this report.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 The draft action plan will include a review of the Election Project Team's risk register and Election Service's risk register.

7. CONSULTATIONS

7.1 A variety of external stakeholders and internal staff were consulted as part of the reviews. Appendices A and B outline the mixture of people interviewed.

8. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

In light of the nature of recommendations contained in this report it is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment needed to be carried out. There are likely however to be equality impact implications arising from the action plan which will need to be assessed.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no environmental impacts arising from the recommendations in this report.

10. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Post-election review of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' Electoral Services – May 2023 - The Association of Electoral Administrators	Attached
(b) Elections Internal Review	Attached

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

11.1 [Performance standards for Returning Officers | Electoral Commission](#)

The Association of Electoral Administrators



Post-election review of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils' Electoral Services – May 2023



Report compiled by:

Peter Stanyon
Claire Wardle

Chief Executive
Member Support and Training Officer

14 June 2023

1 Introduction

- 1.1 On 2 May 2023, the Chief Executive of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, Arthur Charvonia, approached the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) to commission a post-election review of the delivery of Electoral Services. He is the councils' Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) and Returning Officer (RO).
- 1.2 Mr Charvonia and the AEA's Chief Executive, Peter Stanyon, discussed the outline requirements on 3 May, following which the scope of the review was drafted. It was subsequently endorsed by Heather Bush, Regional Manager (Eastern Region) of the Electoral Commission (EC).

2 Scope of the review

- 2.1 The agreed scope was:
- 2.1.1 To investigate the circumstances surrounding the issues faced with the receipt and processing of nomination papers at the district, parish and town council elections on Thursday 4 May 2023.
 - 2.1.2 To evaluate the robustness of the delivery of Electoral Services in the two district councils, particularly in respect of the skills and knowledge of the core Electoral Services team and the support it receives corporately.
- 2.2 It was further agreed the following specific issues were to be considered:
- 2.2.1 The administration of the nominations processes at the district, parish and town council elections on Thursday 4 May 2023.
 - 2.2.2 The ERO and RO's and core Electoral Services team's awareness and understanding of existing legislation and guidance, and the challenges to be faced in the immediate future (Elections Act 2022, UK parliamentary general election, UK parliamentary constituency boundary changes, etc.).
 - 2.2.3 The core competencies of the Electoral Services team, particularly in respect of their skills and knowledge.

- 2.2.4 The corporate structures and processes in place to support the delivery of excellent Electoral Services, particularly in specialist areas such as IT, communications, and HR.

3 Review methodology

- 3.1 The review was led by Peter Stanyon, Chief Executive of the AEA. He has over 35 years' experience of delivering elections. He was supported by the Association's Member Support and Training Officer, Claire Wardle. She has around 25 years' experience.
- 3.2 It was agreed the review would be completed by the end of May 2023.
- 3.3 We reviewed the following documentation:
 - 3.3.1 Our pre-review questionnaire, which was completed by Edward McCreadie, the Corporate Manager – Electoral Services and Land Charges, on 12 May 2023.
 - 3.3.2 The project plan and risk register for the 4 May 2023 district, parish, and town council elections.
 - 3.3.3 The extended leadership team structure of the councils.
- 3.4 We interviewed 17 individuals recommended to us by the Chief Executive, including two election agents. Their names are listed at Appendix A.
- 3.5 We would like to place on record our thanks for the cooperative way all interviewees approached the review. All questions were answered openly and candidly, which greatly assisted our independent analysis.

4 Identified themes

- 4.1 We identified several common themes throughout the review and have therefore structured this report to address each. They are:
 - 4.1.1 Nominations and notices
 - 4.1.2 IT
 - 4.1.3 Communication with candidates and agents
 - 4.1.4 Corporate support
 - 4.1.5 Project planning
 - 4.1.6 Team development
 - 4.1.7 Ongoing corporate learning
 - 4.1.8 Other issues

4.2 We have avoided making specific recommendations in each area but have rather highlighted key issues and offered potential options for consideration.

5 Nominations and notices

5.1 Several issues were experienced in the administration of the nominations process.

5.2 Babergh has 24 district wards and 67 parishes, Mid Suffolk 26 district wards and 103 parishes. Of those, all district wards were contested as were nine of the parishes in Babergh and six in Mid Suffolk.

5.3 To assist with the administration of the process, the Notices of Election for the parishes were published on Thursday 16 March 2023, seven working days ahead of the latest statutory time for doing so. We consider this to have been a sensible decision.

5.4 The receipt of parish nominations commenced on Friday 17 March 2023. Candidates were able to submit their nominations to six locations across the districts at times specified by the RO. An online booking system was made available to candidates with RO staff attending and processing nominations onto the Electoral Management System (EMS). We consider these to be sensible arrangements, although we have reservations as to how they worked in practice.

5.5 The Notices of Election for the district elections were published on Thursday 23 March 2023, two working days ahead of the latest statutory time for doing so. The nominations process for the districts was administered entirely at Endeavour House, Ipswich.

5.6 Significant numbers of nominations were processed over the 13 working days for the parishes and eight working days for the districts (191 district nominations and over 1,340 parish).

5.7 We were made aware of several errors in the processing of nominations and the subsequent production and publication of the Statements of Persons Nominated, and in one case, the ballot papers. The errors included incorrect inputting of data, missing candidate details, incorrect candidate descriptions, errors in the inputting of relevant areas where candidates suppressed their home addresses, candidate details being transposed between district and parish notices, and incorrect voting instructions.

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- 5.8 There was no single reason for the errors that occurred. Several factors were involved, including human error, lack of familiarity with legislation and software, and IT issues. We therefore suggest the following issues should be considered:
- 5.8.1 In-depth training of the staff appointed by the RO to input nominations into the EMS. It is essential they fully understand how the EMS input process works, how the data entry screens are arranged, and the precise data that needs to be entered. It is also essential those staff are aware of when the data must be saved.
 - 5.8.2 To help ensure information is entered completely and accurately, checklists should be provided and used when inputting all nominations into the EMS system.
 - 5.8.3 Every nomination should be physically date and time stamped on receipt so that evidence is available should it be required (as was the case in one incident at this election). Too much reliance was given to the EMS recording that information.
 - 5.8.4 It was reported the EMS processing time was slow and contributed towards some of the inputting errors that transpired. This issue should be taken up with the EMS supplier to seek a solution, with the technical support of the Corporate IT team.
 - 5.8.5 Data inputting should be checked for accuracy on an ongoing daily basis. This will help with identifying common errors or issues of concern, and with the timely production of the various notices required following the close of nominations.
 - 5.8.6 In all instances, data should be checked by reference to the source documentation, for example the physical nomination paper. Ideally, it should be done by individuals not involved in the inputting process, by reference to checklists developed for the specific tasks, for example the checking of ballot papers should include specifically checking the number of candidates for whom electors may vote.
 - 5.8.7 The system for the filing of the physical nomination papers must be organised, clear and simple. It is essential the papers can be found easily so that the checking and validation processes can proceed efficiently. Consideration could be given to sub-dividing the filing system into the two

sovereign district areas, sub-dividing again into parishes within those areas, and then delegating responsibility for the four areas to individual officers.

6 IT

- 6.1 The councils have contracted Democracy Counts to provide the EMS used for the delivery of Electoral Services. These were the first all-out district and parish elections held using the system. It was successfully used at the combined Suffolk County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections in 2021.
- 6.2 It is clear there were issues with aspects of the software, which contributed to the challenges faced with the processing of nominations and production of subsequent notices. Ghosting of data was experienced, as was the ability to save invalid nominations (introducing confusion) and the incorrect formatting of exports.
- 6.3 Democracy Counts has identified a bug in the system, which may have been unique to Babergh and Mid Suffolk. We were advised steps are in hand for it to be corrected.
- 6.4 A lack of confidence in the system was expressed by several interviewees, but it is also clear the EMS cannot be held responsible for every issue that transpired.
- 6.5 We make the following suggestions:
- 6.5.1 With the support of the corporate IT team, discussions should be had with Democracy Counts in respect of the individual issues faced at these elections. It is essential the users of the system have confidence in its operation.
 - 6.5.2 Every user of the system should receive the necessary training in its operation in respect of their areas of responsibility. We formed the view that some of the issues experienced may have been because of lack of understanding of the processes to be followed within the system.
 - 6.5.3 At future elections, the system should be set up and tested much earlier than was the case on this occasion. We recognise there may have been issues preventing an earlier set up at these elections, but that contributed to the challenges faced. The corporate IT team should be fully involved in assisting where necessary.

- 6.5.4 The method for the reporting and escalation of issues, primarily to Democracy Counts, should be reviewed by the Electoral Services and corporate IT teams to improve effectiveness and resolution time.
- 6.5.5 There is an opportunity at the casual vacancy elections in June to set up the election and use the system in less pressurised and overwhelming circumstances. This could enable procedures to be learned and recorded more effectively. Any issues can be reported and resolved with the software company to the benefit of future elections.

7 Communication with candidates and agents

- 7.1 There was no communications plan in place for this set of elections. The EC emphasise it is part of the RO's role to ensure that everyone who wants to participate in elections (including electors and candidates) can access clear information to enable them to do so. Early engagement with candidates and agents is recommended.
- 7.2 There were two briefings for candidates and agents – one before and one after the close of nominations. We consider this sensible. However, we were informed by an agent that the meetings were quite brief and given at short notice, so not everyone who would have benefited was able to attend. It was felt there was insufficient information provided about the parish council election process.
- 7.3 Candidates and agents were not given direct contact details for the Electoral Services Manager (ESM) or core team. They were required to use a generic switchboard number. We were told it was difficult to get through to members of the core team. Those who were existing councillors had the ESM's contact details, and responses to phone calls were considered helpful. However, there was a slow response to emails sent to the team.
- 7.4 Because of the large number of nominations being processed, appointments taking longer than expected, and the emerging issues, the nomination process did not appear to be under control. One agent told us he had raised concerns about insufficient staff dealing with the nominations.
- 7.5 When issues were found with some Statements of Persons Nominated, not all the agents were informed. If information was given in a more proactive and transparent way, this could have helped reassure candidates and agents issues were being worked out and that subsequent election materials would be accurate.

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- 7.6 Although no issues were reported in respect of the count process, there were gaps in the information provided at the verification and counting of the votes. For example, verification statements were not made available for inspection as they should be and have been in the past. Candidates and agents also found it difficult to ask questions, as it was not clear who to ask apart from the ESM or RO, who were actively engaged in the count.
- 7.7 Concerns have been raised about the Declarations of Result, which show very large numbers of ballot papers “rejected in part”. We understand these are in fact unused votes, not rejected votes.
- 7.8 Some voters do not use all the votes they are entitled to use. Unused votes should not be categorised as rejected but should still be recorded at the count to provide a clear audit trail and help reconcile the verification and count figures.
- 7.9 The fact the unused votes have been incorrectly categorised has no bearing on the accuracy of the result. However, we understand some people may have been confused by the way the results have been presented, introducing doubt as to their accuracy.
- 7.10 We therefore recommend the following issues should be considered:
- 7.10.1 The development of a communications plan for future elections, detailing how candidates and agents will be given information before, during and after elections. This should be part of a wider public awareness plan to encourage participation.
 - 7.10.2 Identifying methods of communication to reach and inform as many candidates as possible, bearing in mind the geographical area of the two districts.
 - 7.10.3 A strategy for communicating clear information in the event of issues or errors, aiming to be proactive and transparent, and setting the narrative, should be developed.
 - 7.10.4 Identifying staff during the election process, and at the count, as points of contact for candidates and agents. Clear lines and examples of answers for common questions should be provided.
 - 7.10.5 The Declarations of Result for the contested parishes should be re-published so that unused votes are not incorrectly classified as “rejected in part”, but as unused votes.
-

8 Corporate support

- 8.1 The Electoral Services team sits within the Law and Governance directorate, with the Director having line management responsibility for the ESM. The ESM is a Corporate Manager, and also manages Local Land Charges. Both the Director and the ESM are designated Deputy ROs with full powers at elections. The Deputy Chief Executive is also a Deputy RO with full powers.
- 8.2 There is a good history of corporate support for elections, with services across the councils being identified as having relevant skills and resources to assist. These include staff in Democratic Services, Land Charges, corporate IT, Communications and Customer Services. It is important that the experience within the councils is tapped into and built on at future elections.
- 8.3 There is a continued corporate willingness to support the delivery of elections. When the problems with the nomination process were identified, there was a clear, evident and swift mobilisation of resources to assist. The RO and DROs took a hands-on approach to resolving issues, and twice daily meetings took place in the last four weeks of the election timetable.
- 8.4 We received differing recollections as to the availability of additional support prior to then, and the readiness of colleagues to assist.
- 8.5 We believe the ESM could have been clearer as to what support the team needed whereas the project team could have been more challenging in its oversight of the delivery of the project. That in turn would likely have led to an escalation of the potential requirements to the senior leadership team, from where appropriate support could be channelled.
- 8.6 In short, greater understanding of the level and types of support that could have been requested and could then have been granted was not communicated as effectively as it might have been.
- 8.7 While acknowledging that all-out district and parish elections are the most technically difficult to administer, there will be other issues and challenges in future.
- 8.8 The assistance from a previous member of the Electoral Services team was extremely valuable. Her local knowledge, for example around the structure of the register and the arrangements for the count, was particularly useful. Such knowledge needs to be absorbed and built on by the existing team.

8.9 We therefore recommend the following issues should be considered:

- 8.9.1 A thorough review of the challenges faced by the Electoral Services team in the delivery of these elections, identifying what resources and support will be required to mitigate risk in future.
- 8.9.2 Recognition of the forthcoming challenges in implementing Phase 2 of the Elections Act 2022 measures, implementing parliamentary boundary changes, preparing for the UK parliamentary general election (at potentially 25 working days' notice), and preparing for the scheduled PCC polls in 2024 and Suffolk County Council polls in 2025.
- 8.9.3 Questioning which aspects of the election process could be delivered by staff other than the core Electoral Services team. For example, recruitment of polling station staff, handling elector enquiries, proof-checking election materials, preparing ballot boxes and stationery, etc.
- 8.9.4 Recognising that elections are much bigger than the business-as-usual processes of the Electoral Services team, and engendering a "one council" approach to their delivery and success within the extended leadership team.
- 8.9.5 Recognising that examples of positive support and collaboration exist and building on existing experience and expertise at future elections.

9 **Project planning**

- 9.1 As with previous elections, there was a project team with representatives from Communications, Customer Services, ICT, as well as the RO and his Deputies.
- 9.2 There was a high-level project plan, based on the EC's template. This plan was monitored at project board meetings.
- 9.3 With hindsight, it is apparent that members of the project team felt there was insufficient check and challenge of the delivery of the plan. They were assured that things were going to plan and took that at face value.
- 9.4 The project plan contains broad deliverables, but without supporting detail of how long certain elements take or the interdependency of different tasks.

-
- 9.5 There was no detailed operational plan underneath the high-level plan. This meant there was a reliance on the ESM's experience and knowledge of how to do things, making it difficult for others to lead on tasks.
- 9.6 There is no electoral registration plan, which is one of the performance standards inputs expected by the EC. Such a plan should be in place for delivering the statutory annual canvass for the register of electors. Registration activity should also be undertaken throughout the year to maintain the register and to try to avoid peaks in applications before an election.
- 9.7 We therefore recommend the following issues should be considered:
- 9.7.1 Encouraging and valuing the input of the core Electoral Services team and supporting services in the development of election and registration plans.
- 9.7.2 To support the high-level project plan, and with the input of the core Electoral Services team and other supporting services, a more detailed delivery plan for future elections should be drafted that identifies key tasks at a more granular level.
- 9.7.3 Ensure project team meetings continue to take place well in advance of scheduled elections, recognising that planning starts with the review of the previous election, and that they provide an opportunity to check and monitor progress effectively.
- 9.7.4 Consider having the oversight of the project plan managed by someone other than the ESM.
- 9.7.5 The development of operational plans, process notes and checklists for all aspects of the delivery of an election, including (but not limited to):
- Setting up an election in the EMS
 - Booking and equipping polling stations
 - Recruiting and training staff
 - Processing nominations
 - Producing notices and election materials
 - Operation of postal vote opening
 - Ballot box preparation
 - Management of the count

9.7.6 Development of an electoral registration plan covering the timescales, tasks and deliverables for the annual canvass as well as plans for identifying new potential electors and maintaining the register throughout the year.

9.7.7 Seeking out good practice from other authorities.

10 Team Development

10.1 The Electoral Services team comprises the ESM and two full time and two part time Administrative and Technical Support Officers. It is a flat structure, with no Deputy ESM or other senior/supervisory staff in the team. The lack of a Deputy ESM is considered a weakness.

10.2 It is a new team. We must note three members of the core team left in quick succession in 2021/2022, as did an experienced and highly knowledgeable Director. This led to an unsettled experience.

10.3 It is clear there are many strengths and an enthusiasm to deliver quality services, but it is also clear the technical knowledge necessary to administer quality electoral services requires development. That will take time.

10.4 There is however no development plan for the team. All have completed the AEA Foundation Course in Electoral Services, but there is no current programme for further development or training.

10.5 We are conscious the issues that arose at these elections have left the team feeling insecure and anxious. Strong leadership will be required to help rebuild confidence and ensure preparedness for the delivery of future elections.

10.6 We therefore recommend the following issues should be considered:

10.6.1 Engendering a collaborative and team spirit culture, undertaking work to build the core team, developing the individual and collective strengths that are apparent and addressing those areas where issues prevent optimum team working.

10.6.2 Seeking out development opportunities to build the core technical skills, including attending elections training courses, software training, shadowing other electoral services teams, etc.

10.6.3 Involving the team in the development of operational plans and process notes (see also the project planning section).

- 10.6.4 Having regular opportunities to share knowledge, new processes and guidance at team meetings, etc.
- 10.6.5 Encouraging individual team members to visit other local authorities to help understand how best to develop processes that will be of benefit to the electors of Babergh and Mid Suffolk.
- 10.6.6 Benchmarking with other local authorities to test if the structure remains appropriate, and to build on good practice already developed elsewhere.

11 Ongoing corporate learning

- 11.1 The delivery of electoral services has experienced significant and ongoing change over the last 20 years. That has introduced challenges for all local authorities. Electoral services teams are no longer able to deliver elections independently – a corporate approach is both recommended and required.
- 11.2 It was clear the introduction of voter ID was managed well in Babergh and Mid Suffolk, albeit we believe focus on its safe delivery may have contributed to the issues experienced in these elections. Some of the core elements of election delivery, including team development, appear to have suffered.
- 11.3 It was also clear there is very little awareness corporately of the challenges to come over the next few years.
- 11.4 We therefore recommend the following for consideration:
 - 11.4.1 A corporate project team be established to consider:
 - The impact the phase one Elections Act 2022 measures (voter ID and accessibility) will have on future elections and referendums.
 - The impact the phase two measures (including online absent voting, the handling of postal ballot papers, EU citizens candidacy and voting rights and the changes to the overseas electors' franchise) are likely to have.
 - Early planning for the PCC (due May 2024), the UK Parliamentary general election (due before the end of January 2025), and Suffolk County Council elections (due May 2025).

- The impact of the changes to the parliamentary constituency boundaries that will be reported to Parliament by 1 July 2023.

11.4.2 As a minimum, the ERO/RO, ESM and core Electoral Services team be encouraged to attend training and development on the Elections Act changes as they arise, and to share that knowledge with the extended leadership team and elected members of both councils.

12 Other issues

12.1 One other issue that became apparent was pressure on physical office and preparation space. The delivery of elections is a large exercise, with significant amounts of paper and equipment involved.

12.2 We appreciate the reasons why the footprint available is limited, but we also consider the lack of space a significant risk in the delivery of technically challenging elections such as those in 2023, but also those such as the forthcoming UK parliamentary general election that will generate higher levels of public interest.

12.2.1 We consider careful consideration should be given to attempting to resolve or mitigate the space challenge ahead of the PCC elections in May 2024.

13 Summary

- 13.1 It is clear significant challenges were faced by Babergh and Mid Suffolk in the delivery of the elections on 4 May 2023. Mistakes were made, but it is apparent they were resolved as efficiently and effectively as was possible in the circumstances. It is also fair to say there were many mitigating issues that are unlikely to arise again.
- 13.2 We are content that despite the challenges, safe and secure elections were delivered. This was largely due to the commitment, enthusiasm and dedication shown by all those involved.
- 13.3 We have recommended several matters for consideration by the ERO/RO and the wider team. Although set out in the commentary, for ease of reference, they are summarised at Appendix B.
- 13.4 We are satisfied there are no inherent failings in the delivery of elections in Babergh and Mid Suffolk. There are clearly areas that require improvement, but we have not identified any need for an entire re-design of the service.

Peter Stanyon
Chief Executive

Claire Wardle
Member Support and Training Officer

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Interviewees

Edward McCreadie	Corporate Manager – Electoral Services and Land Charges
Joshua Edwards	Administrative and Technical Support Officer
Katie Edwards	Administrative and Technical Support Officer
Sally Jepson	Administrative and Technical Support Officer
Michelle Hart	Administrative and Technical Support Officer
Donna Bridges	Electoral Services Team Member (Retired)
Janice Robinson	Corporate Manager –Governance and Civic Office
Patrick Richardson-Todd	Governance Support Officer
Kathy Nixon	Deputy Chief Executive
Sara Wilcock	Director – Customers, Digital Transformation and Improvement
Brad Jones	Corporate Manager – Communications and Engagement
Matthew Harding	Corporate Manager – ICT and Programme Management
Samantha Lake	Corporate Manager – Customer Operations
Philip Faircloth-Mutton	Councillor and Election Agent (Conservative Party)
Ifty Ali	Director – Law and Governance (Interim)
Nicholas Hardingham	Councillor and Election Agent (Green Party)
Arthur Charvonja	Chief Executive and Electoral Registration and Returning Officer

Summary of suggested improvements

Nominations and notices

- 1 In-depth training of the staff appointed by the RO to input nominations into the EMS should be undertaken.
- 2 Checklists should be provided and used when inputting all nominations into the EMS system, to help ensure information is entered completely and accurately.
- 3 Every nomination should be physically date and time stamped on receipt so that evidence is available should it be required.
- 4 The issue of EMS processing time being reported as slow should be taken up with the EMS supplier to seek a solution, with the technical support of the Corporate IT team.
- 5 Data inputting should be checked for accuracy on an ongoing daily basis.
- 6 In all instances, data should be checked by reference to the source documentation. Ideally, it should be done by individuals not involved in the inputting process, by reference to checklists developed for the specific tasks.
- 7 The system for the filing of the physical nomination papers must be organised, clear and simple.

IT

- 8 With the support of the corporate IT team, discussions should be had with Democracy Counts in respect of the individual issues faced at these elections.
- 9 Every user of the system should receive the necessary training in its operation in respect of their areas of responsibility.
- 10 At future elections, the system should be set up and tested much earlier than was the case on this occasion. The corporate IT team should be fully involved in assisting where necessary.
- 11 The method for the reporting and escalation of issues, primarily to Democracy Counts, should be reviewed by the Electoral Services and corporate IT teams to improve effectiveness and resolution time.

- 12 There is an opportunity at the casual vacancy elections in June to set up the election and use the system in less pressurised and overwhelming circumstances.

Communication with candidates and agents

- 13 A communications plan should be developed for future elections, detailing how candidates and agents will be given information before, during and after elections. This should be part of a wider public awareness plan to encourage participation.
- 14 Methods of communication should be developed to reach and inform as many candidates as possible, bearing in mind the geographical area of the two districts.
- 15 A strategy for communicating clear information in the event of issues or errors should be developed.
- 16 Clear points of contact for candidates and agents should be identified, with clear lines and examples of answers for common questions provided to them.
- 17 The declarations of result for the contested parishes should be republished so that unused votes are not classified as "rejected in part", but as unused votes.

Corporate support

- 18 A thorough review of the challenges faced by the Electoral Services team in the delivery of these elections, identifying what resources and support will be required to mitigate risk in future, should be undertaken.
- 19 The extended leadership team needs to recognise the forthcoming challenges in implementing Phase 2 of the Elections Act 2022 measures, implementing parliamentary boundary changes, preparing for the UK Parliamentary general election and the scheduled PCC polls in 2024 and Suffolk County Council polls in 2025.
- 20 Questioning which aspects of the election process could be delivered by staff other than the core Electoral Services team.
- 21 Engendering a "one council" approach to the delivery of elections within the extended leadership team.
- 22 Recognising that examples of positive support and collaboration exist and building on existing experience and expertise at future elections.
-

Project planning

- 23 Encouraging and valuing the input of the core Electoral Services team and supporting services in the development of election and registration plans.
- 24 A more detailed delivery plan for future elections should be drafted that identifies key tasks at a more granular level.
- 25 Ensure project team meetings continue to take place well in advance of scheduled elections, and that they provide an opportunity to check and monitor progress effectively.
- 26 Consider having the oversight of the project plan managed by someone other than the ESM.
- 27 Develop operational plans, process notes and checklists for all aspects of the delivery of an election.
- 28 Develop of an electoral registration plan covering the timescales, tasks and deliverables for the annual canvass as well as plans for identifying new potential electors and maintaining the register throughout the year.
- 29 Seek out good practice from other authorities.

Team development

- 30 Engender a collaborative and team spirit culture, undertaking work to build the core team, developing the individual and collective strengths that are apparent and addressing those areas where issues prevent optimum team working.
- 31 Seek out development opportunities, including elections training courses, software training, shadowing other ES teams, to build the core technical skills.
- 32 Involve the team in the development of operational plans and process notes.
- 33 Have regular opportunities to share knowledge, new processes and guidance at team meetings etc.
- 34 Encourage individual team members to visit other local authorities to help understand how best to develop processes that will be of benefit to the electors of Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

- 35 Benchmark with other local authorities to test if the structure remains appropriate, and to build on good practice already developed elsewhere.

Ongoing corporate learning

- 36 A corporate project team be established to consider the ongoing impact the phase one Elections Act 2022 measures, the impact the phase two measures are likely to have, undertake early planning for the PCC and UK Parliamentary general elections, and the impact of the changes to the parliamentary constituency boundaries.
- 37 The ERO/RO, ESM and core Electoral Services team should be encouraged to attend training and development on the Elections Act changes as they arise, and to share that knowledge with the extended leadership team and elected members of both councils.

Other issues

- 38 Careful consideration should be given to attempting to resolve or mitigate the space challenge ahead of the PCC elections in May 2024.



The Association of Electoral Administrators

Founded in 1987, the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) is the professional body representing the interests of electoral administrators in the United Kingdom, working independently of government. Key objectives include fostering the advancement of consistent and efficient administration of electoral processes, raising the profile of electoral administrators and contributing positively to electoral reform.

With 2,000 members, the majority of whom are employed by local authorities to provide electoral registration and election services, the AEA is uniquely placed to comment on the challenges faced by electoral administrators in delivering safe and secure electoral processes to UK citizens.

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Elections Internal Review (Appendix B)

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to summarise the feedback received from colleagues involved in the organisation and running of the local District and Parish Elections held on Thursday 4 May 2023. A total of 4 workshops were facilitated by Will Knights (Customer Insight and Intelligence Officer), Olivia Wicker (Process Improvement Officer), Sharna Baldwin (Digital Project Support Officer) and Gary Allen (Assistant Manager – Customer Operations) during May and June 2023. During the sessions, colleagues were encouraged to share their open and honest feedback about their experience working in the 2023 elections.

Workshop sessions were arranged for the following groups:

- Presiding officers
- Colleagues involved in nominations
- Parish Clerks
- Elections Team
- Customer services team
- Polling inspector written feedback was also captured.

Across all workshops, 20 different members of staff gave their feedback about the elections. Officers were also asked to provide their feedback via a short survey created using Microsoft Forms. This survey was also circulated to a wider audience in order to capture the opinions of those who could not attend the workshops or had further thoughts to add after their sessions. A further 87 responses were received via this survey. Feedback was also received via email in some instances.

Complaints data for the period 1 February 2023 to 31 May 2023 was reviewed by our Customer Liaison Officer, who shared details of one relevant complaint. An additional complaint was received by Electoral Services via the BMSDC Contact Us form on the website. We analysed a total of 50 calls which were received by Customer Services related to the elections on 4th May.

This internal review has been carried out using the [Performance Standards for Returning Officers](#), published by the Electoral Commission in December 2022, as a benchmark for success. The particular areas for concern, highlighted from this review, are shown in red.

Outcome 1: Electoral services are robust and support the delivery of well-run elections

The Electoral Commission advise that meeting the following criteria demonstrates achievement of Outcome 1:

- Events are delivered in accordance with legislation.
- Elections delivered without legal challenge to the administration of the poll.
- **Analysis of team resilience, capability, and capacity.**
- Analysis of feedback on the delivery of polls and any complaints received.

- **Performance against measures and objectives set out in your project plans.**

Outcome 2: Everybody who is eligible and wants to vote is able to do so and has confidence in the voting process

The Electoral Commission advise that meeting the following criteria demonstrates achievement of Outcome 2:

- Evaluation of public awareness activities.
- Analysis of feedback and complaints from eligible, staff, candidates, and agents.
- Analysis of available data relating to voters who have not been able to cast their vote (for example, due to not having appropriate Identification (at relevant polls)).
- No voters are prevented from casting their vote due to inaccessibility of polling station arrangements.

Outcome 3: Everybody who is eligible and wants to stand for election is able to do so and has confidence in the process

The Electoral Commission advise that meeting the following criteria demonstrates achievement of Outcome 3:

- **No errors on the statement of persons nominated or ballot papers**
- **Analysis of feedback and complaints from candidates, agents, and other observers.**

Outcome 4: Everyone can have confidence that the election process is well managed and in the accuracy of the results

The Electoral Commission advise that meeting the following criteria demonstrates achievement of Outcome 4:

- Elections delivered without legal challenge to the administration of the poll.
- **Analysis of feedback and complaints from candidates, agents, and other observers.**
- Election results are accurate and readily available.
- Analysis of police data relating to allegations of electoral fraud/integrity issues.

Summary and recommendations

Based on the feedback received during this review of the 2023 elections, we can identify many areas of good practice. For example, interviewees and survey respondents spoke positively regarding the staff working the elections, with praise towards the collaboration, teamwork, and attitude of those involved. Presiding Officers gave largely positive feedback to the ballot box pick up from Endeavour House, and some of the aspects of the online training. Parish Clerks fed back that those working at the polling stations were organised and demonstrated experience. Positive feedback was also received regarding the implementation of the new voter ID legislation and reported very little disruption to the running of the election as a result of the new requirements. The customer services team praised the Elector8lite system and the FAQs they were provided to help resolve customer calls.

However, there are lessons to be learned from this year's election experience. Upon review of the responses received during our workshops and the survey, we have organised the feedback into key themes: communication, planning and organisation, knowledge and experience, training, and system issues. Key areas for improvement in each of these themes are outlined below, and it is our recommendation that an action plan be put in place to ensure these areas are addressed for the next election period.

Communication

Communication was noted by most of the groups contacted as an area for improvement. It was highlighted that because an election team plan was not provided to the Elections Team, deadlines and responsibilities were not communicated to those involved in nominations. As well as this, colleagues at the count were not given safety information or a structure of the day. There was also criticism of the communication during the delivery of ballot boxes to Wherstead park, and during the count process itself. This lack of communication caused delays in hitting election milestones, and left staff feeling stressed and confused.

Some clerks also criticised the level of communication they received from the elections team, especially around the mistakes in the first publication in nominations. An improved communications plan and engagement with stakeholders is recommended to ensure key individuals are kept updated and informed. The communication plan, in addition to a robust and comprehensive election delivery plan, will ensure that all staff understand their roles and responsibilities, as well as key milestones and requirements for the election delivery.

Planning and organisation

Improvements to the planning of the election was also suggested as an area for improvement. For example, staff involved in the nominations process expressed that the lack of notice they were given for where they needed to work negatively impacted on their other duties. The forward planning of the nominations process was criticised, and it is suggested that a work plan and test for the process is prepared

well in advance to ensure staff are confident in the process, and that potential system issues can be spotted beforehand.

Presiding officers fed back that on election day their boxes did not always contain all the relevant materials, and the instructions and paperwork were confusing and in some cases contradictory. It is recommended that more time is spent in advance to ensure all materials for presiding officers on the day is clear and consistent, and that officers have everything they need to effectively perform their duties.

Colleagues involved in the verification and count expressed that the process felt at times disorganised, and this led to staff working long hours and a perceived delay in the announcement of the results. Improved communication of the plan and coordination of staff during this process would have increased its efficiency.

It was highlighted in multiple workshop sessions that the planning of the elections should begin well in advance of the election date. It is recommended that doing a test election in advance would be a useful way to try out delivery plans, spot errors, identify risks and ensure preparedness for the real election.

Creating a comprehensive project plan for the elections team to work from that is clear and accessible is also recommended, to ensure that every member of the team knows what needs to be done, when deadlines are, and who is responsible for delivery.

Knowledge and experience

A key concern raised by the Elections Team was regarding the inexperience of the current team. They did not feel they had received adequate training and support from management during the elections process and had to instead rely on an experienced external member of elections staff for help and advice. They argued that too much responsibility fell to a part time member of the team to coordinate the training process.

In order to prevent the same issues repeating in future elections, the Elections Team highlighted a requirement for more training for the team to address the current skills gaps. This would help give members of the team greater confidence in the delivery of future elections, as they expressed concerns that they would otherwise need to rely on external support again in the future.

It must also be noted that there were a large number of first-time presiding officers and inspectors during this election, and more support or specific training may have been helpful for these individuals. There were instances of experienced officers leading relatively small polling stations, whilst inexperienced officers managed busier ones. Better coordination of experienced officers to key areas may improve efficiency on the day.

Training

The need for more training was expressed by the Elections Team and colleagues involved in nominations. In addition, presiding officers felt the training they received could be improved in order to better prepare them for election day. There were many

recommendations for improvements to training provided by those involved in the elections, including:

- Running a test election in advance to train officers and identify any risk areas.
- Having in person training sessions in addition to the online training for presiding officers.
- Allowing the opportunity to ask questions.
- Greater focus on completion of necessary forms.
- Delivering training further in advance.
- Including information regarding requirements for specific polling stations, where applicable.

Whilst there was positive feedback about the online training, many felt having some face-to-face training would also have been beneficial, especially for new presiding officers, to enable them to clarify and ask questions of the elections team, particularly with the new voter ID requirements which many officers were worried about before the election. Some also fed back access to the online training should have been given earlier to enable more time to complete the training and ask questions before the election.

System Issues

The nominations group showed frustration with the elections software, as well as the system used for appointments. They stated that the elections software caused errors and delays in the process, as the team had to complete manual checking of the inputted information once it was saved. Mistakes in the initial publication of nominations, and postal ballot papers in one parish ward can be partly attributed to issues with the system. These mistakes caused reputational damage and required large amounts of officer time to resolve, involving officers outside of the elections team. It was also suggested that more IT equipment (such as laptops) would make the process more time efficient. It would be beneficial to complete a review of the current system and escalate concerns to the system supplier ahead of the next election in order to reduce this risk.

Feedback from the nominations group suggested that the appointments system needs refinements in order to achieve its full benefits. For example, eliminating the possibility of booking multiple appointments in the same timeslot, and allowing for greater flexibility in the duration of appointments. Improving the appointment system for nominations with these refinements is recommended to ensure the nominations process runs more smoothly in the future.

Next Steps and Action Plan

Based upon our summary and recommendations, we propose that a comprehensive action plan is developed over July so that lessons are learned, and appropriate steps are taken to ensure the continuous improvement of electoral services.

This action plan should be created with and owned by the Elections Team, alongside the wider corporate body, with clear commitments and responsibilities for its implementation. We propose the following actions should be included within it:

Project Management and Process Mapping

We need to ensure effective project management, and that key elections processes are run effectively.

- Draft a comprehensive and robust elections team plan with key milestones, actions, dates, and responsibilities that can be used by the Elections and wider project team. Ensure it is drafted well ahead of the next election so it may be refined iteratively.
- Map the changes in elections legislation to ensure that we are fully prepared for the next election and have appropriate communication and support in relation to this.
- Process map the key election processes (e.g. nominations process, postal vote processing) to ensure that the Elections team and related teams understand the processes, steps and what needs to be done at each stage.
- Plan and conduct a 'test' election well before the next election period, to ensure business continuity and that processes and plans are robust.
- Create a comprehensive risk register, capturing all potential risks and issues faced, ensuring they have all been properly documented and that appropriate mitigations have been identified and implemented as a tool to proactively manage the project.

Communications and Engagement

- Create a comprehensive communications plan that spans the lifecycle of the elections process to provide a view of ongoing activities to help with the smooth running of future elections. Ensure that communications are informative and consistent and are given to appropriate stakeholders at the right time.
- Review key stakeholder groups, both internal and external, and ensure that all stakeholders are captured within the communications plan.
- Communications should be sent after this election review to those who worked in the latest local elections, thanking them for their feedback and hard work. This is to ensure recognition of efforts and that an appropriate number of staff will volunteer again to work in the next election period.
- Communication of this review (together with the external review commissioned from the AEA) and the actions being taken, should be sent to all key stakeholders.

Resource

- Complete a polling station review to ensure that all venues chosen are appropriate in terms of accessibility. Work with our partner groups, such as the Disability Forum and the Shaw Trust, who could support with this. This will help us to ensure venues are appropriate and we are aware of any additional resources that may be required (e.g. lighting, coins for meters or poor phone signal).
- Work with existing Presiding Officers to create short information packs for each polling station to help Presiding Officers set up, and to provide key information that may need to be known about each location.
- Review staff numbers required for each election process (e.g. nominations, count) and ensure a robust recruitment plan is drafted ahead of the election period.
- Ensure appropriate allocation of staff to each polling station; try to ensure more experienced staff are assigned to larger or busier stations, and that the number of poll staff is appropriate for each location.

Training and Development

- Review the online training available to staff ahead of the elections to ensure that any additional training materials can be planned out and documented.
- Create a training plan ahead of the next election, explore the possibility to add in-person or specific training to first-time presiding officers, poll clerks, count supervisors or those who may need additional support.
- Create a training and development plan to support the ongoing development of the Elections team, perhaps with the offer of external mentors and support to share best practice.
- Training and development of all support staff including Customer Operations to ensure that more demand can be resolved at the first point of contact.

IT

- Review the issues experienced with the elections system and ensure these are raised and resolved ahead of the next election.
- Create a training plan for those that need to utilise the system to ensure appropriate levels of skill and confidence.
- Using feedback from those involved with nominations, look to improve upon the appointment booking system to ensure that it works as well as possible for the team.