

# BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL **ANNUAL REPORT**

2017-18

Overview & Scrutiny





# BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

## **FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR OF BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2017/18**

In May, when I was asked to Chair the Overview and Scrutiny Committee I had a primary requirement, before accepting the role; that scrutiny would be in-depth, comprehensive and range across key Council matters.

To meet this requirement, the Committee set out to scrutinise Cabinet decisions, specific subjects and Members' concerns. Additionally, it was considered essential to undertake scrutiny tracking, engagement with officers, pre-scrutiny, development of a communication link between Scrutiny and Audit and to ensure good communications between Mid Suffolk and Babergh Scrutiny Committees. A further requirement was associated with Scrutiny Committee Members, where being proactive and taking responsibility for researching and leading on key topics was emphasised. Whilst this approach has had mixed success, with some Members, I believe we have become more efficient in providing effective scrutiny.

A comprehensive, diverse and challenging Scrutiny programme for the year was identified and I am pleased to report that this scrutiny programme has largely been met. To achieve this, with the exceptions of August 17 and April 23 the Scrutiny Committee has met every month, scrutinised 22 topics, scoped 13 topics, scrutinised and tracked 9 topics through the Information Bulletin. In addition, we have accommodated urgent subjects, such as Homelessness, Risk Assessment, Housing Voids and the 5-year Land Supply, to name just four examples and these are discussed below.

A Member led call-in was also considered at an extraordinary Scrutiny meeting in October 2017. This meeting scrutinised the decision from Cabinet regarding 'Working Together' and resulted in the decision being returned to Cabinet and a full Council debate.

An issue I would like to share with Members is the issue of Joint Scrutiny Committee meetings. This option has been considered as a way forward by some Members and it has been suggested that Scrutiny should be jointly undertaken by both Councils. I do not share this view. There are many topics, which are better scrutinised independently and of particular concern is the fact that Babergh and Mid Suffolk have entirely separate Cabinets, which require independent Scrutiny Committees. Also, the Councils are two independent legal entities. Furthermore, we have encountered different emphasis being applied by the two Councils, which has the potential to dilute the Scrutiny process. Therefore, I consider it important that the Scrutiny Committee remit, for the foreseeable future, remains a sovereign activity. Nevertheless, there are times when joint Scrutiny meetings can be helpful, and this option should be maintained.

The introduction of Cabinet/Leader governance model has meant that the scrutiny process is now a legal requirement and it is essential to operate scrutiny transparently. I believe that the work of the Scrutiny Committee has met these requirements. Furthermore, scrutiny has been undertaken in a spirit of cooperation, with no political bias. This I believe has been a significant achievement and I leave it to Members to judge how well we have performed.

Finally, both the Vice Chairman and I have taken this role seriously, with the aim of adding a sound and effective scrutiny process to improve our public services.

Councillor Barry Gasper

April 2018

**MEMBERS OF THE BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE 2017/18**



Cllr Barry Gasper (Chair)



Cllr Simon Barrett



Cllr Peter Burgoyne



Cllr Bryn Hurren



Cllr Jennie Jenkins



Cllr Alastair McCraw  
(Vice-Chair)



Cllr Fenella Swan



Stephen Williams

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

In May 2017 Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils adopted the Leader/Cabinet model for each Council. This resulted in the Joint Scrutiny Committee being decommissioned and the formation of separate Overview and Scrutiny Committees for each Council.

The Committee consists of eight members of the Council and can be any Member except Members of the Cabinet. No Member is allowed to scrutinise a decision where they have been part of the decision process. Substitutes for Members on the Committee must be from the same political group and Council. The Committee sets its own workplan and can set up task and finish groups as and when considered appropriate.

The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committees also conduct joint meetings on a regular basis, when similar topics have been identified, to scrutinise topics and external stakeholders and Service providers relevant to both Councils.

## **THE ROLE OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is defined as having the key purposes of:

- Scrutinising the work of external stakeholders and service providers.
- Holding the Strategy/Executive Committee to account
- Being the home of “call in”.
- Being the home of Member Call for Action.

The Overview and Scrutiny review items in relation to the Strategic Plan and where the Committee can add value; avoiding duplication with any other Committee or working group and ensuring where changes have been made and significant time has lapsed before a review has been undertaken. These suggestions are worked up by the Chairs, Vice Chairs and officers into a forward plan which is then discussed with the Leaders before being referred back to the Overview and Scrutiny for agreement.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee cannot make decisions or policies itself but has the power of influencing and can make informed recommendations to the Cabinet, Full Council and other Committees. Cabinet can also recommend that the Overview and Scrutiny conduct detailed investigation of items considered to require further scrutiny before being referred back to Cabinet for final decision.

Overview and Scrutiny forms an important part of the democratic process within the Council and wider community by examining topics and continuing to monitor the outcome of its work. Where it is considered necessary to follow up on the outcome of a scrutinised topic the Committee will conduct further scrutiny or receive updates on the topic to enable the Council to continue to deliver the best service for all residents in the District



## THE CENTRE FOR PUBLIC SCRUTINY'S FOUR PRINCIPLES OF GOOD SCRUTINY

1. Scrutiny provides a critical friend challenge to executive policy and decision makers by conducting a constructive, robust, and purposeful challenge. This challenge should be non-aggressive and non-political so as to create the optimum conditions for an investigative evidence-based process.
2. Scrutiny enables the voice and concerns of the public through innovative public communications, consultation and feedback. Meetings are conducted in public to enable transparency and openness.
3. Scrutiny is carried out by independent minded councillors, who actively engage in the scrutiny function so as to drive improvement. Areas are reviewed in an apolitical atmosphere.
4. Scrutiny drives improvement and promotes community well-being. Good scrutiny improves the quality of life by undertaking strategic reviews of corporate policies, plans, performance and budgets.

Sources: Centre for Public Scrutiny; [www.cfps.ukfips](http://www.cfps.ukfips)  
 Mid Suffolk Annual Scrutiny Report JSC/8/13 Appendix  
 Annual Report of the Joint Scrutiny Committee Report BC/17/5 and MC/17/7

## **THE STRUCTURE FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OUTSIDE COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

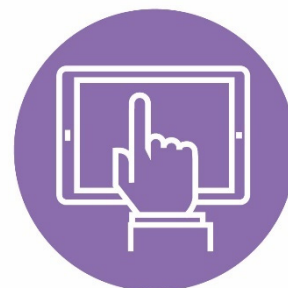
The Overview and Scrutiny Committee cycle is based round one monthly pre-committee meetings to which the authors who will be presenting items at the Committee are invited to attend. This enables co-operation between Officers, Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when discussing the relevant content of reports, and to give a steer of what the Committee is expecting to achieve from upcoming items. It also allows the Chairs and Officers to consider any question which may be asked at the Committee meeting. Generally, each item will be discussed at two pre-committee meetings before going to Committee.

Between meetings, Officers and the Chairs of the Committees maintain an open and engaging working relationship to ensure that the scrutiny process will be efficient and beneficial to the Committee meeting.

Members also partake in 'Task and Finish Groups' which focus on a specific item set by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This enables Members to engage with a topic separately from the Committee and then to report back on the findings of the 'Task and Finish Group' to the Committee, which then recommends any action required to the relevant Officers.

## **TRAINING**

At the meeting in June, the Committee was updated on the training options available from the Centre of Public Scrutiny, when it was decided that the Law and Governance team should proceed to organise a comprehensive training programme for Members and Officers. Training was scheduled to commence in the Autumn, however the move to Endeavour House and outside circumstances beyond the Council's control, required the training to be rescheduled. This will now start in April for both Members and officers of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Senior Leadership Team, and the Extended Leadership Team as well as other officers who work with the Committee.





## **THE ORGANISATION OF THE 2017 – 2018 WORK PLAN**

In May 2017 the Leader/Cabinet Model was adopted by the Council, whereupon the Joint Scrutiny Committee was de-commissioned. At the separate Overview and Scrutiny Committees in July, the Members of the Committee developed a new Forward Plan centred around incomplete topics from the previous Joint Scrutiny Committee's Forward Plan. Further items were discussed and duly added to the individual Forward Plan. The revised Forward Plan was then agreed by each Committee in August 2017.

The Forward Plan is updated at each Committee meeting and Members evaluate each item in relation to the Strategic Plan in order to assess whether the scrutiny process adds value. This results in avoiding unnecessary duplication of work carried out by any other Committee or working group and ensures sufficient time had lapsed between reviews.

Towards the end of 2017 it was agreed by the Chairs that regular joint meetings could be conducted where common topics could be considered. This was implemented from December 2017.

### **Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee Summary of Four Important Topics Scoped and Scrutinised in the Past Year.**

1. Homelessness was scrutinised and the Plan setting out how to meet the challenges of the new legislation, written by the Corporate Manager for Homeless Prevention was found to be comprehensive and suitable, if implemented, to meet the challenges faced by the Council. Further Scrutiny of how well the Council has met the challenge is listed in the work plan.
2. Risk Assessment was identified as a topic in which there were perceived to be key shortfalls in the Council's process and documentation. Scrutiny led to changes, in how the Senior Management Team now address and record their Risk Assessment decisions. However, more needs to be done on this important topic, to improve confidence in the risk assessment elements of Council reports.
3. Scrutiny of Housing Voids was among the first topics to be scrutinised. This led to a rigorous assessment and ongoing monitoring to ensure that a Voids reduction plan was formulated, implemented and monitored. This subject has been reported to the Scrutiny Committee and tracked at each meeting, since it was scrutinised. It is an example, where there has been continuous involvement of Scrutiny Committee Members with the Voids team and management. This has involved meeting with Officers, Council and contract staff, ranging from the Tradesmen in BMBS, through the management chain to the Senior Management. A six-month recovery plan was defined and implemented, which addressed many of the issues identified and in March a presentation was given to the Scrutiny Committee. We can now report that the new wider ranging management recovery plan is being implemented and is having a significant effect on Void times in Babergh. Monitoring is continuing to address in the medium term.

4. The Babergh Five-year Land Supply, failure to meet Government targets, has had a serious impact on our communities. The Scrutiny Committee decided to call this matter in just before Christmas, to assess the 'algorithm', determine if regular monitoring of the independent variables was being undertaken and whether improved monitoring would show that the 5 Year Land Supply shortfall had or was close to being bridged. It took a long time to get to a scoping position, which involved three pre-meetings and two Member discussions with Officers from the Planning Department. The final scoping meeting took place in February with Scrutiny in March. This resulted in 4 recommendations, listed below to introduce regular review of the Five-year Housing Land Supply and monitoring by the Scrutiny Committee.

# The Work of Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2017/18

## **The Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business and Finance Plan Update 2017**

This report was considered in June by the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Members were updated on the Business and Financial plan for the District, with the Committee being informed on changes made to the assumptions contained in the Housing Revenue Account financial plan; the reasons for these changes and the impact the changes have had on the 30-year financial position. Also, Members were updated on how the management of the HRA was being adapted to meet evolving needs and demands and to reflect legislative, financial and technological change.

The update also set out a roadmap for the transformation of the role of local authority housing and the HRA in light of the significant financial challenges caused by changes to Government policy “The emerging Suffolk work on housing delivery and the Government’s White Paper ‘Fixing our Broken Housing Market’ to create a sustainable and robust plan for the future.”

**RESOLVED** 

**That the updated 30-year HRA Business and Financial Plan (Appendix A to Paper BOS/17/4) be approved.**

## **Void Times in Council Housing**

In July Members conducted a scoping exercise of Void Time in Council Housing, with several issues being identified in relation to the challenges facing the Void team to reduce the void times for Council Housing:



- What are the hidden problems when trying to reduce void times – eg notification timescales; management; backlog in carrying out the necessary works, due to changeover from Morrisons’ contract to Babergh Mid Suffolk Building Service (BMBS)
- Breakdown of the turnaround times for different types of repairs etc which have to be done before properties can be re-let
- The potential for an earlier start for some types of work – e.g. while the existing tenants remain in occupation

**RESOLVED** 

**That the Review of Voids for consideration at the September meeting proceeds on the basis of the Scoping Document together with regard to the aspects identified by Members at the meeting.**

In September The Babergh Committee received a report on void times in Council Properties and based on the scoping exercise the report provided Members of the Committee with information about the average time to re-let vacancies within Council housing stock and the action being taken to improve performance.

**RESOLVED** 

- 1.1 That the Committee has received assurances that appropriate steps are still being taken to reduce void times and that the position be reported to Cabinet.**
- 1.2 That the performance against void targets be monitored and be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**
- 1.3 That a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be appointed to work with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Assistant Director for Housing to monitor progress with developing the process documents for reducing void times.**

From January 2018 a monthly Information Bulletin on the Voids Improvement Project was submitted to the Committee and provided regular updates on the progress in the reduction of void times.

In March 2018 a Six-month Void Improvement Plan was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a mid-term review conducted.

**Review of Great Western Community Safety Partnership (WSCSP)**

In October the Committee received the annual report from the Great Western Community Safety Partnership to fulfil the Committee's function under Sections 19 and 20 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Police and Justice Act 2006 and the Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Regulations 2009 to scrutinise the work of Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs).

Babergh was and remains staffed to organise individual review of tragic events, this being considered an appropriate arrangement.

**RESOLVED** 

**That the report be noted.**



### **The Homelessness Reduction Act 2018**

The Committee conducted a scoping exercise for the Homelessness/Bed and Breakfast Accommodation Review in July. It was anticipated by the Committee that with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018, the Councils' resources would be tested. The Committee wanted to scrutinise the work to be done and how the Homelessness Team were preparing for the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018.

### **RESOLVED**

**That Members' views as expressed at the meeting be reflected in a detailed scoping document to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee, with the Review to be carried out in September/October 2017.**

In November a report "Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act", was presented to the Committee, providing Members with detailed information of how the changes would impact on the Council, and outline the work being carried out to ensure that the Councils were legally compliant and able to fulfil the new duties.

It also outlined the current and predicted work levels within the homelessness service.

### **RESOLVED**



- 1.1 That the report be NOTED with the following recommendations:**
- 1.2 That all Babergh District Councillors are briefed on the implications of the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017)**
- 1.3 That an update on the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) be provided to Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee six months after the implementation of the Act (October 2018)**

## Update on Joint Scrutiny Recommendation – Neighbourhood Planning

In October the Committee received an update on Neighbourhood Planning from the 'Task and Finish Group' review of the Councils role and duties with regards to neighbourhood planning. The 'Task and Finish Group' identified action areas which the Council needed to address, and the Neighbourhood planning team provided a progress report on each area.

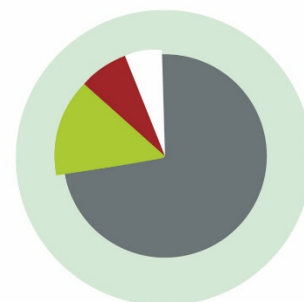
The Committee was concerned that Parish Councils did not understand the reasons for neighbourhood planning and were unable to access relevant information required for the process. Members were also concerned that the Neighbourhood Plan was being ignored in the planning process. The Committee was assured that the Council had improved its service and that all enquiries were directed to the relevant websites.

**RESOLVED** ✓

**(i) That the Committee noted the progress of the actions from the Joint Scrutiny recommendations for Neighbourhood Planning.**

## Supporting Business Growth

In October the Committee scoped the topic Supporting Business Growth. Following the debate, it was agreed that the best way forward would be for the Committee to receive the Draft Economic Development 'Open for Business' Strategy report for comment.



In November the Committee received the report. However, due to the nature of sensitive business information, the report was heard with the Public and Press excluded.

**RESOLVED** ✓

**That the report be noted**

## Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

In December the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee was updated on CIL funding. Members had requested clarification of how the CIL was managed and applied for, and how much had been paid from the CIL funding to the Community. Members were interested not only in the working relationship between parishes and the Council, but also the process for how CIL funding was managed both within the District and with other service providers. As a result, the Committee requested pre-scrutiny of the CIL report before it was presented to Cabinet to allow for Recommendations to Cabinet from the Committees.

**RESOLVED** ✓

**That the CIL Spending Scheme report be pre-scrutinised before being presented to Cabinet**

### **Review of the Shared Legal Service**



In November Members scoped a review of the Shared Legal Service. The Committee responded to concerns from Members of the Council that there had been issues with the Service. The Shared Legal Partnership came into existence in September 2016 as a result of the reorganisation of the Council's use of resources.

The Committee's objectives were to establish how the working relationship with the Shared Legal Service could be improved and if general processes could be identified to achieve these objectives. The scoping exercise identified that further scoping on the topic was necessary before the Committee could receive a report.

**RESOLVED** ✓

**1.1 That the scoping of the Shared Legal Service be completed at the meeting on 18 December 2017**

**1.2 That a survey be conducted into experiences of Officers and Members regarding the Shared Legal Services with witnesses and evidence to be brought before the Committee at the meeting in February 2018.**

Cooperation between Officers and the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees resulted in a report being brought to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December.

The Service Manager for the Shared Legal Service was present to answer questions, with Councillor Davis being invited by the Committee as a witness to relay his experience with the Shared Legal Service. The Corporate Manager – Strategic Asset Management had been invited by the Director of Law and Governance to represent the development of cooperation between a Client and the Shared Legal Service.

After a detailed discussion of the report and the Shared Legal Service, the Committee agreed that communication and clarification on delegation of responsibility both with the Shared Legal Service and the Councils would improve the relationship between the Clients and the Service.

## RESOLVED



- 1.1 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee concluded that further improvements in the performance of Shared Legal Service are required, specifically around communication and the understanding of which officer within the client department is able to give instructions.
- 1.2 That the Shared Legal Service be reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee again in six months' time and that this review included updates on case management and the information previously presented to the Committee.
- 1.3 That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet that prior to any future shared services or partnership working arrangements that a full and proper business case is prepared and that the business case will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for pre-scrutiny.

At the Cabinet meeting in February 2018 the Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendation from the Committee and explained there had been much discussion, and concerns had been raised as the Committee was unhappy with the level of service.

The Vice-Chair raised the point that a business case for any future shared services should be prepared as without one scrutiny of future shared services would be difficult. The Members of the Cabinet welcomed the recommendation.

## RESOLVED



- 1.1 That prior to any future shared services or partnership arrangements with Councils other than Mid Suffolk, a full and proper business case be prepared and be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for pre-scrutiny

### Reason for Decisions:

To ensure that Overview and Scrutiny Members are provided with a full and proper business case in relation to future shared services or partnership working arrangements.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be reviewing the Shared Legal Service again in July 2018.



## **Draft Joint Medium Term Financial Strategy and 2017/18 Budget**

In January the Committee received a report which provided an update on the work that had been undertaken so far on the 2018/19 General Fund budget, and explained the budget process and the approach taken, the current budget shortfall or surplus across the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) period, and the changes from 2017/18 to 2018/19.

**RESOLVED**



**That report BOS/17/30 containing 2018/19 General Fund Budget – Early Indication (Report BCa/17/36) and the Draft Joint Medium Term Financial Strategy and 2018/19 Budget (BCa/17/42) be noted.**

### **Waste Services**

Members were concerned that the Waste Contracts represented the largest share of out-sourced contracts, and that a proportion of these contracts were soon coming up for renewal.



During the pre-committee meetings for this item the Chairs established that the Waste Service and Waste Contract and related service agreements were complex. In order for the Committee to add value to the scrutiny process, further information on how the waste service contracts related to the management of the Waste Service would be needed.

The Strategic Director and the Assistant Director – Environment and Commercial Partnership together with the Chairs conducted a scoping exercise out of Committee to establish which areas of the Waste Service and associated contracts could be scrutinised and any necessary adjustments made. A report based on this scoping was then presented to the Joint Committee in February.

The Committee scrutinised the ‘Waste Services - Options for Review’ report and identified the timing for when scrutiny of Waste Contracts would be appropriate. The report also contained details of the how the waste service operated across the two Districts. The Committee was concerned that insufficient information was received by Members about the structure and the management of the Waste Service. This resulted in a request from the Committee to receive a five-year forecast of the income and expenditure for the Waste Service.

**RESOLVED**



**1.1 Officers to report to Joint Overview and Scrutiny in October, prior to the Cabinet report, on the outcomes of the review and possible extension of the Joint Waste Contract.**

- 1.2 **Officers to report to Joint Overview and Scrutiny in December on the outcome of the MRF procurement process.**
- 1.3 **That the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committees to receive a report from Suffolk Waste Partnership for food waste after April 2018.**
- 1.4 **That the cost and income be supplied to Members for the Waste Services for the next five years.**

## **The Five-year Housing Land Supply**

The Committee requested to scrutinise the Five-year Housing Land Supply due to a mixed understanding in the communities regarding the way it was calculated, and how the lack of supply could be resolved. These issues impacted on delivery of the Joint Strategic Plan in a number of ways, particularly in terms of housing delivery, community capacity and the effect of ad hoc building in inappropriate areas.



At the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February the Five-year Housing Land Supply was scoped by Members, and officers were able to explain in detail the complicated process for calculating the Five-year Housing Land Supply as well as discussing some of the concerns of the Committee. It was agreed that this information and the additional questions identified should form part of the upcoming report to the Committee. Members expressed concern regarding the absence of regular review of the Five-year Housing Land Supply, other than the annual review and the interpretation of the subjective elements of the calculation.

**RESOLVED** ✓

**That a report based on the scoping document be presented to Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 March 2018 and to Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 March 2018.**

In March the Five-Year Land Supply report was presented to the separate Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Members of the Babergh Committee debated the issues raised above. The Committee was satisfied that it was possible to conduct a half-yearly review of the Five-year Housing Land Supply and further that the supply be monitored by officers throughout the year. Members agreed that the report had answered the questions in the scoping document to a satisfactory level and that the proposed recommendations would ensure transparency and clarity of how the Five-year Housing Land supply was calculated.

The recommendations were forwarded to Cabinet.

**RESOLVED** ✓

- 1.1 That the Five-year Housing Land Supply be formally published yearly unless it can be shown that the requirements have been met earlier.
- 1.2 That the Five-year Housing Land Supply be reviewed half yearly and a report be provided to the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 That the Five-year Housing Land Supply subjective and objective variables be monitored regularly throughout the year.
- 1.4 That the Five-year Housing Land Supply report be recalculated and presented to the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April/May 2018 for review.
- 1.5 That Report BOS/17/36 be circulated to all Members.

**All Together Programme**

In March the Committee received a report on the cost of the move to Endeavour House and a comparison of the costs if the Council had remained in the headquarters in Hadleigh. The Committee had expressed concern of the financial position for both Councils following the move to Endeavour House, the opening of the new customer access points in Sudbury and Stowmarket; and the opening of the touchdown locations across both districts. Members discussed the consequences of the move and the cost implications for the Council in the long term.



**RESOLVED** ✓

- 1.1 That report BOS/17/37 be circulated to Cabinet and all Members.
- 1.2 That a breakdown of the Capital Expenditure cost in Table 2.1 in report BOS/17/37 be reported to the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee as an Information Bulletin in May 2018.

## **TOPICS TO BE CONSIDERD AT THE MAY 2018 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

- **Investment Strategy**

The Committee will be scrutinising the BMS Business Plan for the Investment Strategy.

- **Updated Joint Complaints Policy**

Members will be updated and reviewing the Joint Complaints Policy.

- **Information Bulletin**

Void times in Council Properties

All Together Programme - a Breakdown of Capital Expenditure (BDC only)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET AND OTHER COMMITTEES**

During the year the Committee made recommendation to Cabinet or Council on the following items:

- **Void Times in Council Properties**
- **Review of the Shared Legal Service**
- **The Five-year Land Supply**

## **BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL - CALL-INS**

In October 2017 the Overview and Scrutiny exercised the option to call-in a decision made by Cabinet and responded to a Call-in of the Decision from the meeting of the Babergh Cabinet held on 13 October 2017:

BCa/17/22 – Future Options for ‘Working Together’ between Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils.

The Committee met, and the following was agreed with one objection:

That the Scope of the Call - in was based on the following points:

- 1 That the decision notice states that no alternative options have been considered and rejected.
- 2 The decision does not appear to be listed as a key decision.
- 3 There appears to be a decision to consult on merging inadequate preparation and information release.
- 4 The financial appendix to the report is far from a full unbiased picture of the current and projected situation.

The Committee scrutinised Cabinet’s decision and upheld that the decision process had not been followed correctly.

### **RESOLVED**

(i) That the principles of decision making were breached, and that the decision be referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration with additional information. The following additional information should be considered by the Cabinet:

- a) The comments raised during the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 31 October 2017;
- b) A more detailed Financial Case;
- c) Further information about the consultation activities, particularly the telephone poll.

(ii) That Cabinet be requested to refer these decisions to a meeting of the full Council for debate, before Cabinet makes its final determination.

Babergh Full Council debated Future Options for ‘Working Together’ between Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, and it was resolved that independent legal advice be provided to the Chief Executive and provided to Members at Council. This advice was delivered to Council in early December.

At the Babergh Cabinet meeting in December the decision to uphold the decision made by Cabinet in October 2017 was confirmed based on careful consideration of the debate at Full Council and the legal advice received.

## **INFORMATION BULLETINS PRESENTED TO BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2018/18**

<b>September 2017</b>	Community engagement
<b>October 2017</b>	Update on the scoping exercise for Public Realm Transformation Project with the Corporate Manager for Countryside and Public Realm
<b>November 2017</b>	Babergh Business Rate Relief Summery 2017/18
<b>December 2017 (Joint)</b>	Recent Customer Access Activities
	Use by the Council of interims, temporary staff and consultants
	Defining the Performance Framework, and Indicators for Monitoring Delivery of the Joint Strategic Plan (Mid Suffolk District Council)
	Void Improvement Project (BDC)
<b>March 2018</b>	Transformation Fund

## **SCOPING TOPICS FOR BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2017/18**

- Scoping the General Scrutiny Process (June-July 2017)
- Scoping for Homelessness/ Bed and Breakfast Accommodation Review (July 2017)
- Scoping a Review of Voids (July 2018)
- Scoping the Finance Model (July 2018)
- Scoping Risk Assessment (Sept 2017)
- Scoping for Supporting Business Growth (Nov 2017)
- Scoping Legal Services Partnership (Nov 2017)
- Scoping of the use of Interim and Temporary staff (Oct – Nov 2017)
- Scoping of the Community Infrastructure Levy (Oct – Nov 2017)
- Scoping the Budget (Dec 2017)
- Scoping Waste Services – Options for Review (Feb 2018)
- Scoping the Five-year Land Supply (Feb 18)
- Scoping of the All Together Programme (Feb 2018)

# BABERGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2018/19:

18 June 2018

Topic	Purpose	Lead Officer	Cabinet Member	Joint Strategic plan reference
<b>Overview and Scrutiny Training for Members of the Committee</b>		Janice Robinson Corporate Manager – Law and Governance		Enabled and Efficient Organisation
<b>Babergh and Mid Suffolk Building Services (BMBS)</b>	12 months review after the implementation of the services This to include reporting back to the committee on progress in implementing the actions drawn up to reduce the days council properties are void.	Justin Wright - Newton Corporate Manager - BMBS	Jan Osborne	Intelligence based community insight and outcome - focused performance management  Make best use of our existing Housing assets
<b>Local Tourism Strategy</b>	To scrutinise the Local Tourism Strategy	Lee Carvell Corporate Manger – Open for Business	John Ward	Further develop local economy and market towns to thrive
<b>Staff Turnover and Welfare</b>	Reviewing the impact, the office move has had on staff and the financial impact of the move to Endeavour House, with the aim of learning points for other future major change activities.	Anne Conway Corporate Manager HR & OD  Katherine Steel Assistant Director – Corporate Resources		Strengthened and clear governance to enable delivery
<b>Off-payroll Costs Review</b>	A review of Off-payroll Cost following on from the update presented 18 December 2017	Katherine Steel Assistant Director – Corporate Resources	Peter Patrick	Financially sustainable Councils  Manage our corporate assets effectively
<b>Information Bulletin</b>	Voids times in Council Properties	Sue Lister – Corporate Manager – Housing Options  Justin King – Interim Consultant for the Voids Team		Make best use of our existing Housing assets
<b>Members to agree the BDC Work Plan for 2018/19</b>		Henriette Holloway – Governance Support Officer		

<b>23 July 2018</b>	<b>21 January 2018</b>
<p><b>Scoping of Pre-Planning Application</b> – to scope a review of the newly introduced pre-planning application fees. (P Isbell/ G Walker)</p> <p><b>Review of Shared Legal Service</b> – To review the progress and communication following the December</p>	
<b>20 August 2018</b>	<b>18 February 2019</b>
<p><b>Voids</b> – A review of the time it takes to re-let a property</p> <p>Members to receive an updated forecast of how to reduce the BDC deficit based on the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2017/18 figures</p> <p><b>Pre-planning Application report</b></p>	
<b>17 September 2018</b>	<b>18 March 2019</b>
<p><b>Crime and Disorder Panel meeting</b></p> <p><b>The HQ Sites</b> - The Investment Business Case for the Development</p>	
<b>22 October 2018</b>	<b>15 April 2019</b>
<p><b>Investment Strategy</b> To scrutinise the Business Plan for BMS Invest and CIFCO</p> <p><b>An update on the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017)</b> (Six months review after the implementation of the Act)</p> <p><b>Waste Strategy</b> Scrutiny of the outcome of Waste Services Review and possible extension of the Joint Waste Contract, prior of report going to Cabinet. (JOS/17/8)</p>	
<b>19 November 2018</b>	<b>20 May 2019</b>
<p><b>CIL Expenditure Framework</b> The Joint Member Panel to be part of the Scrutiny Process</p>	<b>Annual review of BMS Invest Business Plan</b>
<b>17 December 2018</b>	
<p><b>MRF Procurement Process</b> Officer to report back to the committee on the outcome of the MRF Procurement Contract. (JOS/17/8)</p> <p><b>Information Bulletin: Five-year Housing Land Supply</b> Half Year update</p>	



## TOPICS IDENTIFIED FOR REVIEW BUT NOT CURRENTLY TIMETABLED:



### **Information Bulletin: Customer Access Activity Update**

An update on the customer activity Information Bulletin presented 18 December 2017 **TBC**



**Information Bulletin: Community Engagement** – update to be provided quarterly (sept 2017) **TBC**



### **Community Grants**

Strong and safe communities was asked to report back following a 'health check' of the groups receiving grants. (To be an Information Bulletin) **TBC**



### **Fuel Poverty**

Reporting back to the Committee on the changes incorporated into the Joint Fuel Poverty Strategy – To consider if further action is needed at this stage, in the light of it being incorporated into a Suffolk-wide strategy

### **CIL**

Update on the outcome from the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee 18 December 2018



### **Crime and Disorder Panel meeting**

Required to take place at least once a year, provisionally agreed to take place in **September** of each year



**Void times in Council Properties** – Monthly Information Bulletin



### **Other topics identified:**

- Home ownership review