

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY REPORT

JULY 24TH, 2018

Previously quarterly, this report will be given monthly in line with Mid Suffolk. The Annual Report presented in May's Annual Council could not include the Joint Meeting on the 21st. That meeting is included now.

The Committee examined proposed updates to the Joint Compliments, Comments & Complaints Policy. It was proposed in the paper that Stage 2 complaints would require additional information to proceed. The committee had reservations on this, split almost evenly, and after discussion and a Chairman's Casting Vote we resolved that the revised policy be recommended to Cabinet subject to consideration of those concerns. We also recommended that Portfolio holders receive reports on any emerging negative trends.

Examining figures for the Capital Costs for the Hadleigh & Needham Market Headquarters it emerged that the historic figures on which the Council decision to leave was based were unchanged. The committee felt that all that could now be achieved was to learn any lessons from the moves and to ensure that the predicted savings were monitored. The Information Bulletin was noted.

The newly appointed Babergh Overview & Scrutiny Committee met on the 18th June with a short half an hour pre-meeting to prepare our passage through the Agenda. Both chairs have agreed that this is a productive approach designed to focus and speed the meeting itself.

In Information Bulletins we considered a report on Staff Turnover & Welfare. There was concern about a rise in the stress and anxiety figures. These were not solely due to the move to Endeavour House however, but part of a three-year trend and in line with national and sector trends. The Assistant Director (Corporate Resources) and the Chief Executive were able to provide clarification on questions. The committee felt that a further Information Bulletin with a breakdown of stress related absences should be brought back to us in 6 months.

We noted a satisfactory reduction in Off Payroll Costs and asked that any future increases be monitored for possible future attention.

The Voids in Council Properties were showing significant improvement. This had been an important effort under the previous Chairman, who undertook a considerable amount of work. The committee felt that rather than a monthly update on Void times, we could now review quarterly.

A review of the first year of Babergh Mid Suffolk Building Services was the main item. It was clearly shown in the report that the original business plan had been overly optimistic and ambitious. The revised plan presented was realistic and achievable. Members had considerable concerns about day to day operational issues and introduction of technology.

We resolved that the Service should continue to be monitored, with any identified issues to be referred back to Scrutiny. A further review should be presented to the Committee in 6 months.

We received an Interim Update for the BDC Tourism Strategy, with particular reference to the Lavenham Tourist Information Centre. This was a matter of some concern to many across the Council. Given the nature of ongoing negotiations we were not able to act to produce recommendations. We were however able to encourage the sharing of some useful background information apart from that provided in the Visitor Economy Workshop. We also took written

submissions from concerned parties. In this instance, Scrutiny was operating to provide an opportunity for information sharing, discussion and transparency in the process. The update was duly noted.

The Joint Committee also met in an additional meeting at Ipswich Town Players Lounge on the 28th June to consider a single item on the Councils Joint Investment Vehicle CIFCO. All levels of the structure were represented and extensively questioned on the business plan, performance and potential risks. The committees focussed very strongly on the General Lines of Reporting and Risk Management. Market conditions were addressed as well as alternative areas for investment. The additional information for Performance and Risk management and reporting reassured the committee that CIFCO could achieve its targets. These comments are being reported on today.

Fuller details are available within the Babergh & Joint Scrutiny Committee Minutes and Confidential Minutes, although those for the 18th June are yet to be confirmed.

Future reports will hopefully be much shorter.

Alastair McCraw

Chairman, Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Babergh District Council