

BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS

Minutes of the meeting of the **JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in the King Edmund Chamber, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich on Monday, 20 March 2023

PRESENT:

Chair: John Hinton

Councillors:	Melanie Barrett	Terence Carter
	James Caston	Siân Dawson
	Kathryn Grandon	Keith Welham (Co-Chair)
	Robert Lindsay	David Muller
	Adrian Osborne	Keith Scarff

In attendance:

Officers: Director – Operations (ME)
Finance Business Partner (JB)
Corporate Manager – Governance and Civic Office (JR)
Lead Officer – Overview and Scrutiny (AN)

Apologies:

Councillors: Paul Ekpenyong

91 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

91.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Ekpenyong.

92 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

92.1 None declared.

93 JOS/22/52 TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 FEBRUARY 2023

93.1 It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2023 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

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

94.1 None received.

95 QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

95.1 None received.

96 QUESTIONS BY COUNCILLORS

96.1 None received.

97 JOS/22/53 INFORMATION BULLETIN - REVIEW ON CURRENT LEVELS OF UNTREATED SEWAGE DISCHARGES TO WATERS IN BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK

97.1 Item JOS/22/53 Information Bulletin – Review on Current levels of Untreated Sewage Discharges to Waters in Babergh and Mid Suffolk was deferred from the agenda at the Chair’s discretion.

This item will be considered at the next Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting which is scheduled for Monday 24th July 2023.

98 JOS/22/54 INFORMATION BULLETIN - A REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF BRINGING PUBLIC REALM IN HOUSE

98.1 The Director for Operations introduced the Information Bulletin to the Committee outlining before Members the request for the item to come before Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the review of the Housing Revenue Account (2023/24) in January 2023, the insourcing of the Public Realm service from ID Verde, and whether this insourcing was deemed good value for money.

98.2 Councillor Dawson and Councillor Barrett raised issues with the lack of attendance from the appropriate Cabinet Members to answer questions on the item.

98.3 Councillor Caston questioned about vehicle depreciation costs and if vehicles were depreciated to zero or to a point where they could then be sold off. The Finance Business Partner responded that vehicles were depreciated to a zero value.

98.4 Councillor Barrett questioned about the standards of maintenance for areas covered by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The Director for Operations responded that there was historic under investing for assets covered by the HRA in direct comparison to those covered by the General Fund and that insourcing the Public Realm service would allow for a higher standard of maintenance to be carried out.

98.5 Councillor Welham questioned if there had been a reduction in general service in comparison to that carried out by ID Verde, the inclusion of any

additional services as recommended by the Committee in 2020, and whether the data being collected was detailed enough for more accurate recharging. The Director for Operations responded that there had been no reduction to the general service as a result of insourcing, that additional services, such as tree surgery, did not have dedicated teams working to deliver them, and that more accurate mapping data was currently being sourced to conduct more accurate recharging.

- 98.6 Councillor Grandon queried about plans for grass cuttings and the different schemes for different types of recreational areas. The Director for Operations responded that grass cutting rounds were currently being reviewed and that the mapping data currently being collected would assist in identifying different areas and creating an appropriate schedule.
- 98.7 Councillor Caston questioned about the possibility of acquiring assets that are used non-frequently that could be shared between multiple local authorities alongside the possibility of privately contracting out assets when they are not in use by the Councils. The Director for Operations responded that there was scope for both possibilities to be explored.
- 98.8 Councillor Barrett queried about road sweeping and the strategy for dealing with roads that are not designated on main routes. The Director for Operations responded that the focus in this area was currently on staff and vehicle resourcing, that roads were swept three times as often now in comparison to work undertaken under the old ID Verde contract, and that improvements would be made to co-ordination, integration, and publishing of networks and routes for public viewing.
- 98.9 Councillor Lindsay questioned about the 23,123m² of grassland now being managed as meadow, what the target was for the total amount of land that would be converted to meadow, and whether there was a communications plan to support the drive to improve biodiversity in our Districts. The Director for Operations responded that a biodiversity action plan was currently being created by the Public Realm team, that signage near meadow areas was being put up, and that there was not a formal goal for the amount of grassland being converted to meadow but that more areas were being looked into.
- 98.10 Councillor Carter queried about the mix of vegetation used in meadow growing and raised issues regarding accessibility of these areas for those with disabilities when certain species of plant were being grown. The Director for Operations responded that bringing the Public Realm service in house allowed for more control over the work being conducted to turn grasslands into meadow and that attention would be given to the species being grown to ensure spaces are accessible to all.
- 98.11 Councillor Barrett questioned if the road sweepers would be operating 5 days a week and if there was liaison between other local authorities regarding maintenance of villages and wards that are located on the boundaries of neighbouring districts. The Director for Operations responded that road sweepers would be operating 5 days a week and that there was some

communication between Suffolk counties regarding maintenance but little between Babergh and Essex based authorities which would be rectified.

98.12 Councillor Welham queried if workshops could be set up between the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, and Parish Councils to communicate the changes to Public Realm and the decisions being undertaken to make improvements to grasslands and increasing biodiversity. The Director for Operations responded that there would be opportunities to improve the communications plan and strengthen the relationship between the District and Parish Councils which would be explored.

98.13 Councillor Grandon raised the need for having different strategies to deal with different types of green areas and requested that a commitment be made to not cut down mature trees in the Districts. The Director for Operations responded that cutting mature trees is not work that would be undertaken and that prevention measures to stop mature trees deteriorating extensively which could result in them being cut down was currently being explored.

98.14 The Information Bulletin was noted.

99 JOS/22/55 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTION TRACKER

99.1 Councillor Welham queried the progress on recommendations 1.3, 1.4 and 1.7 for Item JOS/21/25 – Review of Western Suffolk Community Safety Partnership (WSCSP). The Corporate Manager for Governance and Civic Office responded that progress on these recommendations had started and that these will be developed as part of the upcoming Councillor Induction Programme in May and June 2023.

99.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Action Tracker was noted.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 11:05 am.

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Chair