

**Babergh and Mid Suffolk Building Service (BMBS) – A Review of First Year Trading and Next Steps.**

- 14.1 The Assistant Director – Housing, introduced the report and said the report and the updated Business Plan was an honest account of what had been achieved and the challenges ahead.
- 14.2 Councillor Barrett raised questions regarding the less than expected income for the BMBS case scenario for the year 2017/18 (page 64) and if it was possible that the figures could be updated in relation to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). In reality the BMBS service did not lose money, as the BMBS budget was covered by the HRA was hence a loss on paper. Members wanted to know if the updated costs base was a more accurate cost base to work on and the officer responded that this was the case.
- 14.3 The Assistant Director – Housing reminded Members that the original Business Plan was flawed and that the inherited income and expenditure had affected the first six months of the implementation of BMBS. The Corporate Manager – BMBS had only joined the team last year and other factors such as the service becoming an in-house service had influenced the implementation stage in various ways, but now enabled BMBS to deliver a good service to the tenants. There were challenges ahead such as getting all the relevant paperwork into the Total Mobile Programme and it was detailed how significant efficiencies were to be undertaken to save resources.
- 14.4 Councillor Gasper was concerned with the lack of tracking of paper work and workloads between departments and that this was important if searching for efficiencies. It was considered necessary to have a clear route for processes both within the department and with other departments to enable an effective audit to take place.
- 14.5 The Assistant Director – Housing confirmed that auditing was on-going, and he referred to Appendix C, page 103, which showed the outturn figures up to 12 April 2018 compared with the original Business Plan. The total Expenditure was nearly the same figures, however, the income from Capital Maintenance had been unrealistic in the original Business Plan. The new figure of £276,239 was based on the outturn figures.
- 14.6 A process for internal accounting was being implemented to determine efficiencies, similar to the voids project. The team was working with the Accounting team to reflect the process and the outturn figures were robust based on this process.
- 14.7 Questions were raised regarding the Legal Implications of the report, Paragraph 11, page 65. Councillor Williams enquired if there were not legal implications if BMBS undertook work in houses belonging to the public and would include Health and Safety in properties which were being maintained. The officers responded that this kind of work was being undertaken with the Property Service Team and that the

team worked with other services to ensure that the Health and Safety regulations was strictly adhered to.

- 14.8 BMBS conducted an annual 20% Housing Stock Survey to maintain the housing stock.
- 14.9 Members asked if any risks had been identified, and officers responded that an external agency had reviewed BMBS as part of the set-up of BMBS and an action plan had been generated as part of that review. The Internal Audit Team also audited the service regularly.
- 14.10 In response to Members' concern over the day to day management of BMBS, officers referred to pages 59 to 62, which detailed the actions completed and actions which had yet to be undertaken. The Chair stressed that these would be an important measure of performance. It was clarified that most IT issues had been resolved and that the Total Mobile System had gone live within the last few days. The day to day operations were improving, but there were still some issues regarding the administration team. The service delivered to the tenants was satisfactory and there had not been an increase in complaints received.
- 14.11 The main point of focus was to enable the trades teams to have access to mobile technology and it was hoped this would be delivered within the next 4 to 6 weeks. Staff needed to receive training to ensure the teams were up to date with the Total Mobile System.
- 14.12 There now existed a full competent team of Team Leaders and contact to suppliers had been established and could be utilised if needed.

NOTE: Councillor Barrett left the meeting at 4.20 pm.

- 14.13 The Cabinet Member for Housing said that the Business Plan was well presented and robust. It would provide a better service to tenants. There had been a problem of communicating with tenants when work was going to be completed, but this was being resolved by sending a letter to those tenants with this information.
- 14.14 Members discussed if further reports were required by the Committee to review BMBS in the future and it was suggested that review every six months would be appropriate. Some Members felt this was not necessary and that an option to refer a review of BMBS back to the Committee if any matters arose for concern should be included in the recommendations.

**It was RESOLVED: -**

- 1.1 That the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Building Service continue to be monitored and should any issues be identified the matter be referred back to the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee for review.**
- 1.2 That a review of the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Building Service be presented to the Babergh Overview and Scrutiny Committee in six months' time.**