

## Response to Questions raised at Cabinet or submitted post Cabinet on the end of year performance report (For noting)

### Questions received from Cllr Eburne

- 1. Comment:** ‘the “summarised highlights” (section 4 of the report) does not identify any areas that need improvement despite stating it does (“where good performance is demonstrated or where performance improvement is needed”).’

**Response:** Members requested that the outcome performance report should focus on performance outcomes (both good and requiring improvement) and highlight key achievements and success stories. There is therefore a range of information within the summarised highlights including a mention at section 4.1 of the need to improve the average number of days to turnaround an empty council; it reports that at the end of Q4 it was taking 46 days against a target of 28 days. Section 4,4 also discusses the high number of staff leavers during the year which it is hoped has now stabilised.

The performance outcomes contained within the framework and reported upon, are determined by the Cabinet Portfolio Holders in conjunction with the respective Assistant Directors. Work has been underway to refine these indicators for 2018/19, to ensure they reflect the JSP and the Councillors priorities.

- 2. Comment:** ‘I find it incredible that the lack of a five-year housing land supply is not mentioned as needing improvement – indeed it is not mentioned at all’.

**Response:** An indicator for the effective Land Supply is shown in Appendix A, page 24 of the report. The 2016/17 figure is shown with commentary that the 2017/18 position will become available during June. The Strategic Planning team are unable to currently collect robust housing completions data on a quarterly basis but do provide annual information each June/July through the Annual Monitoring Report. Our Building Control team provides quarterly returns to the Government in relation to new starts and completions for housing, however this data only represents the Councils market share of building control work so does not paint a complete picture. For this reason, coupled with the delay in reporting by the NHBC and any other Approved Inspectors, only annual information is included in the report. This was not available at the time the report was presented to Cabinet and hence was not included in the summarised highlights report.

- 3. Comment:** ‘In general, throughout the tabled Appendix A the extent of commentary for each section varies widely. For some there are no “reports on progress” and for many no targets are set. Some may be because we just want a downward (or upward) trend but most should be aiming for something. So how do we know how well we are performing? Equally there are varying comments on what does it mean – what are the next steps or what work is going on?’

**Response:** The agreed performance reporting is based upon monitoring improving trends and the next stage of the developing framework is to add context to the data shown through the inclusion of benchmarking. It is accepted that where possible targets should be identified, and these will form part of the refinement work mentioned above.

**4. Comment - Report page 24:** 'Barriers to growth: no commentary in the report on progress section for all targets despite this being probably the most important area currently for the council.'

**Response:** The report on progress and additional comments need to be read together as information is in both, in future these comments will be merged. The last update date relates to the latest comments provided where it is deemed necessary. More recent data will often be shown in the total data column and the trend analysis, but a further update may not add any further value.

**5. Comment - Report page 24:** 'Question: T2 - no. of dwellings completed. We are in Q1 of the next year where is Q3 data at least?'

**Response:** Information was omitted in error, Q3 was 50 dwellings and Q4 data will be available shortly.

**6. Comment - Report page 25:** 'Question: I1 – no. of dwellings approved. Why no numbers of what has been approve but not built?'

**Response:** Please see comment no. 2 above.

**7. Comment - Report page 27:** 'Question: T2 – no. of plans entering examination stage. Why were no Neighbourhood Plans at the stage we expected?'

**Response:** The Council has no influence on when Neighbourhood Plans are ready for submission. Currently none of the groups are advanced enough to submit for examination.

**8. Comment - Report page 27:** 'Question: T3 – no. of neighbourhood plans made. Target is 1. If possible for 4 or 5 then should the target be higher?'

**Response:** The target for this measure will be reviewed in line with the refinement work that is underway.

**9. Comment - Report page 28:** 'Question: I1 – no. of enforcement cases referred to the team. If benchmarking is hard, what are we doing about it?'

**Response:** As mentioned above, as part of the refinements of the performance measures with the Cabinet Portfolio holders we are looking at opportunities to benchmark wherever possible.

**10. Comment - Report page 28:** 'Question: T1 - no. of privately owned properties empty, in excess of two years, brought back into use. Is 14 or 17 good? Is it anywhere near 100%? How do we know?'

**Response:** 100% is an aspiration but for now a target of 50% has been set. On average there are approximately 80 empty properties in excess of 2 years. As one property becomes occupied it is often the case that others will become longer term empty properties, hence the movement in the figures. Any number of empty properties returned to use is a success story.

**11. Comments - Report page 30:** 'I3 – no. of disabled adaptations in council stock. They are residents not customers.'

**Response:** The Council has a wide variety of customers, including residents, businesses and visitors. This will be explained more in the refreshed Customer Strategy which has an underlying aim to put the customer at the heart of the organisation.

**12.Comment - Report page 30:** '15 – no. of households for whom homelessness was prevented via the private rented sector. If landlords won't accept claimants, what are we doing to help?'

**Response:** The Council is planning to submit a bid for funding from the LGA Housing Advisors Programme to fund a project around reviewing how we access the PRS and produce a new scheme to increase the number of successful preventions.

**13.Comment - Report page 35,36:** T1,T2,T3 - Adult sport and physical activity levels. No targets so is what is being achieved good? Clearly a priority as it is included but what are we doing about it? Targeted grants / capacity building.'

**Response:** Performance measurements in this area can be seen through comparison with our peers, as per the commentary in the report. Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils adopted a Joint Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy in December 2017. An interim Strategic Leisure Advisor and Leisure Projects Manager will coordinate the Councils overall approach to implementing the Strategy. The Health and Wellbeing team are leading on key elements of the Strategy through the commissioning of targeted programmes addressing inactivity and by enabling community-based leisure, sport and physical activity opportunities.

It is important to recognise that the Sport England figures (based on the Active Lives survey) reflect the collective efforts of many individuals and organisations at all levels across the districts who provide countless opportunities for people to be active and participate in sport. Nationally, activity levels have decreased slightly in recent years, but the most recent figures suggest that activity levels are on the up and are moving in the right direction as people become more aware of the value of incorporating health and fitness in their everyday lives. Locally we are seeing an increase across a wide variety of activities and sports; in particular an increase in walking and running. This could be due to the accessibility of these activities, fitting more easily into hectic work and home lives and at low cost, alongside a number of great walking and running clubs and initiatives in the area for people to take part in from beginner level up to elite athletes.

**14.Comment - Report page 38:** 'T3 – Delivery of safeguarding training to all Staff and Councillors, no. of attendees. How many Councillors have had safeguarding training? Surely 100% is target?'

**Response:** 34 Councillors have completed Safeguarding training since July 2017. A target of 100% will be used to monitor mandatory staff attendance at the training.

**15.Comment - Report page 43:** 'Question: T1 – Government funding – Actual Revenue Support Grant. Surely revenue support grant isn't a performance measure. We get what we are given. Obtaining other grants from government might be a target when we have to apply for them or work for them?'

**Response:** This performance measure was identified as a tracker (or lag indicator) due to its strategic importance in enabling the Council to identify appropriate influencing (lead indicators) to bridge the budget gap.'

**16.Comment - Report page 53:** 'Waste, very surprised at lack of targets.'

**Response:** As part of the refinements of the performance measures with the Cabinet Portfolio holders this will be looked at alongside opportunities to benchmark wherever possible.

**17.Comment:** 'It is difficult for anyone to see how we are doing overall and I could not understand how you could therefore say this was 'adequately reflecting' our performance.

**Response:** The performance report contains a very wide range of indicators measuring performance across the Council, including an at a glance view of trends against targets (where applicable). The report demonstrates performance outcomes, key achievements and highlights against the themes in the Joint Strategic Plan. Where performance improvements are required this is also shown. The performance framework and this report is designed to provide a feel of overall performance and the difference the Council is making in the community. As mentioned previously, our framework continues to develop and further work is underway to ensure completeness of information and that robust targets are set.

### **Other Questions raised at Cabinet**

**18.Comment:** What are the number of staff vacancies at present?

**Response:** As at 20 June total vacancies for BDC and MSDC, bearing in mind shared service provision, is approx. 39.73 FTEs. From a financial perspective these can be split as BDC GF 17.8 FTEs, MSDC GF 19.23 FTEs, BDC HRA 1.35 FTE's and MSDC HRA 1.25 FTEs. The top four service areas with the greatest number of vacancies are Development Management 6.8 FTEs, Customer Services 4.6 FTEs, Strategic Planning 4.8FTEs, Shared Legal Service 4 FTEs.

**19.Comment:** How many experienced staff have left the authority?

**Response:** Please see table below:

<b>Length of service - leavers April 17 to March 2018</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Leavers excluding scanners</b>	
0 to 1 year	22
1- 5 years	28
5-10 years	12
10-15-years	11
15-20 years	13
20-25 years	6
25-30 years	6
30-35 years	2
35-40 years	2
40-45 years	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Scanners</b>	

Work has been undertaken with certain teams where retention and recruitment has been an issue. In some areas career graded roles are now in place e.g. in Planning and Building Control. Managers are also encouraged to succession plan through development of staff and to consider how they recruit when someone leaves e.g. do they need to replace like for like. In addition, a Market Forces Pay Supplement Policy is in place which can be used in exceptional circumstances to help retain experienced staff or where recruitment is difficult.

**20.Comment:** How many staff are on long term sick leave due to stress?

**Response:** 16 employees, (3%), were off on long term sickness with Mental Health issues, either Anxiety, Stress or Depression over the past year Mar 2017- April 2018. This is based upon a head count of 531 as at 31 March 2018.