

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, 20 February 2024

PRESENT:

Councillor: Elisabeth Malvisi (Chair)

Councillors:	Peter Beer	David Busby
	Jane Carruthers	Jessie Carter
	Paul Clover	Helen Davies
	Sallie Davies	Derek Davis
	Simon Dowling (Deputy Chair)	Kathryn Grandon
	Ruth Hendry	Michael Holt
	Leigh Jamieson	Margaret Maybury
	Alastair McCraw	Mary McLaren
	Mark Newman	John Nunn
	Adrian Osborne	Lee Parker
	Stephen Plumb	Daniel Potter
	Isabelle Reece	Tim Register
	Brian Riley	Deborah Saw
	Laura Smith	John Ward
	John Whyman	

In attendance:

Officers:

- Chief Executive (AC)
- Interim Monitoring Officer (JR)
- Director – Housing (Virtual) (DF)
- Director – Planning and Building Control (TB)
- Director – Corporate Services (SW)
- Director – Property, Development, and Regeneration (EA)
- Director – Operations and Climate Change (ME)
- Head of the Councils' Companies and Development (HB)
- Head of Strategic Policy, Performance, Insight & Risk (JH)
- Head of Housing Solutions (AAY)
- Head of Finance, Commissioning, and Procurement (Virtual) (KW)
- Shared Revenue Partnership Operations Manager (AW)
- Assistant Manager – Financial Accountant (Virtual) (MH)
- Senior Finance Business Partner (SC)
- Finance Business Partner (JS)
- Head of Internal Audit (JS)

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Bryn Hurren
Alison Owen

86 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

86.1 The Monitoring Officer granted a dispensation to all Councillors in regards to Papers BC/23/38 and BC/23/39.

86.2 There were no declarations of interests by Councillors.

87 BC/23/35 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2024

87.1 Councillor Maybury raised in respect of point 83.3, that it was Councillor Reece who had made comments about support for farmers and herself who had expressed sympathies to all affected by the recent flooding.

87.2 Councillor Holt raised in respect of point 80.11, that Councillor Ward was yet to provide Members with the accurate figures for deferred payments as promised.

It was RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2024 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

88 BC/23/36 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR AND LEADER

88.1 The Chair referred Members to Paper BC/23/36 for noting.

88.2 Councillor Ward, Acting Leader for Babergh District Council, made the following announcements:

Shortlisted for UK Council of the Year

I'm delighted to announce that Babergh and MS have been named a finalist for UK Council of the Year at the prestigious iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards 2024.

Although we have in the past won iESE awards in 2020, 2021 and last year, this is no mean feat and it is fantastic recognition for everyone's hard work, innovation and dedication. We face many challenges in local government, but our teams always step up to deliver for residents and communities.

The awards ceremony is on 6th March in London, and I am sure we all have our fingers crossed.

I would also like to congratulate our Building Control team, who have won a national industry award for their work on Black Pheasant Barn in Sudbury.

Deadline for locality awards

I am sure all councillors are aware, but I would like to remind you that we have until 22nd March to spend any remaining locality award budgets. Our websites contain guidance as to how locality funding can be spent, including the full eligibility criteria and a breakdown of eligible projects.

At the end of the financial year, our communications team will be doing a broad celebration of all the ways in which you all have helped communities using the awards.

Retrofit solutions conference

I would like to raise awareness of a free event focused on making Suffolk's older homes more energy efficient, which takes place at The Hold in Ipswich on 6th March.

The Retrofit Solutions Conference is open to homeowners, landlords and building professionals. It will feature case studies and expert advice on providing innovative retrofit solutions to help increase energy efficiency in properties of all types.

You can sign up on the Green Suffolk website.

Holton Litter Pick

Finally, I just want to let you all know about the litter picking that residents of one of my parishes, Holton St. Mary, have been doing. They have compiled a full audit of everything they collected in 2023 and it is quite a haul: in total, they collected 3,320 litres of all sorts of rubbish, some quite revolting.

It is depressing to see the amount and also the nature of the litter discarded. However, it is also inspiring to know that the residents of Holton St. Mary really care about their community and are prepared to put in so much effort to keep it clean and tidy.

I am sure the problem is replicated in most of our communities and we must do all we can to help our residents combat this plague.

89 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

89.1 None received.

90 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

90.1 The Chair invited Councillor Riley to ask his question.

Councillor Riley to Councillor John Ward, Acting Leader of the Council

What is the split between ourselves and Mid Suffolk for the cost of the chief executive e.g., salary, allowances, pension provision etc?

Response from Councillor Ward, Acting Leader of the Council

All officers work for both councils and apportionment is generally 50:50. Any exceptions to this are specified by service area in the Staff Cost Sharing Addendum to the Inter-authority Agreement. The splits are reviewed annually, based on demand during the year, to ensure that they remain correct.

Specifically, I can confirm that all SLT costs, including the chief executive, are split 50:50 between Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

This cost sharing is the principal benefit of our successful working together partnership, which is now in its 13th year of delivering valuable savings for both councils.

Supplementary question from Councillor Riley

The population of Babergh is 92,000 and the population of Mid Suffolk is 102,000. On the basis that we split Senior Leadership Team costs on a population basis, it means that Babergh are subsidising Mid Suffolk's Senior Leadership Team costs by 11%.

On what basis do we have to split these costs down the middle when Mid Suffolk absorbs more of the time and energy than Babergh does and yet we are paying for it?

Response from Councillor Ward

I refute the assertion about the Senior Leadership Team - they work equally for both councils.

91 BC/23/37 EMPTY HOMES AND SECOND HOMES POLICY

91.1 The Chair invited Councillor Carter, Cabinet Member for Housing, to introduce Paper BC/23/37.

91.2 Councillor Carter introduced Paper BC/23/37 to Members outlining its purpose and **PROPOSED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

91.3 Councillor Derek Davis **SECONDED** the proposal.

91.4 Councillor Beer queried what a Class F Council Tax exemption was. The Shared Revenue Partnership Operations Manager responded that a Class F exemption was one that dealt specifically with properties undergoing probate.

- 91.5 Councillor Holt queried whether the upcoming regulations to cover exceptions to premiums was being introduced this year or in 2025. The Shared Revenue Partnership Operations Manager responded that the regulations would be introduced this year.
- 91.6 Councillor Jamieson questioned what provisions were in place for homes that were empty due to the owners being taken into long-term care. The Shared Revenue Partnership Operations Manager responded that there were appropriate exemptions within the policy that covered these situations.
- 91.7 Councillor Holt questioned whether the policy was being introduced to generate more income for the Council or for more houses to be put back on to the market for tenants. The Cabinet Member for Housing responded that the main aim of the policy was to bring more houses back into use.
- 91.8 Councillor Reece queried how it was determined that a property is a second home. The Shared Revenue Partnership Operations Manager responded that second homes are identified through the property not being designated as an owner's primary residence and stated that these properties are usually fully furnished.
- 91.9 Councillor Maybury questioned whether delegated powers within the policy were awarded to the Director for Housing and the Cabinet Member, as stated in the recommendations, or the Section 151 officer, as stated in the report. The Shared Revenue Partnership Operations Manager responded that this was an error in the draft policy and that delegated powers were issued as per the recommendations.
- 91.10 Councillor Maybury further questioned whether other council tax payers would be funding these reductions and exemptions. The Shared Revenue Partnership Operations Manager responded that there was a discretion within the policy for exceptional cases where premiums were deemed not to be appropriate and that this was funded through the Council's general fund when this specific clause was activated.

By a vote of 24 For and 5 Against

It was RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That Council approve the empty homes and second homes premiums policy for 2024-25 attached in Appendix A of the report.**
- 1.2 That Council delegate authority to the Director of Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to make technical amendments to the policy to ensure it meets the criteria set by Government and the Council.**

92 BC/23/38 GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2024-2025 AND FOUR-YEAR OUTLOOK

- 92.1 The Chair invited Councillor Ward, Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments, to introduce Paper BC/23/38.

- 92.2 Councillor Ward introduced Paper BC/23/38 to Members outlining its purpose and **PROPOSED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.
- 92.3 Councillor Busby **SECONDED** the proposal.
- 92.4 The Chair invited Councillor Maybury, Leader of the Opposition, to make a representation to Paper BC/23/38.
- 92.5 Councillor Maybury spoke to Paper BC/23/38 and expressed her Party's concerns about the figures contained in the report.
- 92.6 Councillor Holt questioned whether the Babergh Growth project should be postponed to ascertain a better understanding of its potential implications on the budget in upcoming years. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments responded that any further postponement of this project would incur significant costs.
- 92.7 Councillor Maybury queried if the Council was putting money into the Quiet Lanes Suffolk project. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments responded that this was not the case.
- 92.8 Councillor McLaren queried whether there was a succession plan programme in place to support internal recruitment and career development in relation to the vacancy management factor. The Chief Executive responded that this support was in place.
- 92.9 Councillor Riley questioned why expenditure for the Senior Leadership Team had increased. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments responded that this increase was largely due to the increase in the Team's salaries, as agreed by the Council in 2023, and that an imminent reduction in the size of the Team would result in savings.
- 92.10 Councillor Beer asked what the £12.3m spent on staff costs equated to in terms of percentage of total expenditure. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments responded that this equated to 50%, a reduction of 1% from the 2023/24 budget.
- 92.11 Councillor Holt queried if there was assurance that CIFCO would be able to make their repayments for upcoming years. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments responded that the CIFCO board had issued a guarantee that full repayments would be made annually.
- 92.12 Councillor Parker asked for clarification on the split between short and long term borrowing on CIFCO. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments responded that this information would be provided outside of the meeting.

- 92.13 Councillor Parker also queried the Roadside Workspace Development and what this entailed. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments responded that this was a postponed development in Hadleigh along the A1071.
- 92.14 Councillor Jamieson asked for reassurance that the problems faced when putting together the 2024/25 budgets would be identified and solved ahead of next year's budget. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments responded that work would be starting on the 2025/26 budgets immediately and that changes to how the budgets were pulled together were already being planned.
- 92.15 Councillor Clover queried the reasons for a decrease in planning income. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments responded that there had been a reduction in the number of major developments being brought forward to the Council.
- 92.16 Councillor Beer criticised the decision to borrow £15m to fund ongoing projects and the proposed raise in council tax.
- 92.17 Councillor McCraw spoke about tax burden on a national scale and compared the proposed increase in the Council's council tax to that of Suffolk County Council.
- 92.18 Councillor Holt expressed concern for the impact of ongoing projects, such as CIFCO and the depot, on the future budgets.
- 92.19 Councillor Jamieson raised the need for more sufficient funding and financial support to the Councils, and all local authorities, from the national government.
- 92.20 Councillor Ward provided reassurance for the borrowing taking place as part of the budget and clarified that council tax only funds 28% of the budget – all other expenditure must be covered by alternate income.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19.3, the vote was recorded as follows:

For	Against	Abstain
David Busby	Peter Beer	Isabelle Reece
Jane Carruthers	Paul Clover	
Jessie Carter	Michael Holt	
Derek Davis	Margaret Maybury	
Helen Davies	Mark Newman	
Sallie Davies	Brian Riley	
Simon Dowling		
Kathryn Grandon		
Ruth Hendry		
Leigh Jamieson		

Alastair McCraw		
Mary McLaren		
Elisabeth Malvisi		
John Nunn		
Adrian Osborne		
Lee Parker		
Stephen Plumb		
Daniel Potter		
Tim Regester		
Deborah Saw		
Laura Smith		
John Ward		
John Whyman		
TOTAL 23	TOTAL 6	TOTAL 1

By 23 votes for, 6 votes against and 1 abstention

It was RESOLVED:

1.1 That Council approves:

(a) The General Fund Budget proposals comprising:

- the 2024/5 revenue budget estimates as set out in Table 1 including the savings proposed in Table 3.
- the options proposed for funding the 2023/24 budget and to establish new reserves as set out in Appendix A.
- the 2024/25 to 2027/28 capital programme and it's funding as set out in Appendix B.
- the movement in, and creation of, reserves as set out in table 7.

(b) A 2.99% increase in the Band D Council Tax for 2024/25 from £182.64 to £188.10 per annum, an increase of £5.43 or 10p per week.

(c) The new income bands and contribution rates for the 2024/25 100% Local Council Tax Reduction (Working Age) Scheme as set out in Table 5.

(d) The 2024/25 Council Tax resolution set out in Appendix C.

1.2 The Council notes:

(e) The Medium-Term forecast set out in Table 9.

(f) The section 25 report on the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves in Appendix D.

93 BC/23/39 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) 2024/25 BUDGET

- 93.1 A short break was taken between 7:10pm and 7:23pm before the commencement of Paper BC/23/39.
- 93.2 The Chair invited Councillor Ward, Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments, to introduce Paper BC/23/39.
- 93.3 Councillor Ward introduced Paper BC/23/39 to Members outlining its purpose and **PROPOSED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.
- 93.4 Councillor Saw **SECONDED** the proposal.
- 93.5 Councillor Maybury requested clarification on recommendation G. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Assets, and Investments responded that the PWLB loan was due to be repaid in 2024/25 and that the recommendation referred to agreeing to repay this rather than taking out a new PWLB loan and refinancing.
- 93.6 Councillor Hendry asked if the Cabinet Member for Housing could provide the Council with assurance that an increase in rent would come hand-in-hand with improvements to services and repairs of properties. Councillor Carter, Cabinet Member for Housing, responded that the condition of current housing stock was poor due to years of systemic underfunding and that this increase in rent would be put directly into improving the condition of these houses as a top priority.
- 93.7 Councillor McLaren questioned what support was in place for tenants that are not in receipt of Universal Credit and fall outside the safety net. The Director for Housing responded that the Council employed financial inclusion officers who were assessing tenants' situations and were able to assist with budgeting.
- 93.8 Councillor Maybury queried how many properties currently had an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of E or below. The Director for Housing responded that as part of the energy retrofit programme the plan was to retrofit 100 properties with around 170 properties in Babergh currently receiving an EPC rating of E or below.
- 93.9 Councillor Maybury further questioned if the Government were still planning on removing leaseholds. The Director for Housing responded that this was not the case.
- 93.10 Councillor Beer requested the average timeframe between a tenant reporting an issue in their property and the completion of any necessary repairs. The Cabinet Member for Housing responded that she did not have this figure to hand but that a recent change of contractors would mean that repairs would happen quicker with the aim of a reporting to completion timeline being 14 days maximum.

- 93.11 Councillor Holt questioned what was constituting the high costs of roofing under planned maintenance and response. The Director for Housing responded that the housing department has a 30 year plan of proposed works and that there was a significant amount of aged roofs needing immediate repair that needed to be spread across the first 5 years of the delivery of this plan.
- 93.12 Councillor Holt further questioned how many properties currently had storage heaters. The Director for Housing responded that this figure would be identified and communicated outside of the meeting.
- 93.13 Councillor Holt requested for councillors to receive frequent updates about the properties in their wards scheduled for repairs and the proposed timescales for completing these.
- 93.14 Councillor Maybury asked if future reports could include a consistent method of reporting figures and timescales.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19.3, the vote was recorded as follows:

For	Against	Abstain
Jane Carruthers	Peter Beer	Daniel Potter
Jessie Carter	Margaret Maybury	Isabelle Reece
Paul Clover	Brian Riley	
Derek Davis		
Helen Davies		
Sallie Davies		
Simon Dowling		
Kathryn Grandon		
Ruth Hendry		
Michael Holt		
Leigh Jamieson		
Alistair McCraw		
Mary McLaren		
Elisabeth Malvisi		
Mark Newman		
John Nunn		
Adrian Osborne		
Lee Parker		
Stephen Plumb		
Tim Register		
Deborah Saw		
Laura Smith		
John Ward		
John Whyman		
TOTAL 24	TOTAL 3	TOTAL 2

By 24 votes For, 3 votes Against and 2 abstentions

It was **RESOLVED**:

1.1 That Council approves:

- (a) The HRA Budget proposal proposals for 2024/25 set out in this report.
- (b) That a CPI + 1% increase of 7.7% for social rents, equivalent to an average rent increase of £7.92 and a RPI + 0.5% (9.4%) increase for affordable rent of £11.13, a week to be implemented.
- (c) That the RPI increase of 8.9% in garage rents, equivalent to an average rent increase of £3.83 or £4.71 (private rental), a month be implemented.
- (d) That an increase for sheltered housing service charges, equivalent to £49.12 a month, be implemented.
- (e) That an increase for sheltered housing utility charges, equivalent to £28.95 a month, be implemented, following no utility increase for 3 years from (2019/20).
- (f) That in principle, Right to Buy (RTB) receipts should be retained within the Housing Revenue Account, to enable continued development and acquisition of new council dwellings.
- (g) That a £6m PWLB loan due to be repaid in 2024/25 be repaid rather than refinancing at a higher interest rate.
- (h) That the Revenue Contribution to Capital is increased from £4.48m to £5.572m.

94 BC/23/40 JOINT CAPITAL, INVESTMENT AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES 2024-2025

- 94.1 The Chair invited Councillor Saw to introduce Paper BC/23/40 in the absence of Councillor Hurren, Co-Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee.
- 94.2 Councillor Saw introduced Paper BC/23/40 to Members outlining its purpose and **PROPOSED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.
- 94.3 Councillor Register **SECONDED** the proposal.
- 94.4 Councillor Riley questioned if the £5.15m increase in the Council's Capital Financing Requirement was linked to the development at Corks Lane. The Corporate Manager for Finance, Commissioning, and Procurement responded that the Capital Financing Requirement relates to the level of indebtedness that the Council has and is forecasted to hold and that it is a function of how much the Council wishes to borrow through the capital programme.

- 94.5 Councillor Holt queried how much interest would be paid on the £9.2m loan to Babergh Growth for the delivery of houses at Corks Lane in Hadleigh. The Corporate Manager for Finance, Commissioning, and Procurement responded that there was currently a 5.06% interest rate on any borrowing as advised by Arlingclose.
- 94.6 Councillor Riley queried what factors were driving the increase in outstanding borrowing forecasted over the next 3 years. The Corporate Manager for Finance, Commissioning, and Procurement responded that the main factors were more investments in the capital programme, financing existing debt, or more short term borrowing to keep the Council liquid.
- 94.7 Councillor Holt commented that future reports should include Babergh information only and not incorporate Mid Suffolk figures and projects.

By a vote of 24 For and 5 Against

It was RESOLVED:

That the following be approved:

- 1.1 The Joint Capital Strategy for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28, including the Prudential Indicators, as set out in Appendix A.**
- 1.2 The Joint Investment Strategy for service and commercial investments for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28, as set out in Appendix B.**
- 1.3 The Joint Treasury Management Strategy for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28, including the Joint Annual Investment Strategy as set out in Appendix C.**
- 1.4 The Joint Treasury Management Indicators as set out in Appendix D.**
- 1.5 The Joint Treasury Management Policy Statement as set out in Appendix G.**
- 1.6 The Joint Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement as set out in Appendix H.**
- 1.7 The amendment to the 2023/24 Joint Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement, also set out in Appendix H.**
- 1.8 That the key factors and information relating to and affecting treasury management activities set out in Appendices E, F and I be noted.**
- 1.9 That Workshops to inform and guide the evolution of the Councils investment portfolio be scheduled.**

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

- 95.1 The Chair informed Members that a validated petition had been received and would be debated on as per the Council's petition scheme.

96 PETITION FOR DEBATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COUNCIL'S PETITION SCHEME

96.1 The Chair read out the following petition as detailed in the agenda which received 8,758 validated signatures:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Council to NOT TO CHANGE the current free parking arrangements provided in council run car parks in Sudbury, Hadleigh, and Lavenham.

The introduction of extra car parking charges would further reduce the number of customers, employees, and viability of retail businesses in the above town centres. Consequently business rate income will reduce as will retail choice offered resulting in less footfall. No economic assessment has been carried out in a rural area where car usage is essential as no reliable public service transport network is available. Only 14% of households do not have a car and many of those will be town dwellers.”

96.2 The Monitoring Officer advised members of the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee to exercise caution when speaking on this petition so as not to pre-determine themselves and find themselves exempt on being able to participate in any future items on car parking charges that may come before their committees.

96.3 The Chair outlined the process to be followed for the debate, detailed under Part B of Section 3.1 of the petitions scheme in the constitution.

96.4 The Chair invited Councillor Clover, the petition organiser, to present the petition to Council. Councillor Clover made the following presentation:

“The decision to raise a petition for no change to Babergh car park charges was prompted by a number of reasons.

- 1) A decision to implement car park charges was taken by the previous rainbow coalition and without this petition district council members, both new and old, would not be allowed to debate and scrutinise this proposal. At face value, this would appear undemocratic.
- 2) The power to implement this decision rests solely with the Cabinet and the Director of Operations, again undemocratic, given the issue at hand.
- 3) The refusal by cabinet to have any assessment on the impact this decision would have on our local economies, the lifeblood of our town centre communities.
- 4) No explanation as to why the cost relating to car parks has risen from £185k in 20/21 to £427k in 23/24.

- 5) The fact that the £427k cost figure appears to be a guesswork figure and does not account for some of the £300k business rates that will be returned within that figure.

Now that the budget has balanced, isn't there even less need for car park charges?

Also 'why should the cabinet leaders be seeking to introduce car park charges without having accurate financial information for a proper informed decision to be made?'

Cabinet leaders have said charges will have no impact, they are going to happen and decreasing traffic increases footfall and spend. There is no evidence to back these statements.

Deloitte and other expert analysts report that free parking is the most critical deciding factor in determining where shoppers shop and that car park charges can reduce car visitors by up to 30%.

The petition has been validated as receiving 8,758 signatures. Approx 11.6% of the Babergh adult population. A strongly representative proportion. These are the residents whose best interests we have promised to represent in return for the privilege of being elected by them. There were another 2000 shoppers who were not eligible to be counted. Make no mistake, these town centre car parks serve all Babergh wards. The petition shows us that visitors come from a wide radius including Colchester, Clacton, Ipswich, Needham Market, Stowmarket, Bury St Edmunds, Chelmsford, Braintree, Halstead, and surrounding villages.

All district councillors who represent these town centres have spoken out against these car park charges.

There is no guarantee that any income raised will be wholly used for the delivery of car parking services. This is simply an unjustified extra tax on our residents and business owners.

The basis for introducing car park charges has not been properly established. It has been hastily presented and is ultimately undemocratic. Therefore I ask you to support this petition."

- 96.5 The Chair invited Councillor Busby, Leader of the Council, to respond to the petition. Councillor Busby made the following representation:

"Interesting – 8,000 signatures, free car parking. You didn't ask me as I would have signed it especially if you could have got motor tax on there for nothing as well. I mean why not? It was just one half of a sentence, wasn't it? What was going to be the cost of delivering this? You didn't ask anybody whether they were prepared to lose things to get that.

One of the things I found very difficult was that you didn't structure the petition in, I don't think, the right way. You reckon in Sudbury that free car parking is probably the number one priority. I would have asked why can't the Town Council take on the responsibility of the car parks to ensure that they are in control of car parking. It's interesting that Sudbury Town Council have a spend of over £800,000 a year and of that £800,000 zero is spent on car parks. It seems like a strange number one priority.

As for saying it's not the right kind of tax, it actually is the perfect kind of tax. It is the kind of tax where if people use it then they pay for it. If people don't use it then they don't pay the tax. That is exactly the way we should be taxing people – not just taxing people across the whole spectrum which is what we do at the moment. I'm paying £10 a year for your free carparking in Sudbury and Hadleigh, so are the people out in the Shotley Peninsula, and I still have to pay if I go to Colchester or if I go to Ipswich so I'm paying twice. Would you like to pay for my brown bin in lieu of me paying for your car parking? No of course you wouldn't. What do Sudbury have that they think they can demand money from everybody else? It isn't special that way.

We have run a policy of discretionary taxes which is if you use a service you pay for that service. That is what happens with car parking. We know that we have a lot of money to try and raise but if it wasn't for that I think I would still say that we should be having car parking charges. We have climate change problems, we have flooding, we have too much traffic in the towns, we have poor air quality, but you don't seem to want to do anything about it in Sudbury.

We can't keep burying our head in the sand – we have to do things and we have to make changes.

There is evidence to show that if you take traffic out of town centres, the more people will go in and spend longer in there because it is more comfortable. I don't enjoy walking up and around the marketplace in Sudbury because there's too much traffic. Once I get round the back it's okay but in the centre it's not attractive at all."

- 96.6 The Chair opened up the debate and invited other Members to speak to the petition.
- 96.7 Councillor Regester stated that Sudbury Town Council was not in an adequate financial position to be able to take on car parking in Sudbury, that a trial removing traffic and parking in the Sudbury marketplace was being actioned in the summer, that he was an advocate for active and sustainable travel but that facilities were not currently in place to encourage this in a safe manner, the collation of 66 survey responses that stated 2/3rds of respondents were directly influenced by free parking on where they go shopping and that half of respondents would only still park and shop in Sudbury if the first hour remained free, the lack of appropriate funding to councils from the government, and expressed his opposition to implementing parking charges.

- 96.8 Members unanimously agreed to extend the meeting past 8:30pm.
- 96.9 Councillor Potter expressed concerns for potential changes to shopping behaviour with the implementation of parking charges and the negative effect this would likely have on local and small businesses, the impact on elderly residents by removing free and accessible parking, and the increased risks for congestion and dangerous parking.
- 96.10 Councillor Carruthers commented on the potentially detrimental impact that car parking charges would have on the Hadleigh high street, highlighted a survey undertaken in Hadleigh, as constructed by Councillor Dowling, which gathered 189 responses that stated: 186 people came to Hadleigh specifically to use the high street services; a mean distance of 5.4 miles was travelled; 67% would be unlikely to use car parks if charges were introduced; 65% were favourable to having the first hour of parking free of charge; and expressed herself that the council should be encouraging residents from outside the district to use services in our key towns as well as look to introduce more improved sustainable methods of transport.
- 96.11 Councillor Grandon started her representation by expressing concerns for the harm that introducing car parking charges would have on independent and small businesses in Hadleigh, that the survey undertaken in Hadleigh captured three main points: that there was overwhelming support from businesses to maintain free parking in Hadleigh (93% of respondents), that the implementation of fees would have a negative effect on businesses (63%), and that one hour of free parking would be negatively restrictive on their businesses (62%), the potential effects of charges on consumer habits, and stated that volunteers at the East Anglia Children's Hospice (EACH) do three-hour shifts in line with the current free parking period and that this would significantly impact their ability to provide their services.
- 96.12 Councillor Saw commented the surveys undertaken by colleagues did not capture what services residents would be prepared to give up in order to achieve a balanced budget in lieu of implementing parking charges, raised the savings but overall negative impact on the council and its residents if certain services, such as planning enforcement, public realm, and communities, received cuts, and asked fellow councillors to give serious thought to what services would need to be cut if parking charges were not introduced.
- 96.13 Councillor Beer stated that he had spoken to residents in Sudbury about the petition and that he had received many frustrated comments, and discussed the implication of introducing parking charges on the risk of dangerous and overcrowded parking in residential streets, alternative methods of saving money to balance the budget, and Sudbury Town Council's inability to sufficiently fund car parking for the district council.
- 96.14 Councillor Maybury spoke about the two car parks in Lavenham owned by Babergh District Council and the current donation scheme in place with one car park taking in £20,000 per annum, the impact on households which do not

have designated parking spaces on their properties, the lack of investment in traffic infrastructure, and expressed her opposition to introducing parking charges.

- 96.15 Councillor S. Davies expressed that she believed the timing of this petition was premature, that a fully realised proposal on introducing parking charges had not yet been brought forward for discussion, the potential consequences of coming to a decision on the petition on future decision-making arrangements, and the need to at least explore implementing car parking charges due to the current budget situation.
- 96.16 Councillor Ward stated that he had only 12 emails from members of the public on the issue and that 66% had been against implementing car parking charges, spoke about the support express from some members of the public for introducing fees, the desire from residents for improved sustainable transport methods, the necessity for making up the current deficit in Babergh's budget, the overwhelming support from residents for introducing car parking charges to avoid cuts to key services, and the detrimental impact on the delivery of key work if staff cuts were implemented.
- 96.17 Councillor Parker started his representation by congratulating Councillor Clover on the number of valid signatures on his petition and expressed that it was an admirable demonstration of democracy in action, further set out the importance of holding public debate around car parking charges, and raised that in 2011 the Sudbury Chamber of Commerce created a framework for a community interest company (CIC) of which the management of car parking could be placed under.
- 96.18 Councillor McCraw spoke about past consideration to implementing car parking charges by both the Overview and Scrutiny committee and Full Council, criticised the assumptions as put in the petition statement, and reminded Members of both the proposed process that car parking charges item would be following and that a current public consultation about car parking charges was still ongoing.
- 96.19 Councillor McCraw **PROPOSED** that the petition be noted.
- 96.20 Councillor Busby **SECONDED** the proposal.
- 96.21 The Chair allowed Members to continue on with the debate and speak to the proposal on the table.
- 96.22 Councillor Holt stated his previous differing views and decisions made on introducing car parking charges in past administrations, expressed that he had since changed his mind and currently does not support implementing fees, that parking charges would negatively impact businesses and tourism in the district as well as creating dangerous traffic issues, and that alternative cuts could be made within the budgets to balance the figures.

96.23 Councillor Newman spoke about the impact on local, independent businesses in Sudbury if free parking was taken away from customers and the trickle-down effect of losing visitors on nearby places such as Great Cornard.

96.24 Councillor Riley raised the impacts on consumer habits and visitor numbers to places such as Wickham Market and Woodbridge when parking charges were introduced, and that Councillors have an overwhelming duty to listen and enact on the electorate's wishes.

96.25 Councillor Reece stated that most people naturally pay taxes for services that they do not use and reinstated that volunteers for charities in the key towns based their shifts around the provision of free parking.

96.26 Councillor Nunn expressed concerns for the detrimental effects on local businesses in key towns by introducing parking charges, and that implementing these fees would lead to an increase in congestion due to unsafe road parking.

96.27 The Chair concluded the debate and moved to the vote on the proposal to note the petition.

By a vote of 17 For, 12 Against and 1 Abstention

It was RESOLVED:

To note the petition.

97 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

By a unanimous vote

It was RESOLVED:

That Council endorses the following changes to the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel Terms of Reference:

1) that a requirement be added at Section 5 b) of its Panel Arrangements that Independent Co-opted Members of the Panel must live or work in Suffolk.

98 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

98.1 None received.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 9.12 pm.

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Chair