

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, 19 March 2024 at 5:30pm.

PRESENT:

Councillor: Elisabeth Malvisi (Chair)

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

In attendance:

Officers:

- Interim Monitoring Officer (JR)
- Deputy Chief Executive (KN)
- Director – Planning and Building Control (TB)
- Director - Housing (DF)
- Head of Housing Solutions (AAY)
- Head of Service - Communication & Engagement (BJ)
- Professional Lead - Key Sites and Infrastructure (CT)
- Infrastructure Officer (JM)

Apologies:

Councillors:

- David Busby
- Paul Clover
- Helen Davies
- Isabelle Reece

99 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY COUNCILLORS

99.1 Councillor Maybury declared an Other Registerable Interest in relation to Report BC/23/42 as a Trustee of the Friends of Lavenham Library.

100 BC/23/41 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 FEBRUARY 2024

It was Resolved:-

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th February 2024 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

101 BC/23/42 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR AND LEADER

101.1 The Chair referred Members to Paper BC/23/42 for noting.

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

UK Council of the Year

I really must start this evening with the great news this month that Babergh and Mid Suffolk were named UK Council of the Year at the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards at a very enjoyable event in London on 6th March. You may have noticed the trophy next to the Chair.

This award is presented to a council deemed 'outstanding' in transforming its services and creating vibrant communities. It is great recognition for our staff, for all councillors across the political spectrum who have served their wards with distinction over recent years, and all the partner organisations we work with.

We show what can be achieved despite the challenging financial circumstances that local authorities face - not just supporting residents and offering good services which are great value, but being innovative and helping create thriving communities.

Well done to everyone involved but I really do want to give my heartfelt thanks to all of our staff – we in this chamber really appreciate everything you do for our communities.

Bramford to Twinstead

Councillors will be aware of National Grid's long-running plans for more electricity pylons between Bramford and Twinstead.

The Planning Inspectorate has just completed the examination of the proposals and will now prepare a report for the Secretary of State, who will make a final decision.

Babergh District Council recognises the need to upgrade the grid to help meet net zero targets, but we have objected to the plans. Significant shortcomings must be addressed. Grid reinforcements cannot come at any cost to our residents or the environment. Not enough has been done to mitigate the

impact on our countryside and local communities and National Grid has not fully considered the impact on tourism – this is unacceptable.

We also remain concerned about the cumulative impacts with other developments within the area, including the proposals for an additional powerline from Norwich to Tilbury, which would connect to the Bramford substation.

We will continue to work on behalf of our communities on this matter.

NFU Landowner Meeting

On a very wet Tuesday last week, Cllr Whyman and I met with local farmers and representatives of the NFU to discuss a number of matters of mutual interest. We covered planning issues, particularly renewable energy schemes and how to meet BNG targets, limitations of solar on roofs, designation of special landscape areas and damage caused by construction of AW's pipeline, but drainage, flooding and river management was the overriding concern at the moment.

I really hope that this will lead to regular contact with the NFU.

DCN

Finally, last week Cllr McCraw and I, along with the Chief Executive and Tom Barker, attended this year's DCN Annual Conference. There was a very full agenda covering skills & employment, AI in local government, cyber security, Oflog, use of energy in homes, the environment and delivering net zero, and an excellent keynote speech by Olympian Chris Boardman, who is now National Active Travel Commissioner and Chairman of Sport England. Perhaps the most insightful session was on what voters are thinking at the moment and current voting behaviour. There were some sobering conclusions for all political groups.

On a brighter note, there was quite a focus on Independents, given our greatly increased number and initiated somewhat inadvertently by the DCN chairman, who was brought to task by our LGA group leader for forgetting to mention us. This gave many of us the opportunity for an 'I'm Spartacus' moment throughout the conference.

102 TO DEBATE THE PROPOSED SUFFOLK DEVOLUTION DEAL

102.1 The Chair invited Members to debate the proposed Suffolk Devolution Deal.

102.2 Councillor Regester commented that having an elected Leader ran the risk of concentrating resources in certain areas to the detriment of others, and that a lack of provisions had been set out to prevent duplication of functions between Country and District level authorities.

- 102.3 Councillor Potter stated that there was a lack of accountability for how power would be dispersed and carried out, and that it was not “clear cut” about the different responsibilities of different levels of government.
- 102.4 Councillor Ward expressed support for the deal, raised that he had overseen the development of the devolution deal as a member of the SPSL group and that the deal had significant scope and potential, but expressed concerns for the amount of money set out as part of the proposed deal and the lack of guaranteed collaboration between the elected Leader and District / Borough authorities.
- 102.5 Councillor McCraw stated that many Councillors at both District and County level had reservations about the proposed deal that should be captured, and noted that the diminishing return would prove to make the deal “worthless” over time.
- 102.6 Councillor Riley raised concerns about adding another level of bureaucracy to the current political system, that the costs of the arrangements should be “slimmed down” as much as possible, and stated that delays to the governance of other authorities across Suffolk should be avoided.
- 102.7 Councillor Maybury expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of guarantee that extra money could come forward as part of this deal and the decision for the funding to not be indexed linked, stated that there was a significant amount of uncertainty surrounding the proposed deal, and raised that Councils similar to Suffolk County had already refused to accept comparable devolution deals.
- 102.8 Councillor Davis commented that he was not impressed with the proposed devolution deal, that disinterest had been shown to the District Council and their involvement in the deal, and that the public consultation would be key to determining whether or not to go forward with the deal.
- 102.9 Councillor Holt expressed opposition to the proposed deal, that the investment fund did not provide enough financial support to achieve key deliverables and support the County, and that the lack in rise of funds to combat inflation would detrimentally restrict the impact the deal could have.
- 102.10 Councillor Beer asked the Monitoring Officer if, as a sitting member of Suffolk County Council, it would be best for him to abstain from the vote. The Monitoring Officer clarified that this vote only related to the letter being sent by the Leader of the Council to Suffolk County, but advised Councillor Beer and other dual hatters to exercise caution when engaging in items concerning the devolution deal.

By a vote of 23 For, 3 Against, and 2 Abstentions

It was RESOLVED:

To delegate authority to the Leader of the Council to collate the views of the Council and respond to Suffolk County Council.

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

103.1 None received.

104 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

104.1 None received.

105 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

105.1 None received.

106 BC/23/43 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) - CIL EXPENDITURE FRAMEWORK SIXTH REVIEW - MARCH 2024

106.1 The Chair invited Councillor Sallie Davies, Cabinet Member for Planning, to introduce Paper BC/23/43.

106.2 Councillor Davies introduced Paper BC/23/43 to Members outlining its purpose and **PROPOSED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

106.3 Councillor Parker **SECONDED** the proposal.

106.4 Councillor Maybury questioned if the Conservative Party would still be represented on the Joint Member Panel. The Cabinet Member for Planning confirmed that the Conservatives would be represented.

106.5 Councillor Holt queried what protection measures were in place concerning funding requests from sports clubs and associations. The Professional Lead – Key Sites and Infrastructure responded that the Joint Member Panel had looked into this specific issue and clarified that specific documents needed to be completed by those clubs applying for CIL funding to ensure these were being allocated appropriately.

106.6 Councillor Maybury queried if there was a further ceiling limit above the £100,000 maximum threshold for community and sports organisations. The Director for Planning and Building Control responded that there were no further limits beyond the designated threshold.

106.7 Councillor Maybury further questioned if CIL funding could be used for other aspects of car parking rather than being restricted to just EV (electric vehicle) facilities. The Cabinet Member for Planning confirmed that this was correct.

106.8 Councillor Maybury sought clarification on whether libraries situated within other buildings could apply for and be granted CIL funds. The Director for Planning and Building Control responded that they could providing there

were lease arrangements in place.

106.9 Councillor McCraw questioned if bids outside of community use in excess of £100,000 could be applied for and approved. The Professional Lead – Key Sites and Infrastructure confirmed this was the case.

106.10 The Chair opened the item up for debate.

106.11 Councillor Maybury commented that CIL payments had provided considerable benefits to the District and expressed support for the Officers undertaking the work.

106.12 Councillor Holt commented that CIL was a success for the District but expressed concern over the additional sectors that could now apply for funding due to it being a limited pot.

By a vote of 28 For

It was RESOLVED:

3.1. That Babergh District Council approve the amendments to the CIL Expenditure Framework – March 2024 (arising from the sixth review) - (Appendix A) and the CIL Expenditure Framework Communications Strategy – March 2024 (Appendix B)

3.2. That Babergh District Council agree that the CIL Expenditure Framework and the CIL Expenditure Framework Communications Strategy be reviewed again whilst Bid round 14 is being considered (October 2024) so that any amended scheme can be in place before Bid round 15 occurs (May 2025).

3.3. That Babergh District Council agree that the Joint Member Panel be retained to inform this (seventh) review.

107 BC/23/44 JOINT HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2024

107.1 The Chair invited Councillor Jessie Carter, Cabinet Member for Housing, to introduce Paper BC/23/44.

107.2 Councillor Carter introduced Paper BC/23/44 to Members outlining its purpose and **PROPOSED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

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

107.4 Councillor Maybury asked if the five-year review period could be added in to the report's recommendations for clarity. The Monitoring Officer advised that this could be amended and added to the report's recommendations.

- 107.5 Councillor McLaren queried why the challenges and goals for Babergh and Mid Suffolk were different. The Cabinet Member for Housing responded that there was a significant difference in the housing need and community resources available in both districts meaning that different approaches had to be designed.
- 107.6 Councillor Riley questioned if Babergh looked after homeless individuals from other District and Borough areas in the County. The Cabinet Member for Housing responded that Babergh residents were prioritised and that individuals who had moved to Babergh and claimed homelessness would be assessed as to whether care could be provided for them by the local authority in which they originally came from.
- 107.7 Councillor Owen questioned if homeless individuals were provided support within Babergh or if any were sent to Ipswich or neighbouring authorities for support. The Cabinet Member for Housing responded that it was a priority to keep individuals in their hometowns and in areas they are familiar with but that individuals would be assessed on their needs and assigned to somewhere that was able to best meet these.
- 107.8 Councillor Riley queried how much the strategy and its implementation would cost the Council. The Head of Housing Solutions responded that resources already allocated to the service would pay to deliver the strategy and that the exact figure would be provided outside of the meeting.
- 107.9 Councillor Ward queried in instances of individuals needing to be housed outside of the district for safety reasons whether there was a responsibility of Babergh to rehouse these individuals when problems had been rectified. The Cabinet Member for Housing responded that it depended upon the type of accommodation the individual had been placed into when first dealing with the case.
- 107.10 Councillor McLaren requested that Ward Members be included in discussions about ensuring customer support was accessible to all residents, particularly those in rural areas.
- 107.11 Councillor Saw questioned if any interim measures had been put in place should the Council no longer receive the household support fund. The Cabinet Member for Housing responded that work was currently underway to formulate mitigation measures and that discussions had taken place with neighbouring authorities regarding a collaborative approach to tackling homelessness.
- 107.12 Councillor Potter queried what support was in place to help reduce the number of young people in temporary accommodation. The Cabinet Member for Housing responded that reducing the amount of time young people spend in temporary accommodation was a high priority and that external services could be relied upon to assist them with mental health or social issues.

By a vote of 28 For

It was **RESOLVED**:

- 1.1 To adopt the contents of the report and the Draft Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2029, attached as Appendix A and associated Delivery Plan, attached as Appendix B, provide security and, where appropriate provide comment.
- 1.2 To adopt the vision and priorities of the draft Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy, ensuring the Delivery Plan is reflective of the current challenges facing the districts.

108 BC/23/45 DESIGNATION OF THE SECTION 151 OFFICER ROLE

- 108.1 A short break was taken between 7:14pm and 7:24pm before the commencement of Item BC/23/45.
- 108.2 The Chair invited the Interim Monitoring Officer to introduce Paper BC/23/45.
- 108.3 The Interim Monitoring Officer introduced Paper BC/23/45 to Members outlining its purpose and asked for a proposer and a seconder.
- 108.4 Councillor Ward **PROPOSED** the recommendations as set out in the report; Councillor Hurren **SECONDED** the proposal.
- 108.5 Councillor Riley queried if there any invoicing of services would occur with this new appointment. The Interim Monitoring Officer responded that no extra financial remuneration would be awarded.

By a vote of 28 For

It was **RESOLVED**:

- 1.1 That Karen Watling be appointed to the statutory role of 'Section 151 Officer' for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils until the Director for Corporate Resources returns to their post in a full-time capacity.
- 1.2 That Melissa Evans, Director for Corporate Resources, be appointed to the statutory role of 'Section 151 Officer' for Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils immediately on her full-time return to work.

109 BC/23/46 REVISED PAY POLICY STATEMENT

- 109.1 The Chair invited Councillor Ward, Acting Leader of the Council, to introduce Paper BC/23/46.
- 109.2 Councillor Ward introduced Paper BC/23/46 to Members outlining its purpose and **PROPOSED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

- 109.3 Councillor McCraw **SECONDED** the proposal.
- 109.4 Councillor Riley queried who undertook the revaluation of the Chief Executive's pay and whether this was carried out in-house. Councillor Ward responded that external support was used.
- 109.5 Councillor Parker queried which position amongst Senior Leadership was currently half funded by Health. Councillor Ward responded that the Director of Communities and Wellbeing was a joint post held between Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and the Integrated Care Board.
- 109.6 Councillor Riley questioned if under the new pay policy the Chief Executive would receive an increase in pay. Councillor Ward responded that the Chief Executive's pay would increase to the next spinal column.
- 109.7 Councillor Riley further queried when the Deputy Chief Executive deputised for the Chief Executive. The Deputy Chief Executive responded that she was currently deputising for the Chief Executive at the Full Council meeting due to his absence.
- 109.8 Councillor Holt questioned whether the Council operated on performance related pay scales and whether this applied to the Chief Executive. Councillor Ward responded that the Chief Executive underwent yearly appraisals carried out by the two Leaders of the Council. The Deputy Chief Executive further added that during these appraisals, a survey would be sent to a randomly allocated group of staff to incorporate staff viewpoints.
- 109.9 Councillor Holt further questioned whether other Councillors would receive details of these appraisals and the benchmarks used. Councillor Ward responded that the Chief Executive was assessed on his delivery against the two Councils' corporate plans and that this would give Councillors a good indication as to how performance was being measured.
- 109.10 Councillor Jamieson queried whether the Chief Executive's pay directly related to performance and delivery against key objectives. Councillor Ward responded that there were no direct numerical key performance indicators (KPIs) detailed under these appraisals. Councillor Saw further added that a delivery plan was currently being created under all three sections of the corporate plan that would create measurable deliverables of which the Senior Leadership Team would be directly assessed against.
- 109.11 Councillor Holt queried how the Director of Communities position would now be funded due to its merge with the Economic portfolio. The Deputy Chief Executive responded that Health had confirmed they would still be funding 50% of the position.
- 109.12 Councillor Holt further questioned who received market forces supplements and how much this equated to. The Deputy Chief Executive responded that this related to posts that were particularly hard to recruit to where a low salary was a considerable reason for lack of recruitment, and clarified that

these supplements were not permanent.

109.13 The Chair invited Members to debate the Paper.

109.14 Councillor Holt commented that there was little information about the financial implications of increased salaries on the Council.

109.15 Councillor Beer expressed that staff did excellent work but there would come a time where there would be no money left to fund pay increases and that remuneration needed to be realistic.

109.16 Councillor McCraw stated that the pay policy had been steady for many years, that £59,000 would be saved due to reductions in the size of the Senior Leadership Team, and that pay had to be improved to recruit and retain staff to avoid the need for costly interims.

109.17 Councillor Ward commented that this report was reviewed annually by Full Council and that the Chief Executive's pay had not increased for a considerable number of years.

By a vote of 20 For, 6 Against, and 2 Abstentions

It was RESOLVED:

1.1 That the pay policy statement as set out in Appendix A be approved.

1.2 That publication of the Council's gender pay gap, as of 31st March 2023, be noted.

1.3 That the payment rates for carrying out election duties as set out in Appendix C be noted.

110 COUNCILLOR APPOINTMENTS

110.1 The Chair referred Members to the appointments as detailed in the Tabled Papers.

110.2 Councillor Ward **PROPOSED** the recommendation as set out in the Tabled Papers; Councillor Saw **SECONDED** the proposal.

By a vote of 28 For

It was RESOLVED:

That Councillors Simon Dowling and Brian Riley be appointed to the Council Investment Portfolio Working Group.

111 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

111.1 There were no motions received.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 7.55 pm.

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Chair