

## **BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of the meeting of the **BABERGH COUNCIL** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Tuesday, 21 November 2023

### **PRESENT:**

Councillor: Elisabeth Malvisi (Chair)

Councillors:	Peter Beer	David Busby
	Jane Carruthers	Jessie Carter
	Paul Clover	Helen Davies
	Sallie Davies	Derek Davis
	Simon Dowling (Vice-Chair)	Kathryn Grandon
	Ruth Hendry	Michael Holt
	Bryn Hurren	Leigh Jamieson
	Alastair McCraw	Mary McLaren
	Mark Newman	Adrian Osborne
	Alison Owen	Lee Parker
	Stephen Plumb	Daniel Potter
	Isabelle Reece	Tim Regester
	Brian Riley	Laura Smith
	John Ward	John Whyman

### **In attendance:**

Officers: Chief Executive (AC)  
Deputy Chief Executive (KN)  
Director – Building and Planning Control (TB)  
Interim Monitoring Officer and Corporate Manager – Law and Governance (JR)  
Corporate Manager – Strategic Planning (RH)  
Assistant Manager – Governance (HH)

### **Apologies:**

Margaret Maybury  
John Nunn  
Deborah Saw

## **62 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS**

- 62.1 The Monitoring Officer granted dispensations for all Councillors in respect of Paper BC/23/27 Joint Local Development Scheme 2023-2026, and Paper BC/23/28 Joint Local Plan.
- 62.2 There were no declarations of interests from Councillors.

**63 BC/23/25 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 OCTOBER 2023**

**It was RESOLVED:-**

**That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2023 be confirmed and signed as a true record.**

**64 BC/23/26 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND LEADER**

64.1 The Chair referred Councillors to Paper BC/23/26 for noting.

64.2 The Chair invited the Acting Leader of the Council to make his announcements.

64.3 Councillor Ward made the following announcements:

“We were pleased to hear we have been awarded funding of £115,000 to help offset increased utility costs at Hadleigh Pool & Leisure. The successful bid came from the Sport England Phase 1 Swimming Pool Grants funding. Unfortunately, a first-round bid for funding to help the Kingfisher Leisure Centre in Sudbury was unsuccessful. As councillors will know, swimming pools are particularly dependent on energy use, so inflation and soaring energy bills have put leisure providers under increasing financial pressure. We obviously welcome this funding, and hope for further support in the second round for all our pools and leisure centres facing the same challenge.

It is a month since severe flooding hit a number of our communities, and for many of our residents the recovery continues. The Government has announced grants for homes and businesses that were impacted - £500 for homes, and £2,500 for businesses – to assist with initial recovery costs. Babergh District Council has been working with neighbouring districts and Suffolk County Council to get these grants to those eligible as quickly as we can. We will be able to start distributing funding before the end of this month. I would like to remind everyone that all reports of property flooding need to be submitted via the Suffolk County Council website.

You may have seen the announcement earlier today that we have launched a new ‘Living Well in Winter’ grant to help communities tackle issues like social isolation and the need for ‘warm spaces’ this winter. The funding means that the councils can help communities tackle social isolation and address the choice for some residents of whether to heat or eat this winter as the cost-of-living crisis continues to take its toll. Community groups can apply for a minimum of £500 and a maximum of £2,000. Applications are now open and can be submitted until Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> December.

You will all probably be aware now that the Suffolk Borough and District Leaders wrote an open letter of support to the leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council, Councillor Bridget Smith, regarding their trial of a four-day working week. This is not about the merits or otherwise of a 4-day week, but it is about local autonomy. This is a matter for a local authority alone and the government shouldn't intervene: it sets a dangerous precedent. Councils must be allowed to make their own informed decisions. The decision to serve a Best Value Notice is heavy-handed and tantamount to bullying. The council must now answer up to 80 questions totalling 186 individual requests from government every week, which will be very time-consuming and costly to do. They also have to provide cost and performance data going back to 2018. It is a misuse of the Best Value Notice process and no evidence that one is necessary has been provided. Councillor Smith was very grateful for our support and thanked us for what she said was an incredibly kind and helpful letter.

You will have received an email from Councillor James Giles of the Royal Borough of Kingston at the weekend asking you to sign a letter regarding the situation in Gaza on behalf of an organisation called Councillors for a Ceasefire. The tone of the email has caused a lot of worry and fear for many, and the LGA chairman, Councillor Shaun Davies, has sent out an urgent message reassuring us that no contact data was supplied by the LGA. However, I know that some of you are concerned by the small print at the end of the email, which states 'You are receiving this email because you opted in via our website', and I have written to Councillor Shaun Davies to seek clarification. This is further complicated by Councillor Giles sending his email from his Kingston email address. I will update you when I have further information."

64.3 Councillor Holt commented that not all Members were consulted on the letter sent to South Cambridgeshire District Council and requested or this to happen for future correspondence to confirm Members' agreement.

**65 TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF PETITIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**

65.1 None received.

**66 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**

66.1 None received.

**67 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**

**Question 1**

**Councillor Beer to Councillor Sallie Davies, Cabinet Member for Planning**

Our mission is to “Provide strong, proud and inspirational leadership; striving for excellence, and together building great communities for everyone to live, work, visit and invest in”.

Can the Cabinet Member please inform us how many homes have the Planning Committee approved for construction since 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023 and similarly how many had been occupied?

### **Response from Councillor Sallie Davies, Cabinet Member for Planning**

Babergh’s Planning Committee have had 2 applications for housing since the election in May 2023, one for a single dwelling and one for 43 dwellings, both were refused. However, we have issued planning permission for over 800 dwellings since the election and planning officers under delegated powers have approved 64 dwellings.

### **Supplementary question from Councillor Beer**

If we have not approved any since May, I believe in our policy it is 416 that Babergh is expected to provide towards the Governments total, is this correct and at the rate we are going on is this a minimum because the 880 are nothing to do with the question asked.

### **Response from Councillor Sallie Davies**

It’s not that we haven’t approved any since the elections, Planning Officers have approved 64 dwellings since the election. For the year April to March 2023 there were over 600 completions, that’s against the annual requirement of 416 as you rightly said. Picking up the second part of your question about occupation, we’ve seen 347 homes completed for occupation since the election.

### **Question 2**

### **Councillor Riley to Councillor Ward, Acting Leader of the Council**

Babergh-Mid Suffolk are advertising for a political assistant to support the new Green Party administration at an exciting time for Mid Suffolk District Council.

Would you kindly confirm that no costs for this post will fall upon the taxpayers and residents of Babergh District Council and that any recruitment by Babergh District Council for a similar post will come to full council for approval prior to the post being advertised.

### **Response from Councillor Ward, Acting Leader of the Council**

In response to the first part of your question, although the two Councils are working together in a very successful partnership, we are separate Councils with our own budgets and spending programmes. The political assistant is solely a Mid Suffolk matter and will be covered within their budget.

No part of it will be financed by Babergh. Just as the Mid Suffolk report went to their Council in September, the same would apply to us should it be proposed at Babergh. I must stress at this point that we have no plans to follow. I am not convinced of its value and we can't afford it.

**68 BC/23/27 BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK JOINT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2023-2026**

- 68.1 The Chair invited Councillor Sallie Davies, Cabinet Member for Planning, to introduce Paper BC/23/27, Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Development Scheme 2023-2026.
- 68.2 Councillor Sallie Davies introduced the report to Members and provided an overview of the contents of the report including the supplementary planning documents. Councillor Davies then **PROPOSED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.
- 68.3 Councillor Ward **SECONDED** the recommendations.
- 68.4 In response to a question from Councillor Busby regarding the completion dates for the scheme, Councillor Sallie Davies confirmed that the scheme would be submitted to the planning inspector in June 2025 and would be ready for adoption in December 2026.
- 68.5 Councillor Ward stressed the importance of the document and the amount of work which had been undertaken, he stated that a high degree of management would be required to avoid slippage in the timetable.
- 68.6 Councillor Holt commented that a lot of the details contained in the proposed scheme would have implications for both existing Neighbourhood Plans and those currently being developed. Councillor Holt urged all officers to liaise with Parish Councils to ensure they are kept up to date with all relevant information.
- 68.7 Councillor Sallie Davies assured Members that officers were aware of the importance of the timetable, and the implications for Neighbourhood Plans.

By a unanimous vote of 29 votes for.

**It was RESOLVED:**

**That the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Development Scheme 2023-2026 (November 2023) (Appendix A of the report) is agreed and brought into effect from 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023 in Babergh.**

- 69.1 Councillor Sallie Davies, Cabinet Member for Planning, introduced Paper BC/23/28 Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan for Adoption, outlining the work which had taken place in preparing the plan. Councillor Sallie Davies thanked the officers involved, and the previous Cabinet Member for Planning, Councillor Clive Arthey.
- 69.2 Councillor Sallie Davies **PROPOSED** the recommendations. Councillor Ward **SECONDED** the motion.
- 69.3 Councillor Potter referred to the biodiversity net gain target and asked what, if anything, would prevent the target of 20% being achieved.
- 69.4 Councillor Sallie Davies advised that the minimum requirement for net gain in new developments was 10%, and that the Plan would seek to achieve the 20% target via the Supplementary Planning Documents on Biodiversity and Trees.
- 69.5 Councillor Riley asked whether it could be acknowledged that there would be deficit from previous years, and requested confirmation that it was the intention to make Babergh an affluent area and not living beyond its means.
- 69.6 In response, the Director for Planning and Building Control advised that the Plan aimed to deliver sustainable growth throughout the Plan period, and that the Council had delivered, through planning permissions, a significant number of the dwellings required across the Plan period, and confirmed he was confident that Babergh District Council would be able to achieve the housing needs required.
- 69.7 Councillor Holt commented that although he welcomed Part 1 of the Joint Local Plan, the plan could not be considered a success as it was incomplete and Part 2 of the Plan was still to be completed.
- 69.8 Councillor Jamieson agreed that the Plan was not perfect and had taken a considerable amount of time however he was in support of the Plan.
- 69.9 Councillor Ward highlighted the difficulty of preparing the Plan, and the examination process, and commented that the importance of the policies contained in Part 1 must not be diminished. Councillor Ward went on to state that this was a momentous moment for both Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils and provided clarity of the planning policies. Councillor Ward expressed his gratitude to Councillor Clive Arthey for his work on the Joint Local Plan.
- 69.10 Councillor Derek Davis endorsed the comments made by Councillor Ward regarding Councillor Arthey, he commented that the next stage was to ensure that the hard work undertaken by the officers was not wasted and that Members were fully trained and using the plan to its full advantage.

- 69.11 Councillor McCraw referred to the issue of the Plan being in two parts and felt that there were advantages to this approach in that it provided time to continue developing the supplementary planning documents and enabled the current Members to contribute to these.
- 69.12 Councillor Busby raised concerns with the process, in particular the time it would take to complete Part 2 of the Plan, commenting that there was desperate need for social housing throughout the district which may not be able to be delivered through the existing approved applications.
- 69.13 Councillor Riley commented that the Council should be working with the Private Sector, and that the Plan needed to ensure that the Council was open for business and made Babergh an attractive place to be.
- 69.14 The Director for Planning and Building Control provided clarification that should the Plan be approved, this would not preclude Committee Members from granting planning permissions in accordance with the policies within Part 1 of the Plan without Part 2 being approved.
- 69.15 Councillor Beer sought assurance that better skills and employment opportunities for residents were being encouraged to enable them to afford properties in the District.
- 69.16 In response, Councillor Derek Davis, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, advised that every effort was being made for regeneration sites to be opened, and agreed that there was a need to develop skills and provide a good level of wages to enable people to afford homes.
- 69.17 Councillor Potter welcomed the policies relating to Houseboat dwellers in Part 2 of the plan, and the policies on air quality relating to AONB sites.

By a unanimous vote of 29 votes for.

**It was RESOLVED:**

**That the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan DPD (November 2023) (Appendix A) be approved for adoption under Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning Act (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).**

**70 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS**

70.1 There were no changes to placings.

**71 MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

71.1 None received.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 6.17 pm.

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Chair